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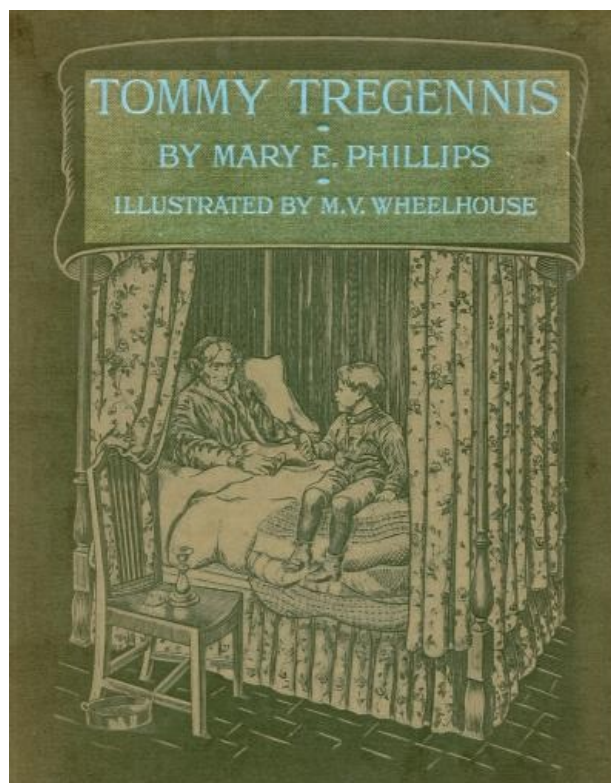
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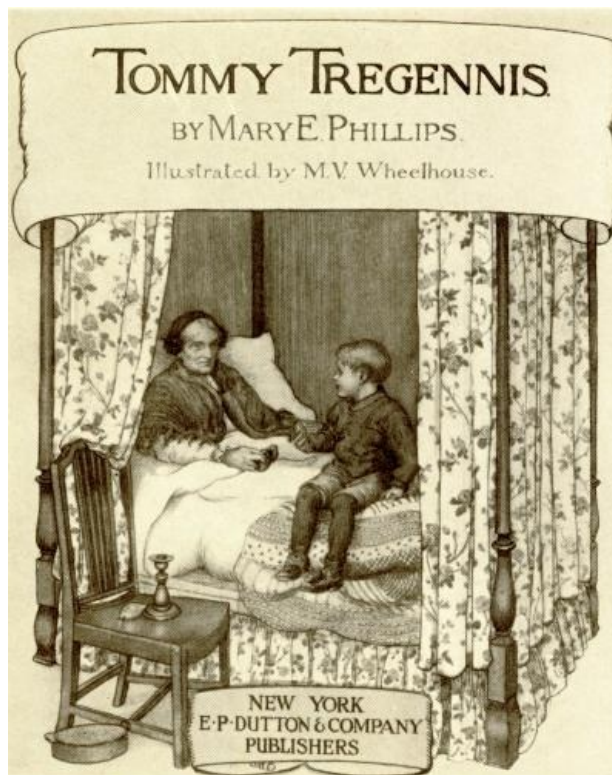
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**TOMMY TREGENNIS**  
**BY MARY E. PHILLIPS**  
ILLUSTRATED BY M. V. WHEELHOUSE

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**TOMMY TREGENNIS**  
**BY MARY E. PHILLIPS**  
**Illustrated by M. V. Wheelhouse**

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## CHAPTER I

**T**HERE was Daddy, of course, and Mammy and home. Outside home was the world, and the world was a stretch of golden sand. It was a very perplexing world to a small boy, for it had a trick, when one least expected it, of hiding under the sea. At such times the confines of the world narrowed, and the world itself became a succession of rocky ledges entirely made up of don't-go-there-Tommy places, and most of the fun was spoiled.

There was always the danger, too, in the world of rocks that clothes would not stand the extra strain they were called upon to bear. In sliding down their sea-washed sides "Take care of your trousers, ma handsome!" was forgotten until the bottom of the rock was reached and the mischief done. Tommy's trousers were never very durable even in the beginning of things, for they were made out of Mammy's worn-out skirts and cast-off coats (all but the Sunday pair, that is) and so little friction seemed to wear them into holes.

Just as often as the warning concerning his clothes was given him, just so often did Tommy disregard it, but never were the consequences so disastrous as on that July evening when he walked slowly up the cobble-paved alley to his home; a boy who had lost his illusions; a boy who regarded sliding down sloping rocks as a highly over-rated form of enjoyment. With one fat hand he held together a yawning rent, while with the other now and again he rubbed his eyes. Slowly he trailed unwilling feet over the cobbles, and only half-heartedly did he kick the little pile of dust left under the wall near the Church door, neglected by the dustman on his morning round.

Mammy was standing in the doorway and saw him coming. "Surely this cannot be Tommy Tregennis?" she said, in a puzzled, uncertain voice.

Tommy's heart stood still. Suppose she didn't know him; suppose she wouldn't have him in the house; suppose he had to sit out on the cobble-stones all night! There was no end to the awful supposings.

However "'Tis me, Mammy!" he explained, and tried to put matters on a pleasant basis by butting her in the stomach as he ran head foremost.

But Mammy drew back, a hurt, surprised look in her eyes. "It *sounds* like Tommy Tregennis's voice," she said uncertainly, "but surely neither Tommy Tregennis nor his fäather ever comes home with they trousers tore! I'm just waitin' for ma handsome, now," she volunteered, "he's been out playin' in the——"

"I'm your handsome, Mammy," declared a choking, muffled voice. "I'm your Tommy, I am, but I've tore me trousers on the Skiddery Rock."

It was dreadful to make such a confession, but necessity calls for decided action; and the effect of the confession was good, for Mammy admitted her graceless son and followed him into the kitchen.

"No, don't sit down," she exclaimed, "let me see just what you've been up to, young man. I'll tell your fäather when he comes home, Tommy Tregennis, you tearin' up the good trousers he goes to sea to get for ee!"

Unprotesting, Tommy was led up to bed. "To-morrow," suggested Mammy, "you'd best run fast all the way to school so as no one shan't see ee, and start early before they other children goes out."

There was a moment's silence, then a wailing cry: "Oh, Mammy, Mammy, can't ee mend they trousers to-night?" Conclusively Mammy proved the impossibility of such rapid repair and it was a broken-hearted Tommy who knelt in his little cot. "Bless Mammy, 'n Daddy, 'n make Tommy a good boy. Please get me trousers mended, Amen." Then "Give I just another chanst, Mammy, just one more chanst."

"But you've said that again and again, Tommy Tregennis, an' it's just been untruth, untruth every time."

"Well, it'll be truth this time, Mammy, for sure it will; just one more chanst." Then very pleadingly, "Put 'em in the rag-bag, Mammy."

Mrs. Tregennis looked horrified. "An' that I won't, my son. Do you think I be *made* of trousers that I can afford to use them for house-cleanin' just because you've got 'em tore slidin' on Skiddery Rock?" And Mammy kissed her son somewhat coldly and went down the creaking wooden stairs.

There was no sleep for the culprit; the evening light coming in at the window mocked his misery. The sea was going down now, and in the distance he could hear the laughter of the children who still played on the widening sands; the very children who, to-morrow, would laugh at him, Tommy Tregennis, because his trousers was tore.

He decided that he would leave for school before breakfast as Mammy had advised, and run very fast all the way. But even so, Tommy was five now, and when you are five years old you no longer sit on the window-seat in Miss Lavinia's school-room. When you are five your legs are supposed to be so long that you can be given an ordinary chair at the long, narrow table.

Of course it was very grand to be promoted from the window-seat; it meant one was definitely growing up. In spite of the promotion Tommy often had regrets, for the outside world, as viewed from the window, was most attractive. The window opened on to Miss Lavinia's back-garden, and there were always sparrows, and often cats; bees in the summer, too, and the gay colours of the flowers. The window-seat was very low (that was why it was your place when you were only four) and it would have been so easy to sit down there backwards. But a chair was quite another matter. That meant standing on a spindle first, then stretching upwards before you turned round and sat; and detection would seem inevitable.

There was the new game, too; the game in which you all lay flat on the ground in a ring and blew at the bonfire in the middle, having first of all piled it up with leaves and sticks (pretending leaves and sticks, of course). And you sang all the time. Then you crawled nearer and nearer to the centre until Miss Lavinia said: "Take care, Tommy; suppose you should burn!" and you wriggled hurriedly back to your place in the ring.

But for such games trousers must be entire. Tommy broke down utterly and sobbed beneath the bed

clothes.

Mammy must still be standing in the doorway for now and again he heard a heavy tread up the alley. "Evenin'," a hearty voice would say, and "G'd evenin'," Mammy would reply.

Then there came a much lighter step, and through the open window Tommy heard another voice which caused him to still his sobs and sit up in bed, his hands tightly clasped and his little chest heaving under the flannelette nightshirt.

"Good-evenin', Miss Lavinia." This was exactly what Tommy had feared.

"I've just had to put my Tommy to bed. He's tore his trousers on the rocks, and I cannot mend them to-night. He must come early to school to-morrow and bide still all day, so that the children won't laugh at him. Yes, thank you, Miss; if he may go back to the window-seat that'll be fine, and Billy Triggs can have his chair, then they children won't see."

When these arrangements had been made Miss Lavinia said "Good-night" and her footsteps died away round the corner.

The evening light grew dimmer and dimmer. Grotesque shadows lengthened in the room and Tommy was still wide awake. At last he could bear it no longer.

"Mammy, Mammy!" he cried; but there was no response.

A second call, however, brought her to the foot of the stairs, for he distinctly heard her toe hit the stair-rod at the bottom that held the linoleum in place. So he knew that she was really listening and called once more. "Mammy, Mammy, don't let anyone have me!"

"But who should want *you*, Tommy Tregennis?"

"I don't know, Mammy," he shouted back in his lusty, young voice. "I don't know, but I thought if you was in the kitchen some one might come up the stairs and get I."

"But who should want to take you away, Tommy Tregennis? Who should want a little boy as tears his trousers when his Daddy's away at sea?"

There it was again! Even a fly, unpardonably late in going to bed, was buzzing on the window-pane, "Tommy's tore his trousers; Tommy's tore his trousers!" Finally the moon looked in at the window laughing at his grief, and Tommy fell into a troubled sleep.

Many hours later he was wakened by the striking of a match and a flare of light. Mammy was putting the kettle on the spirit-lamp at her bedside, and by this Tommy knew that Daddy was home again. Rubbing his eyes he sat up and looked anxiously at the foot of his cot. He saw that the torn trousers were no longer there. He gave a deep sigh of relief; it was true then; he had feared that it was perhaps only a dream. But they were not there, so now he knew that the odd little red-haired man who danced in the moonlight had really taken away those dreadful trousers to make them into tiny coats for the ten little boys and girls whom he invariably left at home on his nights out.

Sleepily Tommy watched his mother's movements. When she had poured water into the tea-pot he crept into the big bed, and as soon as Daddy came the feast began. Some potato and gravy from the cold pasty oozed out of Tommy's share and fell upon his nightshirt. It was too good to be left, so Tommy licked vigorously making very sure that none was wasted. Quickly the midnight meal ended.

"Now, ma handsome," said Mammy (she must have forgotten about the trousers), "skip back to bed like a fly in a jaboon."

So Tommy skipped. Daddy blew out the candle, and soon their regular breathing testified that all three slept.

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## CHAPTER II

**A**FTER all Tommy Tregennis had breakfast at the proper time the following morning; and although he left home a little earlier than usual it was with no intention of hurrying. Rather did he choose to swagger slowly through the crooked streets, while every now and again he bent ostentatiously to pick up a stone to throw at a sparrow, or a lamp-post, or an old tin in the gutter. It did not matter in the least what he aimed at, sparrow, post or tin, for never by any chance did he hit it; but it mattered greatly that those children who had laughed last night, laughed while he was sobbing in bed, should know that there was no need for him to stand upright unless he cared to do so. Without shame he could now assume any attitude he chose. For Tommy Tregennis wore a new pair of trousers!

Tommy himself had not known of their existence, but weeks before, at night while he slept, Mammy had planned and cut and sewn by the light of the kitchen lamp. With puckered brow, and tightly compressed lips holding two or three pins, she had spread her old green coat carefully on the kitchen table, smoothed out every wrinkle, and upon it placed a piece of newspaper which bore some resemblance to the shape of Tommy's legs.

The first plan was faulty; the curve of the arm-hole interfered. The newspaper pattern was taken up, Mammy's mouth held more pins and her frown grew deeper. It was only after much anxious thought that she decided finally that it was possible to cut a strip from a sleeve of the coat and join it to the top of the trousers in such a way that when Tommy's jersey was well pulled down the seam would not show. So the pattern was pinned on more firmly, the first cut was made half-an-inch from the edge of the paper, and after that there

was no drawing back.

As Mammy planned and pinned and cut and sewed in the yellow light of the lamp the silence of the little kitchen was only broken by the fall of a cinder now and again, and by the steady ticking of the clocks.

One clock stood on the chimney-piece, a canister on either side, and beyond each canister a china dog with staring yellow eyes. It was the chimney-piece clock that told the time. Nailed to the wall, to the left of the fireplace, with long slender chains dangling and throwing shadows in the lamplight, hung a cuckoo clock that was Tommy's most cherished possession. All day and all night it ticked steadily through the hours, but as the hands never moved it was not considered trustworthy more than once a day; this was at five minutes past twelve, when (at any rate on Saturdays and Sundays) Mammy would look up to the wall, and say: "Deary me, five minutes past twelve; my dear soul, why 'tis time to put on the potaties!"

As the clocks ticked, and the cinders fell, and the oil in the lamp burned low, Mammy's deft fingers moved very busily, and her thoughts were very busy too. They carried her a long way back—ten years back, in fact—to the time before she was Mammy, to the days when Tommy, and even Tommy's father, had not yet come into her life.

She was just Ellen in those days; Ellen Pertwee really, but no one seemed to remember that she had a second name more than once a year when it was all written in full in her Sunday School prize. For four years Ellen had been a willing little servant-maid at Tomses the draper's, but when she was eighteen there was a great change in her life, for she went to the doctor's as house-parlour-maid, and her wages were twelve pounds a year. She was very hazy at the time as to the meaning of her grand new title; but the money was very real, and she remembered even now how dazzled she was at the thought of so much gold.

With her first month's wages, ten years ago, she had bought the cloth for her new green coat. It had cost her much deliberation and several sleepless nights, but at last she had gone back to Tomses on her fortnightly night-out, and made the important purchase. Night after night she had cut and shaped and pinned and stitched, much as she was cutting and shaping now. At last the coat was finished (all sewn by hand, too, for Ellen had no machine in those days) and she wore it in Church on her next Sunday out.

It was after Church that very night that Tom Tregennis, much to her surprise, asked her to walk out with him, and— Well, now the new green coat was the old green coat, and was being made into trousers for little Tommy Tregennis to wear!

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## CHAPTER III

**S**o far Draeth is comparatively unknown, for it lies a little off the beaten track and hurrying tourists do not find it easily. The Limited Express does not pull up at Scard, the junction, but hurries on, through beautiful country, from Plymouth to Falmouth without a stop. Visitors to Draeth, therefore, travel by a slower train from Mill Bay and leave the main line at Scard. Here, seizing their own hand-luggage (for the porters, like the express, are limited, and unlike the express are slow), they cross the line by the bridge, and pass along a bit of dusty road, following the direction indicated by a painted hand under which is written "To the Draeth and Scard Branch Railway."

The independence of the branch line is emphasized by the fact that the Draeth train remains just outside the station until all the passengers are in line upon the platform. It then steams up alongside with much unnecessary fuss. When at last it starts it runs very slowly and the line is single, but as a precaution against possible accidents an iron bar passes across the window of each compartment. Thus, if a traveller wishes to look out at the narrow East Draeth river, at the willows and alders on its banks, and at the clumps of Rose Bay and Willowherb that give rich colour to the line, he rubs his nose on the dusty bar while he knocks his forehead on the window-frame above.

So steep is the gradient from Scard to Draeth that half-way there the train stops, and the engine steams away alone. Returning it is coupled at the rear and now pulls the train backward at first doubling on its track. Those who cannot travel facing the engine change places with those who cannot sit with their backs in the direction in which they are going. By the time these changes are effected the narrow East Draeth river expands into a wide sheet of water if the tide is up, or into a series of mud flats when the tide is low. Five minutes later the train enters what is surely the prettiest of all Cornish stations, and the journey is at an end.

There was a man once who lived in Draeth who made many plans for beautifying and improving the town. He built the Frying Pan Pier, and it was he, too, who opened up the Pentafore Estate. The branch railway also owes its existence to him. He dreamed of a modern sea-front all asphalt and glittering lights, of a grand Hydro, too, which was to front the sea on a commanding bit of cliff-coast less than a mile eastward of the town. But he died and his plans came to naught, and Draeth is still just Draeth!

Beyond the station the East and West rivers join and together run out to sea, dividing East Draeth from West Draeth and forming a safe harbour for the fishing smacks that have safely weathered so many storms. Lately the fishing has been poor in Draeth because the steam-trawlers have driven away the fish, and in winter there is much poverty in the town.

It was dread of the winter that led the Tregennis to give up their three-roomed cottage and move into a house that had eight windows in the front and rose three stories high. The change was made in April so that all might be in readiness for the summer and the visitors the summer brought.

The new home was only a stone's throw from the old one, and there was much running backwards and

forwards between the two houses, much fetching and carrying, until the last moments in the old home came, and nothing remained but to lock the door and give up the key to the landlord. Then Mrs. Tregennis leaned up against the kitchen sink and cried, while Tommy, not in the least understanding why, cried, too.

"Mammy," he wailed, "Oh, Mammy, what've I done to ee?" "Done, ma lamb, done?" Mrs. Tregennis spoke breathlessly between her sobs. "Why, nothin', ma handsome; you're just the best little boy as ever I had."

Then, having wiped Tommy's eyes and her own with a large red-bordered handkerchief, Mrs. Tregennis ran upstairs for the last time, took one more look at the empty rooms and, with set mouth and without a backward glance, came slowly down the stairs. She took Tommy's hand in hers, and silently and tearfully mother and son passed through the open door, locked it behind them and crossed the cobble-stone alley to the imposing double-fronted house which was henceforth to be home.

Much more furniture was wanted in the three-storied house than in the forsaken cottage, and for some months past the Tregennis family, Daddy, Mammy and Tommy had attended all the neighbouring sales. They were almost too nervous to bid when the articles they wished to buy were put up for auction; when shamefacedly they had made their nod they were held upon the tenterhooks of despair while some one else, who could not possibly want the goods as much as they did, bid against them and so raised the price.

Now the furnishing was complete. The kitchen and one bedroom held the old things, but in the other four rooms Mrs. Tregennis arranged with pride the bargains collected at the sales, and the new things sent out from a Plymouth shop.

It was all so grand and wonderful that she could scarcely realize that the rooms were her very own. Morning after morning, for many weeks, as soon as she was dressed, she opened the door of the tiny sitting-room on the first floor and looked round almost with awe on its beauty and newness. On tiptoe she then advanced into the room, picked a piece of cotton off the gay Brussels carpet, dusted an imaginary fleck from the green art-serge tablecloth, and stroked out the fringe of the plush mantel-border. Then, having slightly altered the position of one of the velvet upholstered chairs, she passed out with a sigh of contentment, and gently closed the door behind her.

The final act of preparation in the new house was to hang up, in the lower sitting-room window, a long narrow card bearing in gold letters the word "Apartments." After this the Tregennis family settled down and waited.

June was a blank month for Draeth that year. It was unusually wet and cold, and very few visitors came to the little fishing-town, and none at all to the double-fronted house. Whenever a stranger walked up the alley Mrs. Tregennis's hopes rose high, but not until July did anyone knock at her door and ask about the price of rooms. Outwardly Mrs. Tregennis was very calm but her inward agitation was great. She displayed her rooms with pride, they were taken, and after that with one party and another she was busy until the end of August.

Early in September, towards the end of the afternoon, she was interrupted in her dressing by the rapping of knuckles on the door. She buttoned her bodice as she came downstairs, shook out her skirts and hurriedly put on an apron before she opened it. "We wondered if you could take us in just for the night," said the taller of two ladies who stood on the step. "We are on a cycling tour and are going on further to-morrow."

"Please come in," said Mrs. Tregennis, and they passed into the downstairs sitting-room, which was just on the left-hand side of the door.

"We've tried so many places," said the lady who had already spoken, "and no one can take us."

Mrs. Tregennis pulled forward two Windsor chairs for the ladies and stood before them smoothing a non-existent crease from her white apron.

"Well, I might manage it, Miss," she said, "if the young gentleman didn't mind, for I have this room free."

"Oh, I do wish you could, for it's getting late to go on, and we're so tired."

"It would be no better to go on, Miss, the rooms at all the places is full, I know. It's like this, you see, Miss." Mrs. Tregennis again smoothed her apron. "Two young gentlemen really belongs to a party at my sister-in-law's and only sleeps here, they have one bedroom. Another young gentleman has the other bedroom and the upstairs sitting-room. If it should be as how he would have a chair-bed in his sitting-room for the night, then you could have his room."

"Well, I do hope he will, Mrs. —?"

"Tregennis, Miss."

"But Mrs. Tregennis, if the young gentleman doesn't wish to sleep on a chair-bed what shall we do?"

"There's the Royal Standard, Miss."

"No, we had a very unsatisfactory lunch there, badly cooked and badly served; the waitress wore a dirty apron and her hair was in curling pins. We really couldn't go there!"

"Well, Miss, will you call again in an hour's time; the young gentleman will be in then, and I'll let you know for certain."

"Tom," she said, when they had left, "there's two young ladies asking for rooms for the night. They're on a cycling tour, but they'd no bikes with them, and they hadn't a scrap of luggage. I've said I'll take them if the young gentleman doesn't mind the chair-bed."

Tregennis slowly uncrossed his legs as he sat in front of the kitchen fire, and with his forefinger rearranged the tobacco in the bowl of his pipe. "Well, Ellen," he said slowly, "and suppose they be just frauds?"

"All I can say is as they don't look it, an' after all we'm got to take our risks. A room for one night isn't much, but all the littles add up, and the summer's nearly gone." After a pause she resumed. "The Royal Standard isn't good enough for them, Thomas Tregennis, I'd have you know, when folks wants things done in real style they comes to the likes of we."

Mrs. Tregennis cleared her throat and prepared her husband's tea.

Two hours later the ladies had brought their bicycles and carry-alls from the hotel-stable, and were sitting down to supper in Mrs. Tregennis's sitting-room, for the young gentleman had proved most accommodating in the matter of the chair-bed.

It was after supper that the meeting with Tommy took place. The arrival of unexpected visitors had put off his bedtime, and when these visitors passed the kitchen door on their way out, he had only just had his bath. He was standing on a chair while Mammy vigorously brushed up his stiff fair hair. Peeping out below the pink nightshirt were toes almost as pink as his flushed little face. All the time his hair was being rubbed and brushed, he went through a rhythmic motion of the body, slowly bending his knees, and rapidly straightening them again. The upright movement frequently brought his head into sharp contact with the hair-brush, but this in nowise disconcerted him.

When Mammy's ladies appeared in the doorway, then in response to Mrs. Tregennis's invitation actually walked into the kitchen, he was overcome with shyness and hid his eyes in his hands. To his great surprise, however, the ladies talked to Mammy, neglecting him utterly. He was accustomed to much consideration, and gradually his tight little fingers relaxed that he might peep through the gaps and see what manner of strangers these were who were so ignorant of his importance and of his claims upon them.

Still the ladies talked only to Mammy. He could bear it no longer, so, dropping his hands, he pursed up his mouth and whistled; at least he called it whistling, but it was very much the same noise that Daddy made each morning when the tea in his saucer was too hot. Its value as a whistle, however, mattered very little, as it had the desired effect. The taller lady, the one in the blue dress, looked at him in surprise; evidently until now she had had no idea that he was there.

"Hallo, Tommy," she said, and made a dash for his toes.

"Hallo," he half-screamed, half-gurgled. "Hallo, Blue Lady," and flung two chubby, suffocating arms tightly around her neck. Then, peeping over her shoulder, "Hallo, Brown Lady," he laughed. Thus their friendship began.



STILL THE LADIES TALKED ONLY TO MAMMY.

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## CHAPTER IV

**A**T breakfast the following morning the Blue Lady looked up from her pilchards. She was eating slowly for pilchard bones are many in number and very small. "Dorothea," she asked, "what about this cycling tour? Do you want to go on to-day, or wouldn't it be rather nice to stay here for one more night and just enjoy Draeth?"

"I should love it!" the Brown Lady replied.

Mrs. Tregennis was summoned. No, she didn't think the young gentleman would at all mind having the chair-bed again; he'd slept very well indeed and had been quite comfortable. As for her, well, she'd be delighted for the ladies to stay.

Thus it was settled, and they stayed.

The tide was high that morning, and they pulled slowly up the beautiful West River. After lunch they took

photographs of Tommy at play on the sands, and sat on the rocks reading. In the evening they bathed for the second time that day, and went to bed at night completely under the spell of Draeth.

The next morning it was arranged that they should stay yet one more night, and it ended in the young gentleman sleeping on the chair-bed in his sitting-room for a week. Then, however, the ladies were obliged to leave. By the end of the week they had planned to reach Padstowe after cycling all round the Cornish coast, and had arranged that luggage should be awaiting them there at the Salutation Inn where they had already engaged rooms.

The evening before they left the ladies went into Mrs. Tregennis's bedroom to hear Tommy say his prayers. He was kneeling in the cot, and by judicious pressure made the mattress rise and fall in such a way that his petitions were more broken than is usually considered quite reverent.

"Please God take care of Daddy, 'n bring the fishes, 'n Mammy, 'n keep me good, 'n——"

A sudden somersault choked the rest. "I've got a sweet, Miss!"

The opening of the right hand disclosed a hot, melted chocolate cream, whose pink inside now filled up the lines of the small, fat palm. After much licking brown and pink disappeared, but an uncomfortable stickiness was left behind. The Brown Lady brought a sponge and towel and washed the stickiness away.

"Tommy," said the Blue Lady, "when you waken in the morning a wooden horse called Dobbin will be downstairs under the kitchen table. That's his new stable."

"Who be it for?" asked Tommy all thought of sleep dispelled.

"Well, it *might* be for Jimmy Prynne."

"Mammy, Mammy," with even more than customary vigour, "is the Dobbin that's goin' to be under the kitchen table for Jimmy Prynne?" Then with a catch suspiciously like a sob, "Jimmy Prynne doesn't wipe his nose with a hankyher; he sniffs does Jimmy Prynne."

"Oh, my dear soul," replied Mammy, in the doorway, "I haven't got no Dobbin. 'Tis a grand thing for Jimmy Prynne if he's goin' to have a horse for to ride. He'll be like the quality will Jimmy Prynne."

"Mammy," brokenly, "do you think as sometimes Jimmy Prynne'll lend his wooden horse to me?"

"Tommy Tregennis," said the Blue Lady, throwing her arms round the dejected figure still kneeling on the bed, but no longer bobbing up and down. "Tommy Tregennis, if you go tightly to sleep, now at once, I shouldn't be at all surprised if that wooden horse turned out to be for you, and not for Jimmy Prynne at all."

At once Tommy lay down in bed and screwed up his eyes. Then, rubbing his forehead, "There ain't no sleep there," he said.

So the Blue Lady held one hot hand in hers, and sitting on the side of the cot sang many a nursery rhyme.

"Hush-a-bye, baby," was sleepily demanded a second time.

"Hush-a-bye, baby, thy cradle is green,  
Thy father's a nobleman, thy mother's a queen;  
Thy sister's a lady and wears a gold ring,  
And Johnnie's a horseman, and rides for the king."

"Was the horse called Dobbin?" Tommy asked, but before the answer came he was riding a kicking wooden steed in the wonderful land of dreams.

Later in the evening Tommy's Ladies bought Dobbin. Mrs. Tregennis said that no fisher-child in Draeth had ever before possessed such a toy. It was dapple-grey and very strong; it moved on wheels and was high enough from the ground for a boy of five to sit astride, slip his feet into the stirrups, and so prepare to set out on great adventures.

Tommy was downstairs in his night-shirt at five o'clock the next morning. He sat on Dobbin's back, kissed his carmine nostrils, poked his glassy eyes, and wished to waken up the Prynne household to show Jimmy Prynne his treasure and assert to him emphatically that Dobbin was his, Tommy's, and his alone.

From this course, however, his mother dissuaded him. She told him that as yet the horse did not belong to him; until it had been given to him, he was certainly not justified in calling it his own.

"Perhaps after all," Mrs. Tregennis demurred, "it may be for some other little boy in Draeth."

"No, Mammy, no; the ladies *said* it was to be for me if I slept tight. They said so, Mammy, they said it was mine."

To make quite sure of ownership, however, Tommy hurried up the two flights of stairs and with both clenched fists hammered on the bedroom door. "My ladies, my ladies; is the Dobbin for me?"

He returned to the kitchen triumphant, and convicted Mammy of lack of faith.

When breakfast was over Tommy led Dobbin proudly up and down the alley by the real leather reins. Three—then four—five—six—seven children followed the horse and his master.





**WHEN BREAKFAST WAS OVER, TOMMY LED DOBBIN PROUDLY UP AND DOWN THE ALLEY.**

Then Jimmy Prynne stepped forward: "Tell ee what, Tommy Tregennis, 'll give ee two cherries to ride him wanst down."

This bargain was concluded.

Ruby Dark parted with three treasured rusty pins for the privilege of herself leading Dobbin three steps, one pin for each step. Although she made her strides as long as possible her turn was soon over, and other contracts were entertained.

In half-an-hour's time the Tregennis household was richer by three rusty pins, one screw, one length of stamp-edging, one dead rose, a parrot's feather and a piece of string.

After lunch that day the ladies left. Tommy smiled until they had turned the corner, then a sudden despair seized him and he screamed with grief. Dobbin's placid, glassy stare irritated him so much that he hit him full in the face with his open palm. Afterwards in a fit of remorse he flung his arms around the wooden neck and sobbed bitterly into the flowing mane. Ten minutes later he and Dobbin slept together on the kitchen floor.

The house seemed strangely quiet to Mrs. Tregennis when the ladies had gone. No other visitors had become so much a part of the household.

A few days later the three gentlemen also left Draeth, and Mrs. Tregennis prepared her house for the winter months. All the ornaments from the sitting-rooms were wrapped up in paper and put away in a box under the bed. The curtains and blinds were washed and folded carefully to be in readiness for the spring; the Brussels carpet upstairs was well swept and overlaid with newspapers; the velvet mantel-border was turned up and brushed, and it, too, was swathed in a paper covering. The best knives, spoons and forks were folded separately in tissue paper and locked away in the cupboard underneath the stairs.

When all these preparations were complete Mrs. Tregennis realized that winter was indeed upon them.

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## CHAPTER V

**A**LTHOUGH Miss Lavinia's door was sorely in need of a coat of paint, no house in Draeth had a brighter knocker, and no door-step was whiter than hers. The twenty boys and girls who were Miss Lavinia's pupils had learned to respect the whiteness of this step, and on muddy days they jumped over it so that no footprint should mar its cleanliness. More than twenty children Miss Lavinia could not take. The back sitting-room was used as the schoolroom. There were tables and chairs for the children with the longest legs, while the very little ones sat on the two low window-seats.

Tommy loved going to school, and he was never late. At twenty minutes to nine each morning he left home, his face shining with soap and his hair neatly brushed. On his way he almost always called for Ruthie, who was now only his cousin, but who in the future was to be his wife. Hand in hand the two children ran

round the twists and corners of the narrow alleys, until they were in Main Street itself. At the top of Main Street, this side of the bridge, stood Miss Lavinia's house. At this time of day the shabby green door stood wide open, and in the narrow rather dark passage one saw the low wooden pegs on which the children hung hats and jackets as they entered.

When the new Guildhall clock struck nine Miss Lavinia walked into the schoolroom, and the twenty children, standing in their places, made a little bobbing curtsy and wished her "Good morning." Then when all the hands were clasped and all eyes tightly closed they said "Our Father" together, and after this sang a hymn led by Miss Lavinia's sweet though trembling voice.

Tommy enjoyed the hymn-singing very much. He had absolutely no idea of tune, but as he learned the words very quickly that did not matter, and his voice could always be heard above the rest.

His quite favourite hymn was one about Angels in Heaven, and with great energy he sang, "Bright songs they sing, sweet harps they hold," but (if Miss Lavinia had only known!) his interpretation was "sweethearts they hold." Of *harps* he was quite ignorant, but his Mammy often called him "sweetheart." He had a very vivid picture of a chorus of Angels all with golden hair, white robes and beautiful wings. They sang songs all day long, and each held by the hand a little boy. In his fancy all the boys were very much like Tommy Tregennis, as Tommy Tregennis appeared to himself in the looking-glass that hung by the kitchen sink.

His second favourite hymn was "Shall we gather at the river?" for Angels came in that, too. He wished the verses did not leave it quite so indefinite as to what it was that was gathered; after a little thought he decided that it must be grasses and forget-me-nots and dismissed the subject from his mind.

Once he did speak to Miss Lavinia about it. "It means they meet together, Tommy," she explained.

"Meet to gather?" asked Tommy.

"Yes," replied Miss Lavinia, and Tommy's difficulty remained.

Although Miss Lavinia had no time-table to refer to, all the children were kept busily occupied in one way or another from nine o'clock until twelve.

The first lesson was writing when for half-an-hour or so slate-pencils squeaked unremittingly. The older boys and girls copied from a book, but those who sat on the window-seats had a line set at the top of the slate, and this they wrote out eight times below. During the writing-lesson Miss Lavinia was able to run upstairs, make her bed and dust the rooms. On her return the writing was put on one side, and while some of the children did sums the younger ones read. Reading, of course, meant saying letters and putting together words of one syllable. Ruby Dark could go backwards from Z Y X to C B A without a pause!

The naughtiest girl in the school was Lizzie Wraggles. Lizzie sat on the window seat. She was only four and looked very shy, but Miss Lavinia said she was naughty and uncontrolled. It was always in the reading-lesson that difficulties arose for Lizzie would not read properly.

Tommy's Ladies had left Draeth on a Saturday, and it was on the Monday morning following that Lizzie was naughtier and more uncontrolled than she had ever been before. On the Friday she had learned, after saying it many times over, that S-O spelled *so*. This morning, in reading a column of letters and little words, she had pronounced T-O as *tow*.

"*Too*," corrected Miss Lavinia.

"S-O, *so*; T-O, *tow*," murmured Lizzie in a low, sing-song voice.

The squeaking of slate pencils ceased, and all the older children stopped doing sums to listen.

Miss Lavinia became agitated: "Say T-O, *tow*, Lizzie," she ordered sternly, and Lizzie said "T-O, *tow*."

Miss Lavinia flushed deeply: "I made a mistake," she explained. "T-O, *too*."

"*Tow*," whispered Lizzie.

Then Miss Lavinia stood up and slapped her! It was a real slap on her bare arm; a slap that was heard by every child in the room. The school held its breath.

Lizzie Wraggles looked straight into Miss Lavinia's eyes, dropped her slate, and "Tow" she said, in quite a loud voice.

Miss Lavinia picked up both Lizzie and the slate, and with a shake put them on a hassock in the corner. Miss Lavinia was thoroughly perturbed. "There you must sit," she said, "and write T-O fifty times before you go home to dinner."

The children had no proper play-time because there was no place in which they could really play. But at half-past ten, while Miss Lavinia did one or two odd jobs in the kitchen, they sat anywhere in the school-room, and those who had brought lunch with them ate it then. Miss Lavinia stayed away from the room longer than usual this morning. The encounter with Lizzie Wraggles had upset her altogether. Never before had she either slapped or shaken a child, and she could have cried with vexation.

When she returned to the school-room the chairs and tables were pushed on one side so that the middle of the floor was left clear for a game. Then they all joined hands in a ring and played "Luby Loo."

Here we dance luby loo,  
Here we dance luby light,  
Here we dance luby loo  
All on a Saturday night.  
All your right hands in,  
All your right hands out,  
Shake your right hands a little, a little,  
And turn yourselves about.

Twenty shrill childish trebles (no, nineteen, for Lizzie Wraggles still sat on the hassock in the corner) sang out the old tune and words; nineteen right legs were shaken, nineteen left legs too; then hands and heads wriggled and shook all through the six verses.

Every morning after the game came composition. Sometimes it was History composition, sometimes

Geography, sometimes Scripture; sometimes just anything Miss Lavinia read out of a book. The best composition time of all was when Miss Lavinia told a story, right out of her head.

The children only half understood Miss Lavinia's stories, but in spite of this they liked them better than any others, possibly because they felt that these stories belonged to them and to Miss Lavinia only; out of all the world no one else could know them, they were every bit their own.

It was to be Scripture composition this morning. When it was composition all the children listened to Miss Lavinia first of all, then the older boys and girls wrote about it from memory, while the little ones did something else.

After the games "Coppersition" was what Tommy liked best of all. Tommy had a very real love for Miss Lavinia. To most people she was just a little old maid who had great difficulty in making both ends meet, but Tommy admired her greatly. He liked to look at her all the time she was speaking; he admired the wave of her silvery hair and the shape of her delicate, white hands—so different from Mammy's hands. Still his Mammy had the most beautiful hands in all the world, and he would fight any boy his own size who said she hadn't. Thus he ruminated when the composition class began. Then he wondered if Miss Lavinia would agree to wait for him until he was grown up, so that he could marry her then if Ruthie would not greatly mind.

He was recalled to the things of everyday by Miss Lavinia's urging him to look at a picture in front of him. He was glad to do so, for it was a delightful picture, Tommy thought. One of the most attractive giants he had ever seen was crouching down behind a boulder of rock. Facing him, at some little distance, stood a young man who wore very few clothes and these of a most unusual pattern.

"This," said Miss Lavinia, pointing to the central figure of the picture, "this is David."

David Williams, sitting in the corner near the old Grandfather clock, smiled self-consciously as eighteen pairs of eyes turned to look at him. (Lizzie Wraggles still sat on a hassock in the corner with her back to the rest of the school.)

"David," continued Miss Lavinia, and now nineteen pairs of eyes were fixed solemnly on hers, "David was very brave. All the boys in this room want to grow up to be brave men and true."

Ten chests swelled visibly and the composition lesson continued: "David went out in the light of the Eastern morning to meet the giant who threatened all the land. And the sun's rays fell upon David as he went forth. He had no weapons wherewith to fight the giant, but he trusted in God who was his strength and his shield. On the way he passed a brook, rippling through the fresh, green valley, and stooping, he chose from the bed of the stream five large, smooth, polished stones. Why do you think David wanted these stones?"

"For to kill the giant," said Jimmy Prynne, and Tommy was annoyed that he had not thought of the answer.

"David," continued Miss Lavinia, "put a stone into his sling and hit the giant" (here Miss Lavinia lowered her voice and there was deep silence in the room) "right on the forehead between the eyes; and the giant fell back dead."

"Oh!" murmured the children, and David Williams, in the right-hand corner by the old Grandfather clock, looked as though reflected glory shone upon him.

In a dazed way Tommy rubbed his forehead and wondered how it would feel to have a stone just there. Then, remembering the distinction achieved by Jimmy Prynne, "We'm going to have beans for dinner," he declared.

Miss Lavinia was shocked. She had hoped the story was making a deep impression, and now, before she could point the moral, before she could show how good must always soar triumphant and evil must ever suffer defeat, Tommy Tregennis, one of her best little boys, had interrupted in a manner that surely proved his thoughts to be very far away.

While Miss Lavinia hesitated, Ruthie's high-pitched voice broke the silence. "'Tisn't that giant, Tommy," she said, "'twas Jack and that giant, but this is David."

Miss Lavinia's brow cleared. There was some connexion it seemed between beans and the Scripture story and after all Tommy Tregennis had listened although he had missed the point.

After giving the composition Miss Lavinia went away to put on the potatoes; then there was only time for a short Geography lesson with the little ones before the Guildhall clock struck twelve, and morning school was ended.

"Shoes is too tight," Tommy complained to Ruthie, as they stood together in the narrow passage, putting on their hats. "They pinches!"

Ruthie sighed. "You do be growin' brave an' fast, Tommy," she replied. "I can't keep up with ee nohow."

Tommy drew himself up proudly. "When my head do be so high as the knob on Mammy's cupboard, then I be a-goin' to wear long trousers," he asserted.

Ruthie looked at him still more admiringly, and, as her custom was, slipped her hand into his, and turned towards the door.

But Tommy hesitated. "I be gettin' a'most too big to hold hands," he demurred, and, as he spoke, he tried to pull his hand away.

"Don't ee be so silly," Ruthie admonished. "'Tisn't your hands as is growin'. Your shoes is pinchin' because your feet do be that big; your hands is all right, Tommy."

This argument was unanswerable and the children ran home hand in hand.

They were the last to leave. When the door closed behind them Miss Lavinia went over to Lizzie Wraggles in the corner to see the fifty "TO's" that were to be written before Lizzie went home. Alas! the only "TO" on the slate was the one Miss Lavinia herself had written there as a copy. Below was Lizzie's conception of a house.

As for Lizzie herself she had fallen asleep and one tear was still wet on her cheek. Miss Lavinia's heart softened. All the other children had gone. She put one arm round Lizzie and gently roused the sleeping child. "Lizzie," she whispered and kissed her, "little Lizzie, try to be a good girl, dear; and try to read your words

just as well as ever you can."

Lizzie smiled, a little roguish smile. "TO, *too*," she crooned, and Miss Lavinia kissed her again and sent her home.

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## CHAPTER VI

**E**VERY Saturday morning Tommy kept Granny Tregennis company, for it was then that Aunt Keziah Kate made her pastry. Granny Tregennis had lived for a great many years and was getting very tired; so until twelve o'clock each morning she stayed in bed. Her bed was a very high one with a long post at each corner, and curtains hung all around.

Tommy knew that Granny was always very anxious for his visit; for when he came into the bedroom she was thinking of him audibly. "Where *can* Tommy Tregennis be?" he would hear her say: "Surely 'tis time for him to come to his granny!"

Then Tommy would creak across the room on tip-toe, climb first of all on to a hassock, and from this to a chair; lifting up a corner of the curtain, "Bo," he would cry, and Granny always gave a little start. "Why, 'tis the very boy I was thinkin' of; 'tis Tommy Tregennis himself."

When these friendly greetings had passed between them, they settled down comfortably for the morning.

By the fireplace in Granny's room was a small cupboard, and in this cupboard Tommy's Saturday playtoys were kept. One of his favourite toys was a massive bedroom candlestick in shining brass.

Granny had many stories to tell a little boy about that candlestick. The very night that Tommy's father was brought to her, years and years ago, she had stuck a lighted dip in the brass candlestick and had put it in this very bedroom window, because Granfäather Tregennis was out on a rough, wild sea catching pilchards.

There was no light at the end of the Frying Pan then, for the pier was not yet built and the men in the boats looked to the cottage windows for guidance. When Granfäather came home, very cold and very wet, in the grey light of the dawn, the candle was just guttering out. In the candlestick were little runnings of grease, and in the big fourposter bed, along with Granny, was a son.

Tommy could picture Granfäather's great surprise when he came upstairs and found a new boy in the house. It was disconcerting to feel that new children might appear in this way at any moment. Whenever Tommy had been away from home for some hours, he was always just a little apprehensive lest another child should have come in his absence, knowing, as he did, how very suddenly his own father had been brought to Granny on the night of the storm.

Among the playtoys, too, were a pair of wee, patent-leather slippers. They were cracked now and stiff with age, and the tiny buckles that used to be so bright were quite yellow. These were the first leather shoes that Tommy's Daddy had ever worn. Tommy knew exactly how his Daddy had tried to walk in them holding on to the horse-hair sofa downstairs, and how he had sat down suddenly in the middle and sucked the patent-leather toes.

"And then my Daddy tried to get up again," Tommy would say, "but he was so very, very little that he rolled right over 'n hit his head on the sofy leg, 'n had brown paper on the big lump, 'n vinegar."

When Granny had duly corroborated this version of the accident, they set aside the worn old slippers and passed on to another toy.

At eleven o'clock quite punctually Aunt Keziah Kate brought up a glass of hot milk for Granny. This was the signal for Tommy to go downstairs and help with the pastry. Quickly he ran down the twists and turns of the quaint old-fashioned stairway, so that he might be the first to get to the kitchen and hide behind the roller-towel before Aunt Keziah Kate saw him.

Like the ostrich Tommy was perfectly contented in his hiding-place, utterly oblivious of the fact that the towel, hanging from the kitchen door, only covered the upper part of him; from his knees downwards he was exposed to the full view of the public.

The public, in the guise of Aunt Keziah Kate, walked briskly into the kitchen, "Now then, ma man," she was saying, "you shall have the rolling-pin and a bit o'—"

Then there was a start and an exclamation. "Why, my blessed fäather, and where *is* the boy? Surely 'n to goodness, I must have left 'e upstairs."

While Aunt Keziah Kate returned to Granny's room to look for the missing nephew, a wriggling Tommy, some inches of runnerin' in his mouth, gave rise to distracting undulations in the roller-towel.

Back once more in the kitchen his Aunt instituted a thorough search; behind the rocking-chair covered with the big woolwork antimacassar; under the horse-hair sofa round which Daddy had walked in the new patent-leather shoes; in the kitchen cupboard; even in the coal-box and other probable and improbable places.

There was one breathless moment when Aunt Keziah Kate rinsed her fingers under the tap, and actually came to the roller-towel to dry them. Even then she did not find the missing boy.

By this time she was overcome with grief and sitting down on the sofa, in an attitude of despair, gave way to tears; leastways she produced a large handkerchief of granfäather's from her overall pocket, covered her face with it, and rocked to and fro.

"How shall a tell his mother?" she wailed; "oh, ma lamb, ma blessed little lamb! His mother'll have to get

a new little boy as none of us knows, 'n poor little Tommy gone no one knows where."

But this was the breaking strain. The roller-towel heaved and pulled, and with clenched fists out rushed Tommy.

"Hush, hush, hush!" he screamed. "I'm here, Aunt Keziah Kate, I'm right here." Then in reply to her incredulous stare, "I was hidin'," he explained, "hidin' behind the runnerin'-towel," and he jerked his thumb in the direction of the kitchen door.

"Found," said his Aunt, gasping for breath, "found!" She clasped her hands tightly and closed her eyes, repeating, "Ma lamb is found."

Then with a sudden descent to the things of everyday, "Now then, Tommy Tregennis, here's the rollin' pin, 'n put your lame leg first and press forwards, 'n get your bit o' pastry made, or we'll be all behind with the cleanin' up when your granfäather comes home."

Tommy's jam turn-over took up more time in the making than all the rest of the pasties and tarts put together. First of all the paste had to be rolled very heavily and very often; rolled so heavily and so often in fact that it wore too thin in the middle. It was then pulled and scraped from the board to which it stuck, and was all pinched up by grubby fingers into a lump again. When it had been rubbed once more into the shape of a ball, the rolling-pin was again used. By the time the size, shape and thickness of the pastry satisfied Tommy's requirements, it was of a uniform grey colour relieved, here and there, by darker shades. Tommy then spread on the jam, doubled it over and pinched it well to keep the open sides together. Tough from much handling and hot from the oven the turn-over was eaten by Tommy himself at the end of dinner.

"Can't think," Granfäather Tregennis had said one Saturday, "can't think why you let the boy eat that muck, Keziah Kate!"

"Must have a peck o' dust in his lifetime, fäather."

"Yes, 'n so he must, but surely 'n to goodness he needn't have it all to wanst."

Tommy, entirely unmoved, ate on.

When dinner was over Tommy grew restless. He had not been home since breakfast; that was a very long time ago and in his absence much might have happened.

He slipped from his chair and thrust his hands into his trouser-pockets. "I'd best be goin' now, Granny," he said, and when the old woman put her arms round him and kissed him he wriggled away, and addressed his Granfäather, for another man would understand.

"Granfäather," he said, "ma Mammy'll be missin' me."

"To be sure she will, Thomas, to be sure she will."

Granfäather removed his pipe from his mouth and with unerring aim spat into the heart of the glowing coals; "you'd best be runnin' home now, ma man; your Mammy'll mebbe be missin' you."

After this there was no detaining Tommy. He snatched his cap and ran all the way home. The door was shut, and he hammered on it with his fists, and kicked with his toes in nervous dread.

Mammy came to the door singing; how happy she sounded. "Be you all alone, Mammy?" he demanded.

"'N who should be with me, ma lovely?"

"Daddy, or——"

"Your Daddy's up to the station helpin' Uncle Sam."

He ran into the kitchen. Everything seemed all right there, but what about upstairs in his little cot? "'N there's no other little boy here, is there?" he asked hesitatingly.

Mammy's arms were round him in an instant. "'N what other little boy should I be wantin', Tommy Tregennis?" she managed to say between his hugs. "Why, you're just the best little boy as ever I had!"

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## CHAPTER VII

**A**S Christmas drew near Tommy was full of expectancy. In the windows of the village shops pictures of Santa Claus were now displayed. Santa Claus was a tall old gentleman with flowing beard and long, white hair; he wore a bright red cloak, and on his back was a sack almost bursting with the pressure of the toys it held.

Like the other children of Draeth, Tommy flattened his turned-up nose against the shop windows and looked at the treasures within; looked until he could see no longer because of his breath upon the glass. A vigorous rubbing with his coat sleeve set matters right once more, and again his roving fancy pitched first on one then on another of the toys beyond his reach.

It was about a week before Christmas, and Mrs. Tregennis was preparing Tommy for his nightly wash in the zinc bath in front of the kitchen fire.

"Mammy," he said, thoughtfully surveying his toes when the home-knitted stockings had been pulled off inside out. "I be growin' so that they stockin's be rather small for I, same as my vestises."

"Your vestises, Tommy Tregennis, do be run up in the wash, but I see nothin' at all wrong with they stockin's; they'm good stockin's, 'n 'll do you my son for a month o' Sundays."

Tommy's diplomacy had failed. His lip trembled slightly. "Mammy, when Santy Claus do come down the bedroom chimbley 'n finds this tiddely stockin' hangin' on the rail, he'll not be able to slip in even 'n orange,

let 'lone a drum."

"That's so, ma handsome." Mrs. Tregennis knitted her brow in perplexed thought.

"I'll tell you what, ma lovely," she said after a few moments' pause. "We'll hang a big stocking of your Daddy's on the rail instead."

This suggestion brought no comfort to Tommy.

"Then he'll go 'n think as how 'tis Daddy's stockin'," he objected; "'n he'll be puttin' in pipes, 'n baccy, 'n things; 'n I don't want they—leastways, not yet," he added as an afterthought. "I wants a drum."

Mammy understood the difficulty. "Well," she said, after another and a longer pause, "we'll hang up your Daddy's stockin', but we'll write on a bit of paper '*Little Tommy Tregennis*', 'n pin it on the leg, 'n the old gentleman'll never know no better."

Tommy was pleased with this plan. Before going to sleep, however, he stipulated that Daddy's stocking should be well darned before it was hung up, so that no little gift could escape either by way of the heel or the toe.

Three days before Christmas the children were discussing Santa Claus at school.

Jonathan Hex, who was bigger than the rest, scoffed openly: "There warn't no Santy Claus," he said, "it was just fathers and mothers it was, as came in when you were asleep 'n rammed the things in the stockin' 'n crep' out again on tippety toes."

The other children were indignant at such unbelief, and Jonathan was obliged to retract, otherwise he would have been excluded from the circle gathered round the fire.

Jimmy Prynne had a grievance against the size of chimneys in Draeth. Jimmy was six, and easily remembered previous Christmases. Last year, for instance, he found only a tiny box of chocolates in his stocking, and his mother had read him a letter that came along with it; in fact he had the letter at home now:

"DEAR JIMMY PRYNNE (it ran)

"This is only a littel preasant because there ant no room in your chimeney if you want something biger you must have your chimeney widenered before next year.

"From

"SANTY CLAUS."

David Williams was also six. He was Jimmy Prynne's cousin and he, too, remembered last Christmas. He had a note from Santy in his stockin', too, and nothin' else. Santy had wrote as he couldn't possibly get down the chimberley because it was such a tight squeeze. He cried, he remembered, and he was cold because they had no fire. His Mammy had said she expected Santy would be thinner next time, and slip down right enough. However they'd gone into a new house now, and the hole was wider for he'd poked up to see.

Tommy went home that evening greatly disturbed. There were so many things he wanted, and he felt very doubtful indeed about their chimney for the bedroom grate was small.

That night when Mrs. Tregennis kissed him and said "Good-night and bless ee" to her surprise Tommy asked for the candle to be left "jus' a minute or two, Mammy!" The voice was so pleading that she gave way.

Tommy listened to her footstep on the stair and for once was quite glad when he heard her reach the bottom, pass into the kitchen and close the door.

Very softly he then crept out of bed and tiptoed across the room.

Round the fireplace was a high old-fashioned fender. Tommy stretched over this and tried to thrust one arm up the chimney. It seemed to be rather wide but his arm was short, and did not reach very far.

In the corner was Mammy's best umbrella. Seizing this he returned to the grate and poked the umbrella upwards. Almost at once it came in contact with something soft. Tommy was distinctly alarmed. Could it be some robber-man waiting there quietly, oh, so quietly, until he was asleep; waiting to slip down the chimney quite noiselessly and carry him silently off? He nearly screamed for Mammy in his fright.

After Christmas Tommy would be six, and at six a boy must be brave like David 'n the giant. So Tommy summoned all his courage and again thrust the umbrella upwards. The contact this time partially displaced the obstruction in the chimney, and a piece of sacking slipped into view. Then, indeed, Tommy's heart stood still. He realized at once what had happened. Santy's rounds this year were evidently unusually heavy, so he was secretly putting sacks of toys in chimneys beforehand, so that when Christmas Eve came his work would be partly done.

Tommy took hold of the free end of the sacking and pulled gently, but the bag was wedged too firmly to move. He then stepped inside the fender, and this time using both hands he really put his back into the work. The third tug released the sack which burst open as it fell and bits of screwed-up paper were littered in all directions.

"The packin' of the presents," Tommy had time to think before fate overtook him.

Sitting there inside the fender he was pelted with bits of mortar and loose stones, tickled with feathers and old starlings' nests, suffocated with falling soot, as the accumulation of years, set free by the fall of the stuffed sack, fell upon him with terrifying speed.

Then he lifted up his voice and wept, crying loudly for Mammy; a frightened little boy upon whose face soot mingled with tears as he sat there, utterly cowed, inside the high old-fashioned fender. At the cry Mrs. Tregennis rushed upstairs and burst into the room, prepared indeed for the worst, but not prepared for anything quite so bad as that which she actually found.

"'Tis just mad I be with ee, Tommy Tregennis," and she spoke through tight lips. "There's a horrid little sight you be and the room not fit for a Christian to sleep in, what call had you to go pokin' up chimneys, 'n where 'm I to put you now?"

Tommy's sobs were becoming more subdued. "Wanted to see how wide the chimberly was," he spluttered, "'n I found Santy's sack here for me."

"Santy's sack, indeed," said an angry Mammy; "I'll Santy's sack you my son if you go playin' they monkey tricks. That's a sack to keep my grate clean, so as bits shan't fall down, and it's stuck there for years before we came here to live; 'n you must go pryin' and meddlin', you shammock, you!" Mrs. Tregennis shook Tommy as she lifted him out of the grate and over the fender. "Here's a fine set to for your tired Mammy. Downstairs you go! Clear!"

A clean night-shirt was aired for Tommy while he had his second bath. He was then wrapped up in Daddy's winter coat and plumped into the rocking-chair in the corner by the fire.

It took Mrs. Tregennis a good half-hour to make the bedroom fit for use and when she came downstairs again Tommy was fast asleep. Tenderly she raised him to carry him back to bed. As her arms enfolded him a long, sobbing sigh escaped from quivering lips, while a tear rolled slowly down his cheek.

"My lamb," she murmured, "my own precious lamb! This Christmas is goin' to be a better time 'n last, 'n you'll have things in your stockin', ma handsome, drum an' all!" Having well tucked in the bed clothes Mrs. Tregennis took up the candle, and left her son to the healing of the night.



"MY LAMB," SHE MURMURED, "MY OWN PRECIOUS LAMB!"

## CHAPTER VIII

**T**HE three days before Christmas passed more slowly than any other days in Tommy's life. As usual the hands of his cuckoo clock remained stationary in spite of the steady movement of the pendulum; but to Tommy's unspeakable annoyance, although the chimney-piece clock seemed to tick louder than ever, he could scarcely see its hands move at all.

To make matters worse school had broken up and it was too wet and too cold for the children to play much out-of-doors. So all day long Tommy was in the kitchen trying to find something to do to fill up the time. When Ruthie was with him they quarrelled, and when she left him he was more miserable still.

Then Aunt Keziah Kate gave him some balls of coloured wool and Granny taught him to crochet. This was most engrossing for a time. He used a stubby forefinger as hook, pulling the loose loops as tight as possible, and slowly and laboriously made lengths of uneven chain. Later he taught Ruthie to make chains too, but was angry when he found that her chains were not only better done than his, the loops being much more even, but that she did quite six inches while he did only three.

At last, in spite of the slowly moving hands of the clock, it was Christmas Eve.

The whole day was one long excitement. At breakfast-time Tregennis, Mrs. Tregennis and Tommy were all in a state of high tension. The evening before, when Tommy was in bed and asleep, Tregennis had brought home a goose, which he handed with pride to his wife.

"Well," she exclaimed, "an' where did ee get that bird?"

"A drawin'," answered Tregennis, laconically. He was always a man of few words.

"A drawin'! My blessed fäather! an' how much did ee pay?"

"Only sixpence, Ellen, an' he weighs twelve pound."

"Sixpence!" breathlessly. "I don't know how ee dare take such risks. You might easily 'a' lost, and 'twould just 'a' been a good sixpenny-bit wasted."

"But I didn't lose, I won, an' here do be the bird; an' as plump a one as'll be eaten by any o' the best in Draeth."

"Well, well," said Mrs. Tregennis, and resumed her knitting, momentarily neglected; "an' what a Christmas dinner we shall have—as good as the gentry! Go round now to wanst, an' ask Granfäather, an' Granny an' Keziah Kate. We'll mebbe never have another goose."

After breakfast, therefore, on Christmas Eve the goose had to be plucked. Work for Tregennis said this was, with Tommy playin' round all the time, and all the feathers all a-blowin' no one knew where every time the kitchen door was opened.

Tommy stuck the biggest feathers in his hair, and was a wild red Indian; some of the smaller, fluffier ones he put by in his box of treasures; all the rest Mammy tried to save to help to make a cushion for the upstairs sitting-room.

When Mrs. Tregennis was in the middle of cleaning the goose she was interrupted by a loud knock.

"See who's there, Tommy," she said, "an' shut the kitchen door so as the feathers won't fly."

Tommy obeyed and opened the outer door a few inches only, with the instinctive caution of childhood, and peeped through the gap.

"Fer your Mammy, Tommy," said the station carman, indicating an enormous package at his feet.

In his excitement Tommy forgot all about being careful and flung open the kitchen door. A gust of wind seized the feathers and whirled them round the room. Mrs. Tregennis's anger was checked by the entrance of the carman, swaying with a square, solid-looking package done up in sacking. When he dumped it down on the kitchen floor more feather flew, but by this time Mrs. Tregennis was past thinking of flying feathers.

"'N what is this, Sam?" she demanded, "a joke?"

"'Tis a pretty heavy joke," said the carman, first straightening his shoulders, then with a large, red handkerchief wiping condensation drops from his moustache, "'n a joke as has cost some folks good money to send from London."

"Then there do be some mistake, Sam Trimble, for I know no one to London, an' this'll not be mine."

But the address on the label showed plainly that the package was indeed for Mrs. T. Tregennis, of Chapel Garth.

Even the goose was forgotten when Sam Trimble had closed the door behind him. Mrs. Tregennis washed her fingers so hurriedly under the tap that she left red streaks on the runnerin' towel when she dried her hands there.

"Have you had the scissors, Tommy? Find Mammy's scissors, quick, ma handsome."

After a search, they remembered at the same time that the scissors had been used before the goose could be cleaned, and they were found lying under the neck of the bird just where Mrs. Tregennis had put them before Sam Trimble knocked.

The sacking was sewn with stout cord and the scissors were blunt, therefore it was some little time before the opening made was wide enough for Mrs. Tregennis to pull out the padding of straw. Under the straw something hard revealed itself to the touch, but there were more stitches to be cut through before the contents could be withdrawn. Then Tommy held on as firmly as he could at one end of the sacking while Mammy tried to pull out whatever it was that was so carefully packed within. Something rolled to the floor as she pulled, and after a glance at it she snatched it up and furtively hid it underneath her apron.

"What's that, Mammy?" said Tommy, all alert.

"That," pointing disdainfully to the pile of straw, "'n do we pay for your schoolin', Tommy Tregennis, an' you not so much as to know as that's called straw!"

"But there was somethin' as fell, an' you—"

"You'm but a noosance an' in the way, Tommy. Run an' see if your Daddy's on the quay, and if he be tell him to come an' help clear up."

When Tommy had gone Mrs. Tregennis took from underneath her apron a brown paper parcel, on which was written: "From Tommy's Ladies, for his Christmas stocking." She put it among the potatoes and firewood in the dark kitchen cupboard, and had only just time to kneel down and pull out more straw when Tommy bounded into the kitchen and again made the feathers fly.

"Can't see Daddy nowheres, Mammy!"

"And much trouble you've taken to find he, my son. However, never mind, I've done it." With a final push and one last pull a simple but well-made fumed-oak book-case came into view.

Mrs. Tregennis lifted it from the ground. "Come on, Tommy," she said.

"Where be we a goin', Mammy?"

"Why, to show it, of course, to your Granfäather and Granny and Aunt Keziah Kate; an' Aunt Martha, an' Auntie Jessie an' Ruthie an' all."

The partly dressed goose was forgotten and left with its head dangling dejectedly over the edge of the kitchen table. Thus, half an hour later, Tregennis found it in the midst of a litter of feathers and blood and straw.

He had just finished clearing up when Mrs. Tregennis and Tommy returned, and excitedly called him into the sitting-room on the left-hand side of the door. In front of the book-case he stood in silence.

"'Tis from the ladies," Mrs. Tregennis said, in answer to his unspoken question.

"The ladies, not—"

"Yes, from Tommy's Ladies."

"Ellen," said Tregennis, passing a toil-worn hand over the smooth, polished wood, "'tis a'most like bein' in church; 'tis like they hymn-boards, an' pulpits an' such. 'Tis a'most like bein' in church."

"An' not a penny under fifteen shillin' Martha says it must have cost. An' to think as they just knocked at the door; no bikes nor nothin'; not so much as a paper parcel in their hands, well, well!" With a last look at the book-case Mrs. Tregennis returned to the kitchen and finished her work on the neglected goose.

That very afternoon the fumed-oak book-case was nailed up in the best sitting-room. Until now many



books belonging to Nelson's sevenpenny library, left behind by visitors, had been piled up on the top of the grandfather clock. These were all taken down, dusted and arranged in red and gold rows along the two lower shelves, while the top shelf Mrs. Tregennis reserved for some of her choicest ornaments.

"Tom," she said, when this was done, "to-morrow after dinner we'll have a fire, and sit here. 'Tis unusual, I'll admit, but, after all, 'tis Christmas time, and 'tis no good *bein'* small an' *lookin'* small both; and here we'll sit; so there!"

As soon as tea was over Tommy wished to go to bed. He was anxious to intercept Santa Claus in his descent of the chimney, and, if possible, exercise a certain selective power in the matter of toys. In his inmost heart he was exceedingly glad that he had dislodged the sack of paper. Had it still been in the chimney it would have been quite impossible for Santy to slip through with his burden, and what would have been the good of Daddy's labelled stocking then?

As soon as Tommy was in bed Mrs. Tregennis withdrew from the potatoes the parcel she had hidden there early in the day. It contained a brown jersey suit and a good big box of chocolates of many kinds.

When Tommy wakened on the morning of Christmas Day and sleepily demanded that the candle should be lit, Daddy's stocking, with the label pinned on the leg, held nuts and two oranges and two apples, while a trumpet stuck out at the top. On the floor below lay a drum, and a brown jersey suit and a box of chocolates. These Santy had clearly meant for some other boy, but had dropped them by mistake in his haste to be gone.

Tommy was naturally delighted at receiving more than his share, but he could not help being afraid that Santy might discover his loss and soon return. By way of preventing this he suggested that the stuffed sack should at once be replaced in the chimney and kept there for the whole of the day.

The lids with their long lashes drooped heavily over the sleepy blue eyes, and Mammy lifted Tommy presents and all, into the big bed. Soon he was breathing regularly through parted lips, and did not waken until Daddy was ready to carry him pick-a-back down the stairs, to be washed and dressed in front of the kitchen fire.

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## CHAPTER IX

**T**OMMY TREGENNIS,  
Chapel Garth,  
East Draeth.

This was the address on a cheap, white envelope that the postman brought on Boxing Day and pushed through the gap below the door. Mrs. Tregennis picked up the letter and turned it over more than once before passing it on to her husband.

"Well, it beats me, Ellen," said he; "'tis a female hand for certain. Who can be makin' up to our Tommy?"

Mrs. Tregennis went to the door and espied Jimmy Prynne. "Seen our Tommy?" she asked him.

Jimmy jerked his thumb over his right shoulder, and Mrs. Tregennis walked in the direction indicated.

"Tommy," she called.

But Tommy, conscious of grimy hands and sticky mouth, thought this was a summons to wash, and affected not to hear. Something on the horizon claimed his attention and he gazed fixedly out to sea.

Mrs. Tregennis, therefore, waved the white envelope in vain. "Tommy, postman's brought a letter for ee, for your very own."

This was arrestive. Very few letters came to the house when there were no visitors, and never before had there been one for Tommy. Often, certainly, he had picked up old envelopes, and by licking the torn flaps had made them stick down for a time so that he could pretend that they were letters that had come for him. But now there was a real letter all for his very own, and it was held in Mammy's hand only a few yards off. He ran hastily, tripped over a stone, picked himself up and ran on again. Then he actually held his own real letter in his grimy hand.

He could read the two capital T's without any difficulty, and of course he knew that they stood for his name. This knowledge gave him much satisfaction; it was a fine thing to be educated. He was all for opening the envelope then and there, but, persuaded by Mammy, they returned to the house together, and in Daddy's presence the flap was torn.

Inside the envelope was a gilt-edged card. At the top left-hand corner of this a gaily-dressed boy with powdered hair was bowing to a Watteau shepherdess who curtsied before him. The picture absorbed them until Mammy discovered that there was interest, too, in the old-fashioned, pointed handwriting below:

"Miss Lavinia invites Tommy Tregennis to a party on New Year's Day, from four o'clock until seven."

There was no R.S.V.P. in the bottom, right-hand corner. The invited guests would not have known what it meant; but when New Year's Day came of course all who were bidden to the party would go.

"My dear life," ejaculated Mammy. "I was never at a Christmas party in all my born days. You'm a lucky boy, Tommy Tregennis!"

Tommy nodded.

After dinner on New Year's Day there was no rest for Mrs. Tregennis until Tommy was dressed in the new brown jersey suit. He was ready before half-past two and wished to set off for the party at once. When Mammy, however, pictured to him how very disappointed Granny and Aunt Keziah Kate would be if he did not

go and show himself in his new clothes, he decided to run in to see them first. He was gratified when they unstintingly praised his personal appearance, although it was only what he had expected.

With one little thing or another it was half-past three before Tommy was able to leave for Miss Lavinia's house. On such an occasion as this no-one would have thought of referring to it as school. Following his usual custom Tommy called for his cousin. He was much taken aback when Auntie Jessie told him that Ruthie was upstairs and was not quite ready, but would be brought to the party later.

Ruthie's absence took some of the brightness out of the afternoon, and as he drew nearer and nearer to Miss Lavinia's house Tommy became unaccountably shy. To add to his embarrassment when he reached the familiar door he found it shut, instead of standing invitingly open as on ordinary school days. At the sight of the closed door the last particle of courage left him, and he wished to run home fast and have tea quietly with Mammy. Yet something urged him to be brave, and he screwed up his hand tight, ready to hammer on the door. It was just at this point that a gentleman walking down the street, seeing a small boy and a high knocker, crossed over to Tommy and gave a loud rat-tat to help him. Smiling he passed on, leaving Tommy more deeply embarrassed than before.

When Miss Lavinia, wearing her best black silk dress and a gold locket, herself answered the knock Tommy stood still, not quite knowing what to do next. When she stooped and kissed him he flushed deeply, then, with a broad smile of anticipation, stood flat against the wall in the narrow passage while she closed the door.

Miss Lavinia, who was really just as shy and nervous as her guests, led the way into the schoolroom, and here the sense of unfamiliarity deepened. The desks and maps had gone and the room was hung with evergreens. Round the fire stood children whom Tommy saw every single day and never before had he been at a loss in entering upon a conversation with any one of them. This afternoon, however, he found nothing to say, and they all looked at one-another in silence.

Miss Lavinia felt that the party was a failure and grew more and more nervous as the silent moments were ticked out by the school-room clock. She went away presently to speak to Mrs. Harris about the tea. Mrs. Harris was the woman who came in for an hour now and again to help with the rough work, and she had volunteered to be there this evening just to see Miss Lavinia through.

A very genteel knock at the door put an end to Miss Lavinia's superfluous directions. There was hushed expectancy among the groups of children gathered round the fire when she ushered into the schoolroom Ruthie's mother leading Ruthie by the hand.

Ruthie was the only child who had been brought.

In the very middle of the room she stood while her mother freed her from the folds of a big Paisley shawl. Then she was revealed to nineteen pairs of admiring eyes—a little girl in a white silk frock; the only white silk frock in the room.

"It is to save her Sunday dress," Ruthie's mother explained to Miss Lavinia. "You see this will wash."

She then lifted her daughter on to a table at the far end of the room, and with a whispered injunction that she must on no account mess up her clothes she left.

The spell that until now had held the children was broken. Half envious, half admiring they gathered round the table and looked at Ruthie in a real party frock. Her hair had been in so many plaits for so many hours that it stood out crisply all round her head. But the greatest wonder of all was her gloves. Ruthie was actually wearing gloves! White cotton gloves they were, held up at the top by a band of black elastic; a band so tight that it had already made a groove in each little arm between the elbow and the wrist.

Tommy was the only one brave enough to speak about them. "You've forgotten to take off your gloves, Ruthie."

"Mammy said to keep 'em on."

"Whafor?"

"I don't know."

"Take 'em off," said Tommy, and Ruthie, as usual, obeyed.

The gloves and elastic bands were laid on the table, and from there they fell to the floor. A kick from Tommy sent them into a corner where Mrs. Harris found them the next morning when she came to tidy up.

The summons to tea broke up the group. Ten very shy little girls and ten boys trying hard to look at ease, walked along the narrow passage to Miss Lavinia's kitchen. Here table and chairs had been replaced by trestle-boards and forms.

It was a tight squeeze but a place was found for all the guests who, in deep embarrassment, looked at the well-piled plates in front of them.

Miss Lavinia and Mrs. Harris walked round filling tea cups and passing plates.

In the deep silence Miss Lavinia quite dreaded the sound of her own voice. She grew more and more nervous. She had given so much thought to this, her first (and last!) little party. For weeks past she had exercised numerous economies to make the giving of it possible, and now that it was actually happening it was all a failure. The children were not happy and there were still three hours to drag through. Her mouth was so dry that she had to clear her throat and moisten her lips before she could ask Ruby Dark to have more tea; and her words came so jerkily that Ruby was surprised almost to the point of tears.

Then Mrs. Harris came to the rescue. "Where be they crackers, Miss Lavinia?" she demanded, and Miss Lavinia, opening the cupboard door, brought out two gay boxes with twelve beautiful crackers lying closely and shingly side by side.

First each girl was given one and pulled it with the boy sitting near her, and they all screwed up their eyes and there were little cries of fright when the pop came. By the time the boys were given their crackers all the children were out of their places, jumping up and down with excitement, proudly wearing paper bonnets with frills, and three-cornered caps, and paper aprons whose strings would never meet round any waist.

Miss Lavinia's nervousness suddenly passed. "Shoo!" she said as though they were so many chickens.

"Run back to the school-room."

She clapped her hands and they surged along the passage laughing, jumping, poking one another; a boisterous band of happy children for whom tea and the crackers had broken the ice.

First of all they would play "Hunt the Slipper," and therefore they must all sit in a ring.

"Mammy said not to sit on the floor," whispered Ruthie to Tommy.

"Sit down," said Tommy scornfully. Ruthie sat, and the game began.

The slipper went round and round and round. It was thrown across, and up and back again, and Jimmy Prynne, outside the circle, grabbed and missed and snatched again. There was much confusion, and no one quite knew what anyone else was doing, or what they themselves were meant to do, but it was a grand game, and in the merry laughter no-one joined more heartily than Miss Lavinia herself.

Next came "Nuts and May," and "Blind Man's Buff." The blind man always guessed the wrong number of fingers held up, and yet managed to see just quite a little either above or below the handkerchief that smelled so sweetly of lavender and had belonged to Miss Lavinia's father years and years ago.

After this they were all so hot that they played "Postman's Knock" for coolness. Jimmy Prynne went out first. He rapped sharply on the closed door and Miss Lavinia opened it just a small crack and peered out into the passage where Jimmy stood. Then followed the old-time dialogue, dear to so many generations of children.

"Who's there?" said Miss Lavinia. Memories laid away in lavender these many years were awakened by the foolish old game.

"Postman," replied a gruff, stern voice.

The children sitting in a row, waiting—waiting, laughed their appreciation of Jimmy's dramatic power.

Then the dialogue continued. "What with?"

"A letter."

"How many stamps?" The air was tense.

"Fifteen stamps."

Then the most important question of all. "Who for?"

There was a pause on the part of the postman.

"Jimmy, Jimmy Prynne, choose me, Jimmy," and Ruby Dark stood up in her excitement.

Jimmy hesitated.

Miss Lavinia, the doorkeeper, bent down, and in a very gentle whisper, said: "Choose Ruby, Jimmy." And Ruby, shining eyes and chin uplifted passed out into the dim light of the narrow passage, and there fifteen kisses, each one carefully counted by the bearer of the letter, were solemnly exchanged.

Every one had a letter. Miss Lavinia saw that nobody was forgotten. She was childishly glad when Tommy chose her and the letter bore one hundred stamps; although, as she explained when they were together in the passage, there really was not time for all the hundred then, they must be content with two and the rest could be delivered some other day.

After this Mr. and Mrs. Brown, and the little dog, and the cushions, and the whip, and the reins and all the other parts of the Old Family Coach grew dizzier and dizzier with the restless whirling and turning resulting from the many adventures and accidents that befell the coach on its perilous summer morning's journey.

Christmas parties come all too quickly to an end. It was nearly time to go home, but first of all would Miss Lavinia tell them a story? So the lamp was turned out, and in the firelight Miss Lavinia began.

"Once upon a time" (every child looked straight into Miss Lavinia's eyes). "Once upon a time, in the heart of a deep, green wood, a very beautiful princess lived all alone. She had no father and no mother, but all the creatures that flew, or crawled, or ran were her friends.

"It was always summer in the wood. So the princess wore beautiful garments made of silken gossamer, and the spiders wove a new robe for her every morning, just when the sun was up. When the new gossamer robe was ready the birds flew to the boughs of the beech tree under which the princess slept, and sang sweet songs until the princess sat up and rubbed her eyes, and said: 'Why, it is day!'

"Then the birds flew away to look after their own families, and the squirrels brought nuts and cracked them, and laid them at the feet of the beautiful princess.

"She was never hungry, this beautiful princess, for such wonderful fruits grew in the wood. She was never cold, for the sun shone all day long. When night came, and the moon and the stars took the place of the sun, she lay down under the beech tree that had stood there for hundreds of years, and covered herself with bracken, and slept.

"She was perfectly happy, was the princess, until one night she had a dream. It was the very first dream that she had ever had, and she dreamed that she was alone. In the morning she sat up and rubbed her eyes just at the dawn, long before the birds came. She looked down through the long shadows of the trees. She was afraid, for 'I am alone,' she said. It seemed a dreadful thing to be a beautiful princess all alone in the heart of a deep, green wood."

A glowing coal fell from the fire. Miss Lavinia paused for a moment, and for the first time the children stirred.

"When I'm grown up," said Ruthie, "I shall get married."

"You must wait until some one asks you, Ruthie," Miss Lavinia gently reproved her.

"Didn't no-one never ask you, Miss Lavinia?" said Tommy, pushing a hot, moist hand into hers. "'N so couldn't you never be married?"

"What happened to the Princess in the wood?" asked Jimmy Prynne impatiently.

"Well, a butterfly that had also wakened very early flew round and round the Princess, and then away from her, towards the shadows of the trees. The Princess stood up and followed, one hand stretched out as if

to touch the coloured wings. The butterfly led her quite to the edge of the wood. There, beyond the bracken that she gathered for her bed under the beech tree, stood the most wonderful Prince in the whole, wide world.

"And the Princess knew that she was no longer alone.

"Come!" she said to the Prince.

"There is magic," he replied, "and I cannot cross the bracken unless you lead me by the hand."

"So the Princess stepped through the high fern-fronds, and when she held the hand of the Prince he kissed her. At his kiss a wind arose and the branches of the trees waved to and fro. The birds twittered uneasily, and there was a sound like thunder and falling rain. Then, as hurrying shadows, the trees vanished. The Prince and the Princess could no longer see the birds, but they heard the fluttering of their wings overhead.

"There was a sudden lightning flash that made the Prince and Princess close their eyes.

"When they opened them again they were no longer in the wood, but in a room with a cheerful fire and a lighted lamp. The Princess had lost her gossamer robe; she wore a blue serge frock and a white apron. The Prince had on a blue jersey with a name on the front. They stood in the little room hand in hand.

"I am no longer alone," said the Princess, and smiled.

"Let us unlock the door," said the Prince, "then perhaps a little child will come in."

"So they drew back the bolt and waited!"

Tommy wriggled his hot hand from the clasp of Miss Lavinia's thin fingers. "My Mammy'll be missin' me," he said, and struggled to his feet. Then the clock struck seven.

Five minutes later twenty little people, in coats and mufflers, kissed Miss Lavinia and ran out laughing into the winter night.

Miss Lavinia closed the door behind them and returned to the firelight alone.

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## CHAPTER X

**O**F course Tommy was much too excited to sleep. When a girl called Annabel is coming to live in your house for ever and ever it naturally absorbs all your thoughts.

Annabel's father was a naval officer who was sailing away from Plymouth for two years, and Annabel and Annabel's mother were to live in Tommy's house until he came home again.

All Tommy's particular friends, with the single exception of Ruthie, were looking forward to the coming of Annabel, but Tommy had made it quite clear to them that only now and again would she be able to give them much attention, as most of the time she would be helping him to carry out the most wonderful of wonderful games.

A late train this very February night was to bring Annabel and her mother to Draeth. Tommy reduced the bed clothes to indescribable confusion while he waited for their coming.

"Mammy, has Annabel come yet? Mammy, what's Annabel like?"

Mrs. Tregennis came upstairs and for the twentieth time that day described the little girl.

She had seen neither Annabel nor Annabel's mother. It was with the naval officer himself that she had made all arrangements, and as he had crisp, curly hair, and very blue eyes she decided that his little daughter possessed these qualities too. Tommy, therefore, pictured Annabel with golden curls, rosy cheeks, blue eyes and a merry smile.

"N will she play with me, Mammy?"

"If you'm a brave good boy, she will. But no sliding down Skiddery Rock, mind."

"N shall I show her the Smuggler's Cave, 'n let her ride on Dobbin? Oh, Mammy, I *wish* as Annabel would come. You'll bring her straight in to see me, Mammy, won't you, before her goes to bed?"

Mrs. Tregennis promised. "But you'll have to be very good, ma handsome," she warned him, "or your Mammy'll be properly ashamed of ee 'longside Annabel."

For the first time Tommy felt the improvement of his moral character to be a real need.

Mrs. Tregennis went downstairs to make final preparation for supper, while Tommy left to himself passed into the realms of play-acting. The *dramatis personæ* were Tommy Tregennis, enacted by himself, and blue-eyed, curly-haired Annabel, represented for the moment by the pillow. There were others, too, scattered dimly in the shadows of the room.

In the first act Tommy sat up in bed, clutched the pillow tightly, and "I *love* you," he said.

Then, in reply to an interruption from the shadows: "No, her *don't* love ee, Jimmy Prynne!"

The setting of the second act was slightly different, as, by this time, the sheets and blankets were lying in a disorderly heap upon the floor. Tommy was kneeling in the middle of the cot digging a wonderful castle in the sand, while the pillow (that is, Annabel), looked on with admiring wonder. Those others, in the shadows, tried hard to make fine castles too, but Annabel gave them never a look.

Before the curtain rose on the third act the real Annabel, accompanied by her mother, entered the house. Ungraciously Tommy thumped the pillow and flung it aside.

In vain he listened for ascending footsteps. Why didn't Mammy at once tell Annabel that he was waiting

for her, he wondered. At last, after what seemed to him hours and hours, he heard them come upstairs.

There was a stumble, and a strange voice said: "Be careful, darling," then they came on again.

Oddly the footsteps did not stop at his door, and a moment later he knew by the sounds overhead that Annabel and her mother were in their own bedroom.

"Mammy!" he called.

At once she stood by his bed and, stooping, kissed him, with some new quality in her kiss.

"Wants to see Annabel, Mammy," he said plaintively, rubbing tired eyes. "Bring her to see me, Mammy."

Mrs. Tregennis hesitated, then stood in the doorway and spoke to the visitors as they came downstairs. "My little Tommy's in bed, ma'am, and can't go to sleep, he's so excited about seein' Annabel."

Mrs. Tregennis held out her hand to draw the child into the room.

"Oh," interposed Annabel's mother, scarcely pausing on the stairs, "*Miss* Annabel will speak to your boy in the morning, it is too late to-night."

"I wants to see her now, Mammy. I wants to see her to wanst," wailed Tommy, losing his shyness when confronted with the dread possibility of having to wait all through the hours until morning. "I wants to see her *now*, Mammy," and his voice rose higher.

The naval officer's wife held her daughter's hand and tightened her lips. "He seems to be an undisciplined child," she said, and went down to the sitting-room where supper was spread.

While Tommy sobbed in his pillow Mrs. Tregennis spoke out her mind to her husband. "A blessin' she may be, I'm not for sayin' that she isn't when I think of good money for two whole years. But she be a blessin' in a thick disguise, Tom, so there 'tis, an' can't be no tizzer. *Miss* Annabel! *Miss*, mind you, Thomas Tregennis. I reckon she be just like her mother though she be but a maid of five years old. Well, I be main sorry for 'e. 'Tis proper glad he'll be to be away these two years, I'm thinkin'. Real glad he be, I guess."

When Tommy returned from school the following morning a sallow, lank-haired girl stood in the doorway of the downstairs sitting-room.

"Come here, boy," she demanded imperiously.

Tommy looked at the unattractive stranger a full minute without speaking; then—"Go out of my house," he said.

Two mothers rushed hurriedly forward.

"Tommy, Tommy," cried Mrs. Tregennis, "that do be *Miss* Annabel."

"What a *rude* boy!" said the naval officer's wife.

Tommy took no notice of her. "'Tisn't Annabel," he said, shaking off his mother's restraining hand. "Annabel has curls, an' is pretty, an' smiles. That do be 'n ugly girl, that be."

Annabel ran forward and smacked him. "I hate you, boy," she cried.

Tommy was quite ready to fight, but his mother's grip prevented him; all he could do was to make a hideous grimace as he was pushed ignominiously into the kitchen where the door was shut upon him.

Later in the morning the naval officer's wife summoned Mrs. Tregennis to her sitting-room (the room on the ground floor on the left-hand side of the door), and expressed her wishes and views. "I must live quite economically," she explained. "I do not wish to spend much money on food. I should like you to do all the shopping, but there must be no extravagance and no waste. We shall eat very little meat, but plenty of vegetables. I do not like to think of cows and sheep, animals that lend charm and poetry to country life, being sacrificed to the material needs of my babe and myself. Vegetarian dishes form the only Christian menu. To-day we will have haricot beans made up into some little delicacy, and for the second course a small rice pudding. Please take a half-pennyworth of milk for me each day, and skim off the cream that rises to the top for my afternoon tea."

"Oh, my blessed fäather; I've never met her like," confided Mrs. Tregennis later to Aunt Keziah Kate who had just dropped in for a bit of newsin'. "Two years of she'll about finish me, I reckon. Cream on the top of a ha'porth of milk; my dear soul!"

Four weeks of the downstairs visitors had made Mrs. Tregennis quite irritable and short-tempered, and when, towards the end of March, the postman brought an unstamped letter she quite crossly refused to take it in. It came by the afternoon delivery, and Tregennis went to the door as his wife was upstairs.

"Ellen," he called, "here's a letter for ee, an' tuppence to pay."

"An' what'll I be payin' tuppence for?"

"It can't be left without; there's no stamp on 'e."

"Then it must be taken back. I don't want 'e." To emphasize her words Mrs. Tregennis retreated from the head of the stairs and closed her bedroom door.

Tregennis held the letter delicately between finger and thumb and looked perplexedly at the postman, who tilted his official cap and scratched his head.

At this moment the Naval Officer's wife came out of her room. "Are there any communications for me?" she asked.

"No 'm, nothing at all," and Tregennis held up the unstamped letter to the light, and tried in vain to penetrate the thickness of the envelope.

"Ah, I see there is two-pence to pay," said Annabel's mother, who still stood in the doorway. "Perhaps you have not the money; pray use this." She thrust forward two pennies as she spoke.

Tregennis was a man by no means given to prejudices, but for this woman he had conceived a violent dislike. "In no way thank ee, ma'am. I have plenty of money here," and he slowly and carefully extracted from the depth of his trouser pocket one penny and one halfpenny. Shamefacedly he fumbled for a second halfpenny which could not be found. First in one pocket, then in the other he felt, until the postman showed some signs of impatience. The Naval Officer's wife looked supercilious and returned to her room.

Tregennis, hot and uncomfortable and feeling like a thief, went to the kitchen cupboard. From the right

hand corner of the second shelf he took a yellow china pig with a longways slit in its back. This rattled as he moved it, for it was Tommy's moneybox. The only way in which the capital invested in the pig could be recovered was to turn the animal upside down and shake it in rapid jerks. Not infrequently it happened that the coins lodged right across the slit instead of slipping through. So it was to-day. At last one penny fell on the table and rolled to the floor. Stooping, Tregennis secured the penny and handing it to the now openly impatient postman received in exchange his own halfpenny and the unstamped letter addressed to his wife.

He put the letter in a prominent place on the chimney-piece, propping it up against one of the china dogs. Here Mrs. Tregennis found it a little later. "Why, my blessed fâather," she exclaimed, when it caught her eye, "we might be made of money. We might be the quality themselves the way you do go flingin' away tuppences right and left. Whatever made ee give tuppence for that?"

Tregennis jerked his thumb over his shoulder. "*She* wanted to pay!"

"Well, that was proper sensible of ee, too, Tom," admitted his wife as she took down the unstamped letter from the chimney-piece, turned it over, and pushed her thumb under the flap.

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## CHAPTER XI

**I**T was the Thursday before Good Friday, and in the Tregennis household there was great excitement and joyous expectancy. Mrs. Tregennis had sung softly to herself all the while she was dressing, greatly to the annoyance of the Naval Officer's wife, who was invariably irritated when people hummed. She was irritated, too, by Mrs. Tregennis's happy manner when she carried in the downstairs sitting-room breakfast; and again when breakfast was over and was being cleared away.

Then, however, curiosity got the better of hurt dignity. "What time do the ladies come?" she asked.

"At ten minutes after six, ma'am."

"Ah, then perhaps I had better defer my call until to-morrow. They will have many little matters to occupy them this evening."

"How do you mean 'call,' Ma'am?" asked Mrs. Tregennis anxiously, feeling that there was probably trouble ahead.

"I mean that I shall, of course, visit them at once," replied Annabel's mother in her most affected manner. "If I approve of them, and find that they belong to my own social grade, I shall most certainly take them up and show them every civility."

"I don't think the young ladies will want to trouble about visitors and such," retorted Mrs. Tregennis hotly. "They be all for bein' out and sittin' on the rocks, be our ladies, and they've got each other, an' they don't want nothin' more. And they'm just of the very best, ma'am, our ladies; truly lovely people they be."

"They did not scruple to send you an unstamped letter, these people, who are of the very best; but perhaps you think the stamp rubbed off in the post?"

"No'm, I *don't* think that, there was never no stamp on at all, there was no gummy corner, nor nothin'. 'Tis lucky that my husband had more sense than me an' took it in. The ladies gave it to some one to post, I guess, with a penny for a stamp, and the stamp was never put on. Save a penny like that! Them!" Mrs. Tregennis hurried from the room with her heavily loaded tray.

To Mrs. Tregennis the hours of that Thursday passed very slowly. The rooms for the ladies had been cleaned and prepared the day before, but more than once she went into the upstairs sitting-room, and tried to improve the hang of the curtains and the arrangement of the flowers that looked so many more than they really were because of their reflection in the overmantel glass. Once she ran hurriedly upstairs and again inspected her drawer of bedroom towels to make quite sure that she had put out the biggest and the best. Once, too, she walked into the ladies' bedroom and rather anxiously inspected the cake of pink soap that fitted so neatly into the perforated tray of the soap-dish, and wondered if it was just exactly what they would really like the best of all. In the middle of the morning two trunks arrived as luggage in advance. When these had been carried upstairs and placed at the foot of the bed the carman's foot-marks were removed with a duster, and nothing further remained to be done.

When Tommy burst in from school soon after four o'clock, his first breathless words were, "Have my ladies come yet, Mammy?" and so restless and excited was he that he could scarcely be induced to have tea.

When he was released from the table he ran out into the alley, and, refusing all invitations to dig on the sands, he played round his own doorway so that he might catch the first glimpse of his ladies when they actually did arrive. Just before half-past six, however, when he peeped round the corner and saw them coming, he was seized with shyness and ran hastily into the kitchen, and hid in the cupboard among the coals.

Before they could shake hands Mrs. Tregennis must give hers a last wipe on the oven cloth, while Tregennis rubbed both of his slowly up and down the legs of his trousers. Then there was much talking, but as they all talked together no one heard distinctly anything that anyone else said.

When finally one voice arose above the rest it belonged to the Blue Lady. "Oh, how deliciously those chops are sizzling; we're just as hungry as hunters." Then, "Where's Tommy?" she asked.

Mrs. Tregennis looked around puzzled, then put her head out of the window. "He was here but a minute since, excited as could be."

Then she bethought herself of the cupboard and opened the door revealing her handsome among the coals. In his eagerness to hide he had fallen, and hands and face were black with coal-dust.

"Come forth, Tommy," he was commanded, and, grinning shyly, he obeyed.

"Now, stand perfectly still," and, stooping, the Blue Lady selected a cleanish spot on his face and there she kissed him.

Tommy, completely forgetting his orders, flung his arms around her neck, leaving impressions in coal-dust on her linen collar and on her face.

"It isn't of the least consequence," she assured Mrs. Tregennis. "They'll both wash."

As they walked upstairs to their own sitting-room the Blue Lady slipped her hand into the Brown Lady's saying, "Oh, Dorothea, isn't it good to be here? Just good, good, good!"

Before they had quite finished tea there was a muffled sound on the door and some one walked into the room.

"We've had a beautiful tea, Mrs. Tregennis. We've each eaten a huge chop, but, as usual, I didn't get my fair share of cream." Then the Blue Lady stopped abruptly for she read in her friend's face that something was wrong. Turning she saw that a stranger stood in the room.

"I beg your pardon," she said, rising, with a touch of hauteur in her voice, "I thought it was Mrs. Tregennis who came in when the door opened." Then she waited.

The stranger responded with what was meant to be a winning smile. "My little girl and I are in the downstairs sitting-room," she began to explain, "and I came in now——"

"Ah, I understand," interrupted the Blue Lady, more warmth in her tone. "You have moved down there for us, and came in here now absentmindedly?"

"Not at all," exclaimed the Naval Officer's wife, as she sat down unasked. "I came to welcome you to Draeth."

Meeting with no answer she continued. "There is no society at all here, no intellectual companionship, nothing but the commonplace life of an insignificant fishing-town. Lest you should be dull, Annabel, my babe, and I will place all our spare hours at your disposal."

"I am sure you mean very kindly." The Brown Lady, who still dabbed at jam and cream with her knife, grew hot when she heard the calm even tones proceeding. "But we have come down here purposely to avoid the rush of the S——; that is, to be quiet and alone. I am sure you will understand when I say that we wish for no companionship but that of each other, during the short time we are here."

As the Blue Lady spoke she opened the door, and with a slight inclination bowed the visitor from the room.

"Oh, Margaret!" The Blue Lady flicked crumbs across the table with unerring aim.

"No, Margaret, it's no good being flippant and playing like that, I *will* speak. You were very rude to her, and you know you were."

"Yes, I think I was, but courteously rude. How else *could* you treat a woman like that. Let's have Mrs. Tregennis up and find out who in the name of fortune she is, and after that we'll run down to the sea."

The Blue Lady rang the bell, then singing, she whirled the little Brown Lady round and round the room:

"Oh, for the smell of the salt and the weed,  
Oh, for the rush of the waves,  
Oh, for the cliffs where the white sea-gulls breed,  
And oh, for the murmuring caves!

Here when the beacon light flashes at night,  
Here when the winter winds roar,  
Here when——"

"I'm out of breath," panted the Brown Lady.

"Do stop this jiggling round, and this ridiculous impromptu rhyming. You were just like this when we were here before, but being nearly a year older now you ought to know better. Here's Mrs. Tregennis, so you *must* stop."

"Mrs. Tregennis," the Blue Lady burst forth. "Who is she? Where did she come from? Why is she here? And how long does she mean to stay?"

"Oh, Miss, 'tis brave an' sorry I be. I told her this morning as how you wouldn't want to be taken up, but she would come. There she be now ringin' and ringin' her bell. Always in a fanteague about somethin', she be."

"Well, go and see what she wants; all this can wait, for we're going out."

Hatless the two friends ran downstairs and out, in the fading light, to the sea.

From the very way in which the bell was ringing Mrs. Tregennis knew that no pleasant moments awaited her in the downstairs sitting-room.

First of all there was a complaint about supper. It had been ordered for a quarter past seven; it was now ten minutes past seven, and the cloth was not even laid. "You must remember that I am most particular about punctuality, Mrs. Tregennis, nothing displeases me more than to have meals late. I hope that because two strangers have come here for a few weeks you will not neglect me and my child."

Mrs. Tregennis stood, silent, and outwardly patient. "Do you know at all who they are?" continued her exasperating lodger. "The taller one said they had come down from London to avoid the rush of the s——. Then she stopped. What could there be beginning with 's' that they should wish to escape?"

"Supper begins with 's,' and it'll be fine an' late ma'am, if I don't go and see about it." And Mrs. Tregennis escaped from the room.

When she returned the naval officer's wife spoke with excitement. "I've found out," she cried. "They're shop girls!" and paused, to give dramatic emphasis to her words.

As Mrs. Tregennis appeared quite unmoved she continued. "To escape from the rush of the s—! Of course there must be sales on in the London shops now, and they've managed to save up money enough to come down here to rest until the sales are over, then they will go back again to work. You had better see that they pay beforehand for all they have, or you may find yourself in Queer Street when they go away."

"Mrs. Radford!" Mrs. Tregennis had never before addressed her lodger by name, so it was all the more impressive. "Mrs. Radford, I'll not hear one word against our ladies. They haven't thought fit to tell me who they be, and 'tis no business of mine. Shop girls or no, I cannot say, but they'm real ladies, whatever they be, and I'll not hear a word against them, so there's where 'tis to."

"You need not become angry, my good woman. Their appearance is certainly not in their favour, for they are almost shabbily dressed; plain blue and brown Norfolk suits that are by no means new. When they arrived I looked through the window most particularly to see their style of dress, and I may say I was by no means favourably impressed."

"If you'd like to know, ma'am, they're the very clothes they wore down here last year, an' they weren't new then. Very sootable to Draeth they be to my way of thinkin'. But I don't want to talk about them to you at all, if you don't mind, ma'am. It seems sort of an insult to our ladies to be discussin' their clothes an' such. And if you'll ring when you've finished, ma'am, I'll come in again to clear away."

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## CHAPTER XII

**I**T was perfect Easter weather. It was so hot that when you closed your eyes you thought it was the middle of summer, until you opened them and saw, high up on the cliffs, the leafless trees. Still, as always in Draeth, in spite of the heat, the air had that delightful freshness which results from the mingling of the sea-breezes with the winds which blow from the Cornish moorlands.

In every hedge myriads of primroses opened wide and startled eyes to the blue of the sky. Purple violets nestled among the green grass blades. Timidly the hart's tongue fern unrolled the delicate green of its mitred leaf. The lords and ladies were in flower, and zealously guarded their secret within the closed, mysterious spathe. Over all the blackthorn shed snow-white petals, and the whole air was full of the intoxicating smell of the gorse.

In and out of the hedges darted the mating birds; chaffinches and yellow-hammers, thrushes and blackbirds; robins and linnets; and hedge-sparrows that are not sparrows at all. All together they sang the song of Love and of Springtime, while, on the house-tops in the town, the starlings mocked them all. Such faithful mockery, too, that when you were indoors it was truly bewildering, for you were sure that blackbirds and thrushes were perching on Mrs. Tregennis's chimney pots, until the sweet whistle ended with the ridiculous squawk that always betrays the starling, and lets you know that you have been befooled.

As the ladies sat at breakfast on Saturday morning a stumble on the stairs heralded Tommy's approach.

He fumbled with the handle of the door, opened it wide, then remembered to knock and came in.

After a scarcely perceptible pause of indecision he walked to the Brown Lady. "A letter," he said, and pushed it very deliberately into her hand.

"Oh, Tommy," bemoaned the Blue Lady, "have you no letter for me?"

"There was three for ee yesterday mornin', so 'tis the turn of she."

He jerked his thumb at Miss Dorothea who tore open the flap of the envelope, saying, "That's quite just, Tommy."

But when she had opened out the folded sheet within, she gave an embarrassed exclamation and flushed deeply. "I'm very sorry, Margaret, but it's for you. I didn't look at the address, but just opened it."

The Blue Lady took the open sheet and envelope, and, in her turn, reddened slightly. "I thought perhaps there might be a letter," she remarked.

"Yes," said the Brown Lady, and silence fell between them.

Totally misunderstanding this, Tommy tried to put matters right. "'Taint fair," he said in a loud and angry voice. "There was three for ee yesterday," and he snatched the letter from Miss Margaret as he spoke.

Unfortunately for Tommy, Mammy passed the open door at this moment.

"Oh, my dear soul," she exclaimed, when the incident had been explained to her. "I telled ee the letter was for Miss Margaret. Go right away to wanst."

"It didn't really matter at all," the Blue Lady interrupted. "And, you see, according to Tommy's idea of justice it was quite wrong for the letter to be for me."

But Mammy was angry, and holding a tearful and ruffled Tommy firmly by the hand she led him downstairs.

So the morning began badly. Mammy's lips were tightly closed. Tommy ate his breakfast in sullen silence, standing instead of sitting to annoy Mammy, who took no notice of her son's waywardness, and so made matters worse.

After breakfast Mrs. Tregennis held out a penny to Tommy, who was wiping his lips with the back of his hand. "See if you can get a bit of mint to Bridget's, and be quick back."



"I ain't a-goin' to fetch no more errands for ee to-day," Tommy replied to his mother, raising his clear, blue, innocent eyes, and looking unflinchingly into hers.

"Oh, very well," said Mammy with a sigh, making a feint of undoing her apron strings. "Then I must go to wanst myself, busy though I be."

"Why can't ee send Mabel, or Annie, or Ruthie?" objected Tommy in a determined voice.

"What!" said Mrs. Tregennis, "and let all the neighbours know as Tommy Tregennis isn't to be trusted to fetch an errand for his Mammy? Never. I've got 'eaps an' 'eaps of work to do, and 'tis very busy I be, but I'll go for the mint myself."

Then for the first time Tommy's glance wavered; he held out his hand. "Give I the money," he said, "I s'pose I must go this wanst. Give I the money," and away he ran.

On his return he laid the mint on the kitchen table.

"There," he said, "but I tell ee I ain't goin' to fetch no more errands all day."

"No?" replied Mammy pleasantly, and hummed a little tune as she stripped off the leaves of the mint before chopping them up for the sauce.

Tommy waited a while. Then, "May I go and play on the beach now, Mammy?" he asked.

"Go just where you like, my son," was the reply "and I hope you'll spend a very happy morning wherever you be."

Tommy left the house with a defiant exterior and a leaden feeling within. At play on the beach he lost his ball, which was a rather specially good one, and found, in exchange, two much smaller ones that would not bounce, and therefore offered little in the way of compensation.

At dinner time Mammy was very cheerful, Daddy was silent and Tommy was sad.

After dinner he ran off hastily lest more errands should be required of him, and, for a time, forgot his sorrows in trying to recover by force his own ball from Jimmy Prynne. Jimmy had found it lying snugly in the hollow of a rock where Tommy now remembered he had hidden it for safety. When he had regained possession he removed from the tail of his Jersey cap the two small balls that had lost their bounce; these he kicked disgustedly in the direction of Jimmy Prynne, and turned contemptuously away.

He made up his mind to enjoy to the full the happiness of being thoroughly naughty. No other children were on the Skidderly Rock, but Tommy slid down its steeply polished side again and again, and still nothing tore.

Then he decided that he would get his feet just as wet as it was possible for feet to be. So he threw his ball out to sea and waded in after it; and threw it again and waded again; and again, and yet again, until a wetter pair of boots and stockings than those worn by Tommy Tregennis it would have been impossible to find. This distinction achieved, a little voice within became unpleasantly clamorous; not the warning voice of conscience, but the insistent voice of fear. Tommy waded out of the water and wished with all his heart that his feet were dry.

A few moments he spent in deliberation, then turning his back upon the cold, wet sea he walked slowly in the direction of Granny Tregennis's house. At each step he took the water squelched unpleasantly inside his boots, and each squelching step brought him nearer to an angry mother's justifiable wrath.

"Granny," he whispered, poking his head through the kitchen window. "Granny."

Although it was such a warm day Granny Tregennis sat in the rocking chair by the kitchen fire.

"Yes, ma lovely?" she replied. "An' where have ee been all day, ma handsome? Saturday, too, an' your Granny left all alone."

"Come home along o' me, Granny," pleaded Tommy.

"Why, whatever for should I be comin' home along o' ee?" demanded Granny Tregennis.

"Come home along o' me," repeated Tommy, "come with me to my Mammy; *please*, Granny."

"An' why?"

"Somehow I've gotten my feet all wet," and Tommy, who by this time was inside the quaint, low-ceilinged room, looked ruefully down at the thick, sodden boots.

"Keziah Kate," called Granny, "take thicky lamb home."

"Taint the same thing," argued Tommy, "'t isn't a bit the same. Aunt Keziah Kate do allus be a-comin', she be. Come yourself, Granny, come home along of I."

So persistent was the pleading that for the first time in many weeks Granny put on bonnet and shawl and emerged from her doorway.

It was very slow progress that the two made along the uneven cobbles. When they were about half-way home they saw Mrs. Tregennis in the distance.

"Sh-sh-sh!" warned Tommy, putting a grimy finger across his lips.

But all caution was vain; Mammy looked up, saw them, turned and walked towards them.

"Why, Granny," she asked, "whatever's brought ee out-o'-doors, and evenin' time, too?"

Granny and Tommy felt equally guilty. Granny, as the elder, felt called upon to explain. "Tommy's gotten his feet wet, Ellen. Don't be hard on 'e."

"So, my son, you'm a naughty boy, be you, and goes to hide behind your Granny's skirts? Bringin' your Granny out like this, Tommy Tregennis, because you'm afraid to come home alone. I'd take shame, an' I was you."

While Granny Tregennis sorrowfully retraced her steps Tommy accompanied his mother with sinking heart.

Tregennis was sitting by the kitchen fire. "I've gotten my feet wet, Daddy," volunteered Tommy.

"That you have!" he replied, looking down at the tell-tale boots.

"Take 'em off quickly," ordered Mammy, but Tommy was unequal to the task of grappling with the wet, knotted laces.

"Take 'em off quickly!" he in his turn urged his Daddy, who felt like a conspirator as Tommy confidingly raised first one foot, then the other, that the offending boots might be unlaced and removed.

"Now my stockin's, Daddy," he pleaded in a whisper; but here Mrs. Tregennis interposed.

"You'm not goin' to have clean stockin's on late Saturday afternoon, Tommy, so now you know," she asserted decidedly, as she came forward with a sturdy pair of strap shoes, and lifting Tommy to a chair proceeded to put them on over the wet stockings.



**IT WAS VERY SLOW PROGRESS THAT THE TWO  
MADE ALONG THE UNEVEN COBBLES.**

"I can't bear it, Mammy; I won't have they," Tommy cried.

There was no resisting Mammy's strength; the shoes were not only on, but buttoned.

"I won't have they, Mammy. Lemme go to bed."

"You may go to bed the minute you've had your tea, my son; but first run an' get me two cabbages to Bridget's."

A downward movement on Tommy's part drew a warning from Mrs. Tregennis. "Don't ee remove they shoes, my son. Now run off quickly and get me two cabbages to Bridget's."

As Mrs. Tregennis spoke she put some coppers into Tommy's hand. Tommy's fingers remained limp and the pennies rolled over the kitchen floor. At the same time he kicked off the strap shoes and sent them to the farthest corner of the room.

Then Tommy was whipped, and in spite of cries and kicks the strap shoes were again buttoned on his wet, resisting feet. "Now go and get me two cabbages to Bridget's," commanded Mrs. Tregennis.

"Shan't fetch no more errands for ee, ever;" asseverated Tommy, his fingers clenched.

"Go an' get me two cabbages to Bridget's," said Mrs. Tregennis, now punctuating each word with a slap, and Tommy's sobs rose anew.

At this moment Aunt Keziah Kate entered. Tommy fled to her from the enemy, and buried his head in her clean white apron.

"What is ut, ma lovely?" Aunt Keziah Kate asked tenderly, as she stroked the tousled head.

By this time the Blue Lady had come downstairs to find out the cause of Tommy's trouble.

"Go and get me two cabbages to Bridget's," once more repeated Mrs. Tregennis, while Daddy walked over to the soap-dish by the kitchen sink, and having taken from it a square of damp flannel wiped Tommy's tearful eyes.

"Come, ma lovely!" said Aunt Keziah Kate, and

"Go!" ordered Mammy.

Still Tommy wavered.

"Go to Bridget's, Tommy Tregennis, an' get me two stockin's."

"If they're for our dinner," interrupted Miss Margaret, "we'd really prefer cabbages."

Tommy looked up with the shadow of a smile, then, holding out his hand for the pennies, walked to the door. On the threshold, however, he paused for a moment, then returned to the kitchen, took the flannel which Daddy still held and vigorously rubbed his eyes.

"Shan't let no-one see as 'ow I've been a-cryin'," he explained, and ran off to fetch the errand.

After tea Tommy sat on Tregennis's knee, while Tregennis took off the offending stockings, and rubbed the wet feet in front of the kitchen fire, the while a spirited conversation was carried on between the two.

"You shouldn't never disobey your Mammy, Tommy."

"Shan't fetch no more errands, not never, for she."

"An' the ladies in the house, too."

"Annie or Mabel can fetch they errands, I tell ee."

"Your Mammy's always workin' so hard, too, Tommy. 'Eaps an' 'eaps of work she do get through in the day."

"I'll not go never no more! Somebody else can fetch they cabbages and things."

"When you haven't got your Mammy an' me you'll be sorry you'm a naughty boy, Tommy."

This was a subject of conversation which Tommy always discouraged.

"When you an' Mammy do be dead," he replied, "I shall get married quick, I shall. I shall marry Ruthie to wanst, else I shan't have no one to look after me, I shan't."

Then the tousled head began to droop wearily, for it had been a day of sorrow. "Can't talk to ee any more to-night, Daddy. I be too tired to talk to ee any more to-night. Put I to bed, Daddy."

Mrs. Tregennis was upstairs laying the cloth for supper, so with clumsy hands Tregennis undressed the boy and tucked him tightly in his cot.

"Say 'good-night' to my Mammy for me, 'n, good-night, Daddy."

The sleepy head burrowed into the pillow, while the long lashes drooped over the tired blue eyes.

Although Tommy still felt defiant he could not go to sleep in such an unfinished way. He heard a step on the creaking stair, and "Mammy," he shouted, "good-night, Mammy."

Mrs. Tregennis came into the room.

"Haven't said no prayers yet, Mammy."

"I shouldn't say no prayers to-night," Mrs. Tregennis advised; "not if I was you. Jesus 'e don't love little boys what's naughty."

"Oh, yes, 'e do," said Tommy, with conviction. Then, "'E don't like 'em to be naughty, 'e don't," he added, "but 'e loves 'em all the same."

Then Tommy said his prayers and the good-night kiss was exchanged.

Once more Tommy burrowed into the pillow and Mammy left the room.

But there was still one thing forgotten, and Tommy raised himself in his cot. "Daddy," he called, "Daddy, you needn't say good-night to my Mammy for me; I've said it to she myself."

After this he lay down contentedly. Five minutes later he was asleep and the day of sorrows was ended.

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## CHAPTER XIII

**T**HE sun shone in at the open windows so brightly on Easter Day that it wakened up Miss Margaret some time before Mrs. Tregennis came with the hot water and the early morning tea. She leaned on her elbow and looked out down the alley to the sea.

Under the corner of the next roof two starlings were busily engaged in nest-building. The father starling was very active, but cautious. He took quite unnecessary precautions to avoid detection on his foraging expeditions, precautions that only brought him the more definitely under notice.

Miss Margaret watched him with interest. Flying down to the cobbles he picked up, one by one, three pieces of straw. Returning to the rain-spout he perched on the prominent corner, holding the three straws cross-wise in his beak. He turned his head first to the left, then to the right; then to the left and right again, eagerly alert for possible dangers.

His grotesque movements attracted the attention of a milk-boy who was walking up the alley, a can of milk in either hand. Balancing one can on the cobbles the boy picked up a piece of sea-weed that was lying there, and aimed it at the corner of the rain-spout where it caught and hung. The starling opened his beak, dropped the straws and hurriedly sought the shelter of the eaves, an indignant, ruffled bird. After all, the boy had done him a good turn, for, when he had made quite sure that the enemy had withdrawn, he reappeared, seized the hanging seaweed and carried it to his waiting wife.

After this the church door opened; the world was waking up. In unofficial dress the verger swept out the dust of the week. It annoyed Miss Margaret to see that he did not take the responsibility of his own pile of dust. When it was all collected in the porch he swept it to the lower step, and from there to the cobbles of the alley. A few vigorous movements of his broom removed it from the immediate neighbourhood of the church door and scattered it artlessly among the uneven stones.

In the bedroom below Tommy also was awake. This Easter morning was an eventful one for him. He was going to wear a "noo sailor soot." It was a suit with long trousers, the first long trousers Tommy had ever had. Uncle Sam, who was in the navy, had given him a real lanyard with a shrill whistle attached. Mammy had bought a new black silk handkerchief, too, to go under the white sailor-collar of the blouse. Naturally Tommy was eager to be dressed, and it was irksome to have to lie quietly in bed for so long.

At last Mammy had done all that was required for the ladies and it was Tommy's turn next. It seemed a great waste of time to be washed and have your hair done, although, when the preliminaries were at an end and the new clothes were on, long trousers and all, it proved worth it.

"There, ma handsome," said Mammy, admiringly, "you *do* be in dandy-go-risset. Dressed to death and put to stand you be, my man!"

"Would my ladies like to see my noo soot, Mammy?" he asked, and followed the bacon and eggs into their sitting-room.

The ladies could not find words to express their admiration, but Mrs. Tregennis's vocabulary was such that she could cope bravely with the situation.

"Ain't he flish, Miss?" she asked, with pride. "Proper titched 'e be."

The ladies felt that this exactly expressed what they wished to say.

"Dressed to death, 'e be, and thinks 'tis Sunday," Mrs. Tregennis continued, and was leading Tommy from the room when he was hastily summoned by Miss Margaret, while Miss Dorothea handed him a large plate on which were two Easter eggs full of sweets; a chocolate donkey harnessed with wire and pink ribbon to a chocolate cart; a chocolate ship in full sail and three chocolate hares. One hare stood on its hind legs, one was in the act of running, while the brown body of the other lay stretched out flat upon the white china plate.

"Which'll I eat first, and which'll I give to Ruthie?" Tommy asked excitedly while the plate was being passed to him and before he yet held it in his hands.

Discussing these two important points with his mother he walked from the room.

Accompanied by Auntie Jessie and Ruthie, Tommy went to church. At first he was very devout; his new clothes helped to keep him in a state of spiritual exaltation. When the singing was over he wanted to go outside into the alley and blow his whistle. In the open window of Mrs. Ham's cottage her parrot was calling. "Tommy, Tommy, Tommy," it cried; and again, "Tommy, Tommy, Tommy!" Tommy very much wished he could obey the summons, although he knew by experience that if he were there to reply to the persistent bird Polly would merely put her head on one side, turn slowly round on her perch, and refuse to speak another word.

At last the long service ended and he was free. "Where'll I go till dinner time?" he asked as he ran into the kitchen.

Daddy suggested his Granny might like to see the long trousers and hear the whistle blown. Away Tommy sped and did not return until dinner was on the table.

After dinner Tommy went upstairs with Mammy to dress, but stayed behind in the bedroom when she returned to Daddy in the kitchen.

One Easter egg full of sweets he had given to Ruthie. Half the sweets in the other he had eaten himself, but all the chocolate animals were still intact. These he marshalled in a row on the big bed and wondered what game he should play.

First of all he loaded the chocolate cart with seaweed that had been thrown up by the tide on to the shore at the foot of the bed. The vehicle was not overloaded, for the stranded sea-weed was odd bits of coloured wool that did not weigh very heavy. These Tommy carefully carted away to manure his potato-patch on the cliff at the extreme edge of the pillow.

In time this game palled and Tommy pondered. Chocolate hares were stupid, useless animals for a pretending game at sea; so he bit off first the head and then the tail of the one at full gallop.

After this he set aside the donkey and cart in favour of the ship in full sail. It was a fishing-boat; it was, in fact, his Daddy's boat, "The Light of Home."

One by one Tommy carried all his possessions but this from the big bed to the chest of drawers, where he arranged them according to a definite system of his own.

This work took some little time, but when it was accomplished he was able to give his undivided attention to the chocolate lugger. With care and precision he moulded the blankets and sheets into furrows across the bed, so that the "Light of Home" might sail with pride on the crest of the wave. His Daddy was aboard the lugger catchin' 'eaps an' 'eaps of fish. So he, Tommy, would have a noo mackintosh, real tarpaulin, too. His Daddy had promised him this the next big catch he had.

But Daddy always caught his fish at night-time, and here was the sun just streaming in at the window.

This must be remedied at once. By standing on a chair Tommy was able to reach the blind-cord; when he had pulled down the dark green blind there was a satisfactory gloom within the room.

Now a new difficulty arose. If it was real dark the "Light of Home" might lose her way, or, even worse, she might be wrecked. Then Daddy an' the 'eaps an' 'eaps of fish, an' the noo mackintosh would perish with her too.

Tommy knew all about the Eddystone. He knew that there were three men there, and that they had two months out and one month in. He knew, too, that the lighthouse was built on quite a small platform of rock. The inverted soap-dish made an excellent pretending rock, and on it Tommy placed a little paraffin lamp that always stood on the table by the bed.

At first when he lighted the lamp he turned the wick up far too high, and there was so much smoke and so big a flame that he could not possibly put the chimney in place. He turned it out slowly and was more successful in his second attempt, although even then he did not find the glass chimney at all easy to adjust. Proudly the "Light of Home" sailed round the inverted soap-dish and the smoking lamp. Still Daddy caught 'eaps an' 'eaps of fish. But, alas! a storm arose, and the poor "Light of Home" listed in a truly terrifying manner.

The storm gave rise to a new idea. Daddy was no longer aboard the lugger. It was Granfäather Tregennis instead. Daddy was just a little new boy lying in a big fourposter bed. But there must be a light in Granny's window to help Granfäather to sail safely home.

Tommy was in luck. As a rule there was no candle in Mammy's bedroom, only the paraffin lamp. To-day there stood on the chest of drawers the ladies' china candlestick, fitted with a quite new candle. Tommy pulled up a chair to the foot of the bed, lighted the candle and put the candlestick on the chair. Then he tilted it a little so that the light might shine through the rails at the foot of the bed, for the foot of the bed was the window of Granny's room.

While these preparations were afoot the "Light of Home" had been lying neglected in the trough of a wave. Now she again began to sail over the furrowed bed clothes. But the storm was telling on her. Slowly but surely her outer coat was melting away, leaving sticky brown streaks on Tommy's fingers and on the snowy whiteness of the clean bed-quilt.

"You hobbeck you! you article you! I'll tell your fäather the minute he comes in."

The "Light of Home" slipped through Tommy's fingers. The Eddystone lurched over, fell from its soap-dish rock and was engulfed in the quilty billows below. Mrs. Tregennis rushed from the position she had taken up in the doorway, seized the lamp and extinguished the flame.

Tommy's eyes dilated with fear. "Now I shall get it somethin' awful!" he thought, and shrank against the erstwhile raging sea.

For once words failed Mrs. Tregennis. She looked at the big bed, whose counterpane was brown with chocolate streaks and black with paraffin smuts. She looked at her son, sticky, smutty and subdued. On the new white collar of the sailor blouse were the chocolate imprints of his restless fingers. Down the right leg of the new long trousers were splashes of grease. The room was thick with the smoke from the lamp and the smell was vile.

It was not often that Tommy was really whipped, and when Mammy opened the top long drawer of the chest of drawers with a sharp little jerk the tears welled up slowly in his big blue eyes. When she took from the drawer the supple cane that was so seldom used, and advanced towards him with grim determination, he broke into piteous sobs.

A quarter of an hour later a tearful Tommy sat limply on a chair in the kitchen; he wore his old blue trousers and his old red jersey top. Sunday though it was Mammy stood at the table and with brown paper and a hot iron removed the splashes of grease from the right leg of the new sailor suit. The dandy-go-risset suit of the early morning!

A painful silence lasted for several moments, then:

"Do ee love I any more, Mammy?"

Mrs. Tregennis rested the hot iron on the stand and looked fixedly at Tommy. "How *can* I love ee, Tommy Tregennis, when you'm such a naughty boy."

"No," Tommy's voice broke. "I don't s'pose ee do love I any more; but"—and now the voice was very pleading—"I do love ee brave an' much, Mammy, quite so much as that," and the two restless hands, from which all chocolate stains had been removed, were held more than half a yard apart.

Mrs. Tregennis showed no signs of relenting but gave all her attention to moving the iron lightly up and down over the stiff, brown paper.

The kitchen door opened and Miss Margaret walked in. In amazement she paused; first, because Tommy was in his very everyday clothes; secondly, because Mrs. Tregennis was ironing on Sunday afternoon. The ladies had been sitting down by the sea, surrounded by Easter calm, and were ignorant of the grim tragedy enacted in the Tregennis household.

Miss Margaret was horrified when she was put in possession of the facts. "Oh, Tommy!" her voice was very expressive and her face was very sad. "How more than dreadful it would have been if you'd been all burned up to nothing. Burned right up to nothing at all, only the soles of your new brown boots left lying upon the bedroom floor."

Tommy shuddered and looked down at his feet.

"What would your Daddy and Mammy have done then?" Miss Margaret continued. "They'd have been left all alone just with the soles of your boots."

This amused Tommy. He laughed.

Already the tragedy was being relegated to the background of his mind. He slipped off the chair, and, advancing to Mammy who was folding up the trousers, offered her the piece of pink ribbon that had harnessed the chocolate donkey to the chocolate cart.

"For keeps!" he explained.

The fact that Mammy accepted the gift was a sign that the feud was ended.

Along the kitchen floor, over the linoleum, was a strip of old carpet, put there partly to take the tread and partly to give a little extra comfort and keep the feet warm at meal-times. In jumping across the floor Tommy pushed this out of place.

"Mind my best Brussels!" warned Mammy, playfully, and Tommy felt that he was indeed forgiven.

His joy thereupon became so exuberant that the strip of carpet was kicked entirely out of place.

Then Mrs. Tregennis became firm again. "Put that carpet straight to wanst," she ordered, and reluctantly Tommy obeyed at one end of the strip.

"Now here," said Mammy, pointing to the disarranged part at her feet.

"That be your end," demurred Tommy, but the stern looks of both Mammy and Miss Margaret compelled him to adjust that end also.

Miss Margaret knew instinctively that in putting it to rights Tommy meant to flick up the whole strip and so plunge headlong into disgrace once more. With diplomacy and tact, therefore, and apparently unintentionally, she stood right on the middle of the strip and began to talk to Mrs. Tregennis.

Before Miss Margaret left the kitchen Tregennis came in from the front. Once more the story of Tommy's mishap was repeated.

Tregennis turned to Miss Margaret. "I shall have to take 'e in hand myself, Miss," he said slowly, "if so be as he isn't a better boy."

Miss Margaret left the kitchen and, smiling, told the Brown Lady of the awesome threat. Tregennis was a loving and entirely lovable man, but much too gentle, too simple and too kindly to cope with Tommy's boisterous daring.

Downstairs in the kitchen gloom had again descended. Tommy stuck his hands in his pockets and looked

up into his mother's face. "Tell-tit," he said, "oh, tell-tit," and with the full vigour of his sturdy legs he kicked the carpet strip awry.

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## CHAPTER XIV

**I**T was more than a week since Tommy's Ladies had come to Draeth. Easter was over, and until Whitsuntide no more steamer-loads of Plymouth trippers would visit the little town. On landing the steamer passengers invariably followed the same plan. Presumably during the short voyage they had had enough of the sea, for on leaving the boat they at once trailed up the main street of Draeth, either in scattering groups or in twos. The groups included children: little girls with tightly curled hair and little boys in velvet suits. Sometimes the twos held each other's hands, spoke little and looked down at the ground as they walked; sometimes they were parted by the whole width of the roadway, each seemingly indifferent to the presence of the other.

The groups looked in at the shop-windows until they were hungry; then, carrying bulging paper-bags, they retraced their steps and, sitting in sheltered corners among the rocks, looking out beyond the island to the open sea, they ate stolidly until the bags were empty. Later the tide came up and restored the beach to order, carrying out, even beyond the breakwater of the island, all the litter of paper bags, banana skins, orange peel, glass and tin—all mercifully washed outwards to the horizon until they became waterlogged and sank to the ocean floor.

On Easter Monday the ladies walked to a distant and secluded part of the coast and were happy all the morning in avoiding the rush of holiday-makers. From afar they watched the approach of the thronged steamers, and speculated idly as to the probable number of boatloads that would land. Because it was good for the watermen they were glad that the steamers came.

As they were leaving the house after dinner, a weary lady had approached them. Behind her stood another woman, equally weary, and a pale-faced, meek-eyed man. "Excuse me," the first weary lady had said, addressing Miss Dorothea, "but will you be so very kind as to tell me where we can find the stocks?" she spoke with nervous eagerness. "You see, we are only here for the day."

Miss Dorothea had directed her to the stocks just around the corner, and had followed the Blue Lady down the alley. But she was not to escape so easily. "Excuse me once more," said the weary stranger, somewhat out of breath with running after her, "but is there anything else to be seen in Draeth; you see, we are only here for the day."

On the following Monday, as they were walking up from the sands at dinner time, they were laughing over the Easter reminiscences, and comparing the beauty and stillness around them with the bustle and throng of the week before. Then they began to speak of Mrs. Radford. They found it very difficult to avoid her, although they had not responded to her early advances. Whenever they left the house they were conscious that her eyes followed them until they were out of sight; she stood, barely concealed by the curtains of the window, to mark their return.

The Blue Lady was growing impatient; the unceasing spying annoyed her.

The Brown Lady saw not only the humour, but also the pathos, of Mrs. Radford's actions. "But think, Margaret," she said; "it isn't real ill-nature that makes her so. It's just a sort of jealousy; we have so much, and she has so little."

"I don't agree with you. She has a husband and a child, and money enough to enable her to live without effort."

"Yes, she has all that, but she lacks absolutely the joy of living. You yourself possess this in so high a degree that you scarcely allow for its absence in others."

"Ah, well," sighed the Blue Lady, "I really will try to be more tolerant, but the woman irritates me beyond endurance."

She ran upstairs to the sitting-room:

"Oh the wild joys of living," she quoted, "the leaping from rock to—"

Her good resolutions were forgotten, for there, curled up on the sofa, sat Annabel. She was not an attractive child in appearance: she was too tall for her age, and, in spite of the fact that she was five years old, she spoke in a babyish manner which sounded unnatural and was, indeed, the result of affectation.

She was the first to speak. "Miss Magalet, 'tan I have dinner wiv 'oo?"

"No, Annabel, you most certainly can *not*. Why don't you speak plainly—Tommy does. And you must never again come up here when we are not in."

"You have much nicer dinners than us," continued the child; "me never has g'evy and meat, only beans and fings."

"Poor mite!" said the Brown Lady below her breath.

Annabel had wriggled off the sofa and was pointing to a gay chocolate box on the mahogany wash-stand that served as a sideboard. "'S dem for Tommy?" she asked.

The Blue Lady lost patience. "They *were* for Tommy," she said, quite sharply; "but I don't think they're very good; they don't seem quite fresh, so you can have them if you like."

The child, completely satisfied, went downstairs to show her mother the gift.

"It's no good," said the Blue Lady, ashamed of her unkindness to a little child. "She's exactly like her

mother and I cannot like her."

For dinner the ladies had ordered ox-tail soup, lamb and green peas, gooseberry tart and cream. So much Mrs. Radford learned when she peeped in at the kitchen door as Mrs. Tregennis was dishing up the second course.

"What very extravagant dinners they order."

Mrs. Tregennis took no notice of the remark, but, stooping, closed the oven door, and, digging a fork into the joint, lifted it from the tin to the hot dish waiting on the fender. At that moment the upstairs bell rang. Mrs. Tregennis answered it and returned with the plates and the soup-tureen.

Mrs. Radford raised the lid of the tureen. "What delicious soup!" she remarked, "and what a lot they have left. They would never miss it, Mrs. Tregennis, if you would let me have some."

There was no reply.

"Won't you give me just a little—just enough for Annabel?"

Then Mrs. Tregennis spoke. "I shouldn't think of doing such a thing!" she answered, indignantly. "Why, I wouldn't take not even so much as a crumb of theirs, not even for my own Tommy, no, not if 'twas ever so!"

Even then Mrs. Radford was not ashamed. "A few green peas—" she began again.

"Not *one* green pea, ma'am," replied Mrs. Tregennis, firmly, "and you'll excuse me for sayin' it, ma'am, but I really cannot understand as how you can ask for any such thing; so there's where 'tis to."

Mrs. Radford flushed hotly. "Well! *you'll* see," she said vindictively, "they're living at too grand a rate, they are. Their money won't last out, it won't. You can't say that you were not warned."

Passing into her own room Mrs. Radford slammed the door, while Mrs. Tregennis carried the lamb, green peas and baked potatoes upstairs to the spendthrift ladies.

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## CHAPTER XV

**F**OR more than three weeks it had been very fine on land, but at sea it was rough and stormy, and the water was churned up and thick. For boulder-fishing in the spring the sea must be clear. Because of the bad weather-conditions there was much poverty in Draeth. Between the end of September and the third week in April some of the fishermen had earned barely three pounds. Since Christmas the boats had not once been able to put out to sea. This meant that all through Lent, when the fish fetches record prices, there had not been a single catch.

The poverty of the fisher-folk pressed heavily on the tradespeople too. When children were almost starving they could not refuse to supply the homes with food. Certainly they entered in their credit ledgers the amounts that were due to them from this family or that, but they well knew that in many cases the reckoning was so great that it would take more than a lifetime to pay it off.

As it so often happens at times like these the most deserving found the least relief. The Prynnes, the Tregennis, the Williamses, the Darks and others shunned debt as they would have shunned the plague. Rather than ask for food to be supplied to them on credit they would starve. Day by day the hoard saved up against a rainy day grew less; for you may be prepared to meet a rainy day, but when the rainy day lengthens into a rainy month then you feel the pinch. For many families in Draeth this was the time of fear. The ever-present question was: How much longer was it possible to hold out?

Then suddenly, when things were at their worst, the weather changed. The wind slewed round to another quarter, the turbid waters became clear, and the fisher-folk grew light-hearted, for at last the boats would put out to sea.

It was on the Monday of the last week in April that the fleet made preparations for sailing. Tregennis looked upon it as a lucky omen that on that very morning he had caught a rat on the "Light of Home." For some days he had known the plaguey thing was there. Down in the cuddy-hole he had found an old coat of his bitten through in the sleeve. Some of the nets, too, had been gnawed in places, and he had had to be busy mending tackle. It is a grave matter when a rat boards a lugger, for there is no knowing how many more may follow. The four men on the "Light of Home" had laid trap after trap, temptingly baited, but without result.

Now this morning Tregennis had at last put an end to the plaguey varmint. As this trouble was overcome it was taken by the men as a sign that further good luck loomed ahead.

Miss Margaret went into the kitchen before breakfast and found Mrs. Tregennis packing the basket of food for Tregennis to take to sea.

"It do look a lot, don't it, Miss? There isn't much room on the boat, so you has to get it packed up tight as can be. They did oughter be back on Wednesday morning, but I puts in for a bit longer than that in case."

"If you find your store of food running short, Tregennis," advised Miss Margaret, "remember that you ought to chew a great number of times, forty-five chews to each bit of food I think it is, and then the supplies will last all the longer."

"My dear life, Miss; 'e do just bolt his food."

"Can't seem to taste it, somehow, if I do keep it in my mouth," Tregennis explained.

"He do eat his food too fast, Miss; I never knoo anyone eat so fast as 'e; I be always a-tellin' 'e."

"Well, he must practise this morning. Are you going to give him ham for breakfast, Mrs. Tregennis?"

"Am?—no, miss—I'll 'am 'en. He haven't been to sea and caught no fish. If he don't work neither shall he eat. That's in the Bible, isn't it, Miss?"

"Something like it," agreed Miss Margaret.

"Yes, 'tis there, for sure. If a man will not work neither shall he eat. It don't say nothin' about a woman in like case."

"Oh, well," interrupted Tregennis, smiling good-humouredly. "*Will* not work; but I *will* work when there's work to be done—the pity is so often we *can't*."

"You're both evading this question of chewing," Miss Margaret complained. "It's all the fashion now to chew. They say that if you follow this plan you only need half the usual amount of food. You see it all nourishes you then; otherwise half is wasted."

"Sakes! Tom, you remember that!" admonished Mrs. Tregennis. "'An you too, Tommy, my man. Come here an' listen to your Mammy. If there's goin' to be any savin' in it every bite as you puts into your mouth you chews on forty-five times—— If so be as you can count so far," she added, as an afterthought.

"One—two—three—four—*five*—six—seven," began Tommy, in a dreary, sing-song voice, with incatchings of the breath.

"That'll do," interposed Miss Margaret, hastily. "I am quite sure, Tommy Tregennis, that you can count up to forty-five very nicely indeed," and, laughing, she went upstairs.

After breakfast the ladies came down to see the boats leave the harbour with the tide.

"'Taint no good, Miss, after all," Mrs. Tregennis called out gloomily as they passed the kitchen door.

"Oh, Mrs. Tregennis, why? I'm so sorry! Has the wind changed again?"

"Oh, not the *fishin'*, Miss, but the *chewin'*," she hastened to explain. "Tom and Tommy was both tryin' hard but by the time they'd chewed less an' twenty chews they didn't 'ave nothin' left."

"We was just chewin' on nothin'," added Tregennis, who was drying his face on the runnerin' towel.

"T'ad all slippin' down," volunteered Tommy, looking up from lacing his boots.

Miss Margaret looked at them sorrowfully. "There, you see," she declaimed, "it is just the universal finding. You will not allow yourselves to be improved! You do not wish to be nourished! You will not chew! Thus you waste half, nay, more than half, of the food you eat."

Then, relapsing into her normal manner, "Perhaps I'm not quite justified in speaking," she admitted, "for I know quite definitely I couldn't chew forty-five times myself, and I haven't been as enterprising as you, for I've never even tried."

Tregennis picked up the basket of food that had led to the discussion, and Tommy and the ladies accompanied him to the quay where he boarded the "Light of Home."

Sitting in the sunshine on the rocks, Tommy's Ladies watched the fishing boats tack across to Polderry then veer slowly round and sail in a south-westerly direction. From Tregennis they knew that the fleet was making for Mevagissey, where they would shoot their nets and hope to get a good catch for baiting the boulders. In those waters they thought that the smaller fish, pollock, pilchards (not fit, at this time of the year, for food), herring and whiting would be plentiful.

To those who do not know, boulder-fishing seems a fairly easy occupation. The boats sail away with something trawling after them on the floor of the sea, and the fish is caught!

Actually it is one of the hardest bits of work a man can do. If the first shoot of the nets is successful the boulder is baited without delay, and the luggers may sail away at once far beyond the Eddystone to the fishing-grounds some fifty miles from Draeth. Often, however, it happens that the nets are shot two, three, or even four times before the men have fish enough to bait the hooks.

The boulder is made up of thick, weighted ropes. As each boulder is fitted with two thousand hooks, and as these hooks are fastened to it with cotton-line about eight or nine feet apart, it follows that the whole boulder is from three to four miles long.

All the two thousand hooks pass four times through the hands of the men on the lugger. First of all they must be baited, and after this they must be shot. To the end of the boulder that is shot first from the boat a cork buoy bearing a flag is fastened. This is called the dan. At the middle of the boulder is a second dan. "This," as Tregennis had explained to the ladies, "do give a second chanst, for when once 'tis gone overboard you can't never even say it do belong to ee. Anythin' may 'appen to 'e, you can't never tell."

When the fish is caught on the two thousand deadly hooks these pass for the third time through the fishermen's hands, for now they must be hauled. Lastly, when the lugger is back in the harbour, they must all be cleared, not cleared of the catch only, but of all the mutilated bits of bait. Then they are thoroughly cleaned, carefully coiled round and put away in readiness for the next time the boats are afloat.

Miss Margaret and Miss Dorothea were discussing the heaviness of the work and the hard lot of the fisher-folk as they watched the luggers sail away round the curve of the coast towards Mevagissey and the bait.

As they spoke a cormorant dived in front of them beneath the water.

"There!" said Miss Dorothea, indignantly. "Just as if it wasn't enough for these people to have steam-trawlers, and weather and dog-fish in array against them! And now the cormorants are coming in flocks and are eating up all the smaller fish along the coast. It's an arrant shame!"

It was just one o'clock. The last lugger had rounded the curve. The ladies picked up their books and walked slowly home over the polished rocks and along the firm wide stretch of sand that grew still wider as the tide flowed slowly out.



## CHAPTER XVI

**T**HE day after the fishing boats put out there was a sudden change in the weather. Little white horses rode in the bay. On land the wind blew in sharp, fitful gusts. The watermen said that there must be a fall of snow inland.

Towards evening Mrs. Tregennis grew restless and uneasy. After fastening up the house for the night she slipped back the bolt, and, throwing on a shawl, went down to the front and looked out anxiously over the angry sea.

When she carried in the breakfast the following morning there were deep shadows under her tired eyes.

"You didn't sleep properly last night, now, did you?" asked Miss Dorothea; and Mrs. Tregennis admitted that she had been awake for many hours.

"I didn't only partly undress," she explained. "I felt somehow so restless and unsettled inside o' me. But 'tis all right now, Miss," and Mrs. Tregennis smiled brightly, "for the boats they be sighted I do hear tell, and they'll be here about eleven o'clock."

Soon after eleven one by one the boats sailed up the harbour. Most of the fishing families of Draeth were represented on the quay, for there was much anxiety to find out at once if the first catch since Christmas had been good.



**TOWARDS EVENING MRS. TREGENNIS GREW RESTLESS AND UNEASY, AND WENT DOWN TO THE FRONT AND LOOKED OUT ANXIOUSLY OVER THE ANGRY SEA.**

Mrs. Tregennis did not go down. She was too busy to leave home, but she sang light-heartedly as she went about her work.

"Where's my Daddy to?" asked Tommy, when he came home from school.

"Not come home yet, ma handsome."

"Boats is in," objected Tommy.

"Yes, my man, but I s'pose your Daddy's busy cleanin' up. Run an' find 'en, ma lovely, an' tell 'en to come in quick an' have dinner afore he goes to bed."

Tommy ran off to the quay and walked alongside, trying to pick out his Daddy's boat.

"Hallo, Tommy," said Uncle Sam, who was hauling up water in a bucket over the side of the 'Henrietta.'

"Hallo," replied Tommy, "I be lookin' for my Daddy; where be the 'Light of Home,' Uncle Sam?"

"Dear life, I don't know! Up there 'appen," and Uncle Sam jerked his thumb in the direction of the bridge.

Tommy sped on. There was Uncle Harry in his boat and Uncle Jim in his. But no Daddy and no "Light of Home" could Tommy find.

"Uncle Jim, do tell I, where be the 'Light of Home'?"

"Sure I don't know, Thomas, my son. Can't ee find she?"

Tommy shook his head.

"Try down below," and Uncle Jim waved vaguely towards the mouth of the harbour.

"Been there," Tommy demurred, "an' Uncle Sam 'e said come up 'ere, 'e did."

Uncle Jim was removing old bait from the boulder; he stopped and scratched his head.

Tommy's eyes grew large and puzzled.

In a few minutes the word passed round that the "Light of Home" was missing, and with her were Tom and Jack Tregennis, James Prynne and Billy Dark.

Tommy walked into the kitchen with a white, strained face. "Mammy," he said, and again, "Mammy." Then he swallowed hard. "I can't find my Daddy and the 'Light of Home' bain't in."

Mrs. Tregennis was kneeling in front of the fire, making toast. She rose and turned fiercely on her son. "I'll about half kill ee, Tommy Tregennis," she said, "if you come here scarin' with such tales as they. I don't want none of that sort of yarn here. I'll knock ee flying!"

For a moment they looked into each other's eyes. Then Tommy flung himself on the floor in a passion of weeping, while Mrs. Tregennis stood staring in front of her, still holding the toasting-fork in her hand.

Awkwardly, and as if ashamed, Uncle Sam edged into the kitchen.

"Don't ee take on now, Ellen," he admonished. "'Twill sure to be all right; it be just——"

"Of course 'twill be all right, an' righter than right," she interrupted, angrily. "'Tis but that fulish child. Get up, Tommy, and come an' have your dinner, or you'm be late to school."

Tommy still lay on the floor, his face buried in his arms.

"Get up, I tell ee, or I'll shift ee, my son."

Then, as there was still no movement: "If you don't get up to wanst, Tommy Tregennis, I'll tell your faather the minute——"

The familiar threat ended abruptly, and Mrs. Tregennis turned away, put down the toasting-fork and filled the kettle at the sink.

All through that weary Wednesday Draeth waited for the "Light of Home" and still she did not come. There was a heavy fall of snow inland, the papers said, and the wind at sea grew more and more boisterous. On Thursday morning there was snow in Draeth itself, the roofs were white, and it settled on the fields above the cliffs.

Still there was no sign of the "Light of Home." Glasses swept the horizon in vain. No sail was in sight!

Dozens of people were on the front looking out seaward the whole day long. Women wept and little children were terrified.

All this time Mrs. Tregennis never left the house, but went about her work with tight, colourless lips, and with unseeing eyes. At school Tommy sat still and frightened, but his Mammy said 'twas better as he should go.

Mrs. Radford attempted tactless consolation, but Tommy's Ladies behaved as far as possible in a normal way. Outside they shunned the shifting throng on the front, because they dreaded hearing the muttered conjectures. So they sat some little distance apart on the rocks, straining—like all the rest of Draeth—straining out to sea.

"If I were the parson here," said Miss Margaret, "I should open the church and ask all those people on the front to come in. I'd just have one strong, simple prayer and sing 'For those in peril on the sea.' I shouldn't say anything to them because I should only cry if I did." Miss Margaret groped for her handkerchief and wiped away the tears that were trickling down her cheek.

In the whole wide world there seemed to be one thing only that really mattered, and this was that the "Light of Home" should sail over the horizon and ride with the tide up the harbour to Draeth.

The remaining hours of the Thursday dragged with incredible slowness. It was a relief when night came and there could be no more weary gazing seaward for a few hours at least.

When Mrs. Tregennis brought the tea in the morning there was a new look in her eyes.

"Well?" asked the ladies, fearfully.

"They've sighted the boat," she said. Then her unnatural composure gave way; she leaned up against the wall and sobbed.

Miss Margaret jumped out of bed, rescued the tray and put her arms around her.

"You darling," she said. "You've been just so brave, it's been wonderful." And she and the Brown Lady cried too, cried until they laughed, then laughed until they cried again.

Crowds waited on the Frying Pan and on the quay to see the "Light of Home" come in. Her bows were knocked out with the lashing of the wind and the sea. But they had got the fish! The men were heavy with sleep, stunned with exposure, shaking with cold. But they had got the fish!

Bit by bit their story was told. When they had anchored on the Tuesday afternoon they had, of course, thrown out the boulder with the anchor. About nine o'clock that night when they wanted to sail along a bit they found the boulder had parted from the anchor. There was nothing for it but to make their way to the dan, cast anchor there and wait patiently until daylight. By this time all the other boats were sailing home. They secured the boulder all right, but they didn't seem to have much fish. So they thought to wait a time longer, sailed farther southwards and anchored again.

Then the wind had come up somethin' awful. As their lugger was not built for a heavy open sea, they reckoned to make for home. But they found that the strong spring tide had swept the boulder round so that it was firmly caught as ever was on some rock or somethin' at the bottom o' the sea. In workin' another man's gear you'd rather risk your life than leave the boulder behind! So again there was nothin' for it but to wait; wait this time until the heavy tide turned and swept their boulder back again from the obstruction on which it had caught.

Hours they had had to wait for this, and even then they couldn't get off. Ill-luck seemed to dog them, for once more the boulder parted; this time in the middle. How long they were 'eavin' an' pullin' an' gropin' they couldn't rightly say. For more than twenty-four hours they had had neither food nor fire. But they had got the fish and the owner of the boat had his boulder right enough, and that alone was a matter of twenty poun' an' more.

The catch of the "Light of Home" made a record sale. There, on the quay, the fish was all arranged in heaps—congers, ray, skate, cod, ling, hake, even a few turbot and halibut lying royally alone.

"There was certainly 'eaps of fish," the auctioneer remarked, "and good fish at that."

"'Uman creatures' lives," Jack Chorley was heard to quote.

The auctioneer frowned him down, blew his nose and started.

"Beautiful fish, gentlemen," thus suavely he addressed the buyers. "Now what offers, gentlemen, for the beautiful 'eaps of skate?"

Eight—nine—ten—; up went the bidding, until the pile of skate brought fifteen shillings a dozen, and the ray fetched the same high figure, too. Congers stuck at twelve shillings a hundredweight, but the hake reached as much as one-and-ten apiece; the turbot rose to twelve shillings the fish, and one halibut alone brought forty-two shillings.

On droned the voice of the auctioneer. "'Ow much for this lot, gentlemen? a shame to let it go for ten shillin', sirs. 'Tis too good a 'eap to be give for nothin'. Come, gentlemen, come! What offers I say?"

"'Twarn't on no rock as that boulder parted," said Jim Hex, and shifted his wad of baccy from the right cheek to the left.

"No more it warn't, Jim," agreed Joe Cox. "Too good a catch for a rock."

"A wreck for sartin'," and Jim spat over the side of the quay.

"A bit o' what 'peared to be a woman's gound were catched up along wi' the boulder," corroborated Tregennis, somewhat huskily, from the shattered bow of the boat.

"Poor soul!" said a woman on the outskirts, who had overheard. There was a half-sob in her voice.

Jack Chorley looked at her angrily. "Damn!" he said, and vindictively hit at a fly that was trying to settle on his nose.

As the clock chimed a quarter past four the sale was ending. Slowly Tommy trailed along the street to his Mammy and his home. Seeing the crowd on the quay he turned aside to find out its cause.

"Daddy," he shouted, "oh, Daddy!"

Heedless of mooring-ropes and slippery bits of fish he ran and stumbled, stumbled and ran, towards the "Light of Home."

"Daddy, oh, Daddy!" he sobbed, and reached the edge of the quay.

Tregennis stretched out his arms, lifted him into the lugger and held him tight. Again there was a woman's sob and the air was tense.

"Have a bib for your tea, my son," said Uncle Jack, and laughed rather uncertainly as he held up to him a little fish, something between a pollock and a whiting.

"An' here be two plate-ray to take home to your Mammy," added Billy Dark, who was young and unmarried, "an' happen you'd best take your Daddy along too."

Once more the crowd parted and Tommy and his Daddy passed through.

Mrs. Tregennis could not trust herself to go down to the quay, so she had not seen Tregennis yet, for the fish must come first.

"I expect you'm cold and hungry, Tom," was her greeting when at last he came holding Tommy by the hand. Her lower lip trembled as she spoke. "Here be a good meal for ee, an' there be hot bottles in the bed. So hurry up do ee now, for you do be fair done."

"I tried Miss Margaret's plan o' chewin'," said Tregennis, smiling a little wearily as he sat down to a bit of somethin' to eat. "An' upon my sam I believe there be somethin' in it. But in a while there warn't nothin' left to chew. Not in my mouth I don't mean this time, but not in the hamper neither. Brave an' empty 'e was I can tell ee; never a single crumb left, no, not even for a sparrer to pick."

Later in the evening Mrs. Tregennis held in her hand eight pounds nine shillings and sixpence, Tregennis's share of the record sale.

"What be I to do with this vasty sum?" she asked the ladies, as they sat by the fire and laughed at nothing at all. "I shall think I be some size now," she asserted, drawing herself very upright and tilting her chin. "What'll I do with all this gold?"

"Why not go up to London?" suggested the Blue Lady, "and stay at the Hotel Cecil. I believe you can live there quite comfortably for five pounds a day."

"Can ee now, Miss, indeed? I hadn't known of that. Well, th' objects no money to me, so Tommy, shall you an' me an' Daddy go up to London for to see the King?"

"Yes," nodded Tommy, his mouth full of bread and butter.

"Then come along o' me," said Mammy, and she put on her hat and coat, walked up Main Street to the Post Office, and there with pride she pushed the eight pounds nine shillings and sixpence across the counter to be added to her small account.

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## CHAPTER XVII

**A**LTHOUGH May had come Tommy's Ladies had not yet gone. Much to Mrs. Radford's annoyance their money was still holding out.

Here and there in the woods of Draeth late primroses lingered; while purple-tinged anemones still caught the sun that was cut off more and more each day by the slowly unfolding leafy screen of the oaks.

Miss Lavinia had read lately that in other schools children were learning about flowers and birds and even about the things that crawled. In connexion with this she had read much of Educational Values that she did not understand in the very least. But it seemed to her a delightful change that sometimes in the afternoon the little girls should put aside their hemming and that the little boys should sponge out their sums, and that they should then talk about the flowers the children gathered in the woods and in the lanes.

Miss Lavinia bought a book which helped her to look intelligently at the flowers and to understand the wonders that were there. Again and again she was surprised to find that the children, as a result of their own observations, saw many things that she herself did not know of until she had read about them in her little book.

Mr. Toms, the draper, sent his children to Miss Lavinia's school. This Mr. Toms was the son of the Mr. Toms from whom Tommy's Mammy bought the cloth for her green coat so many years ago. He was a very practical, go-ahead man, was the present Mr. Toms; a man whose motto was "Progress," and by progress he meant "Push," and "Getting on in the World."

Mr. Toms felt that afternoons spent in the study of common wild flowers represented so much waste of time. So keenly did he feel this that one early closing day he called on Miss Lavinia to talk to her about the matter. Miss Lavinia received him in the best parlour and was very nervous, for a visit from the parents of her pupils was a most unusual event.

Mr. Toms sat down on the extreme edge of one of Miss Lavinia's Chippendale chairs, and after clearing his throat loudly explained to her that what he paid for was a good sound education with no high-falutin' nonsense. Sums and such had made him the man he was; sums and such would surely train his boys to follow worthily in their father's footsteps.

The flow of words quite paralysed Miss Lavinia; she had no answer to give.

Mr. Toms again cleared his throat. "It's in this way, Miss Lavinia," he continued, "time is given us to be used. An all-merciful Providence has put us here to do the best we can, and we must make the most of our talents. They mustn't be wrapped up in a napkin and hid."

By this time Mr. Toms's thumbs were in his arm-holes and he was in his best platform vein.

"There's them as doesn't heed, but *I* say 'waste not, want not,' whether it be bread, or money, or time. Let not the talents be abused! And when my boys come home and talk about primroses and such, well then *I* feel annoyed and rightly so."

Again he cleared his throat, but was arrested in the further expression of his views by the tears that filled Miss Lavinia's faded blue eyes.

In spite of pompous manners and in spite of push, Mr. Toms was a kindly man at heart, and a little old maid's tears made him feel ashamed. "Oh, I say, Miss Lavinia ...," he stammered, "oh, I say ...!"

"I am very foolish," she answered him. "I think I am a little tired. But about the flowers! I read that it was being done in quite big schools. I myself know very little about them but I thought that I, too, would like to try." Then her delicate cheeks flushed as she went on speaking. "I thought, too, that as God himself has made all these wonders, it could not possibly be waste of time for us to stop now and again and look at the beauty that he gives. But ... I do not know. Perhaps I am wrong..."

Again Mr. Toms cleared his throat. "Upon my word, Miss Lavinia," he interrupted; "upon my word, I believe that it's me. Anyhow, go on, go on; I'll say no more! It can't do no harm anyhow, and who knows but it may be good."

When the following week Miss Lavinia took her school to walk, two by two, through the woods of the West River, Mr. Toms was glad that the afternoon was fine. In the evening, when his boys showed him little twigs of oak already bearing the future acorns, he was so much interested that he took old Mr. Toms's magnifying glass, until now used in reading the Bible only, and through it saw the flowers on a larger scale.

"Well, it caps me, Mother," he remarked to his wife as he replaced the lens in the drawer of the bureau. "Forty-five years have I lived in this town and never till to-day did I know as oak trees flowered!"

It was after this walk in the woods that Tommy discovered that the Tregennises had a garden. Naturally he was greatly excited by the discovery and ran into the kitchen volubly explaining the need for watering at once without a moment's delay.

"My dear soul, Tommy Tregennis, what's all this?" asked his mother.

"Oh, Mammy, Mammy, gimme some water in a cup to water my garden; give it to me to wanst please Mammy, or my garden'll mebbe die."

Mrs. Tregennis did as she was commanded. Taking from the cupboard an enamelled mug she filled it with water at the tap above the sink, handed it to her son and followed him to the door.

There, sure enough, underneath the window, in three separate places little blades of grass had pushed their way upwards between the cobble-stones.

Tommy pointed to these with pride, then, stooping, he put the mug upon the ground. But the stones were uneven there and the mug of water wobbled. In all moments of stress Tommy's tongue curled round the corner of his mouth. It curled now. Then with care and deliberation he chose another and a safer place where the cup stood firm.

After this Tommy himself knelt upon the uneven stones and tenderly stroked the fresh green blades. "Now, Mammy, look!" he said; and while Mammy looked he lifted up the enamelled cup, bent slightly forward, over-balanced, and fell upon his garden-plot.

There was a moment of deep suspense, but when Tommy found that not one of his plants was injured he smiled happily.

"S'more water, please Mammy," and he passed the cup towards the doorway.

"But all they plants be just flooded with water, my sweetheart," objected Mrs. Tregennis. "They'll be drowned quite if you water 'em any more."

"*That*," Tommy explained patiently, "was accident; that wasn't waterin', that wasn't."

This was an unanswerable argument and without further ado Mammy refilled the cup.

After this, in sun or rain, Tommy watered his garden twice a day. It was to him an unfailing source of joy.

He told the Blue Lady all about it as they walked up from the sands together. "'N before I go to bed I must water my garden. There's seven grasses in the one closest up to the drain; 'spect it gets splashed 'n likes it. There be on'y five in the one in front, but there be somethin' thick an' tight in the miggles of he. 'N there's ... I don't 'xactly remember how many grasses there do be under the wall. 'N what be the thick an' tight thing in the miggles, Miss?"

"I can guess, Tommy, but I won't tell you. You watch and watch, and just see for yourself what happens."

"I'm allus watchin' an' watchin'," replied Tommy, gloomily. "It be they cats! Goin' round the corner they run right over my garden, they do. I be allus watchin' an' shoooin', 'n Mammy she be allus a-shoooin' of they too."

By this time they were half-way up the alley and very near the house. To his horror Tommy saw his Daddy, his own Daddy, walk ruthlessly over the three small patches of green.

"Oh, oh, oh ...," he screamed, darting forward in a very passion of anger. "You be a-killing of my garden, 'n I hates ee, I do, I just hates ee!"

His eyes were tightly closed in his rage and with clenched fists he hit out wildly at his Daddy, only to find his outstretched arms firmly imprisoned in his mother's grasp.

Mrs. Tregennis addressed Miss Margaret. "You'll often have been wondering, Miss, how my Tommy came by such a funny lookin' sort o' face. 'Tis with cryin' so much that 'e got 'e. 'Tis a brave pity that he be so plain."

Tommy choked down a sob. "I do know some boys as is uglier 'n me," he affirmed.

"Oh?" Mammy sounded sceptical.

"Jimmy Prynne's worse ugly 'n me," said Tommy, still shaken with sobs.

"I'd think shame if I was ee, Tommy Tregennis, callin' a likely boy like Jimmy Prynne ugly, that would I."

Tommy wept more loudly.

"I shouldn't make a face like that, no, not even if my head was off." Mammy was scornful.

Tommy felt that there was a flaw in the argument but sobbed more noisily still.

Then Mammy grew stern. "Stop that noise, Tommy," she said, forcefully, accompanying her words with a shake.

Tommy screamed all the louder.

"My blessed fäather," Mammy remarked to the empty air. The Blue Lady and Daddy had discreetly vanished. "Whose boy may this be makin' such a disgraceful scene. Whoever he be *his* Mammy an' Daddy won't be wantin' 'e any more. There's no pleasure in lookin' at a boy like 'e."

Tommy's screams ended quite suddenly and he consigned the whole incident to oblivion. "Some water for my garden, please Mammy," he said.

"No, my son, not to-night. We'll have no waterin' to-night. You'm a naughty, hasty boy, 'n you'll go right up to bed this minute."

With a sob in his throat Tommy went.

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## CHAPTER XVIII

**T**HEY were all standing outside the kitchen window in the dinner-hour, the Blue Lady and the Brown Lady, Daddy, Mammy and Tommy. In the doorway, not of the group, but looking longingly towards it, stood Annabel.

"'Tis the tight thick thing in the miggles," Tommy was explaining volubly. "It's been an' broke this mornin', an' now 'tis all feathery an' different."

"That's what you've been watching for, Tommy; that is the flower of the grass."

Tommy looked at the Blue Lady in amazement. "Flowers do be blue an' red," he objected, "an' my miggles thing's green."

"Tommy," Annabel still in the doorway spoke in a supplicating voice. "Tommy, let me see the green grass-flower."

The owner of the garden took not the least notice of her request.

Mammy, Daddy and the ladies had returned to the dinner they had left to see the wonder out-of-doors, so the children were alone.

Annabel drew nearer. "Which is it?" she asked, bending down, her hands on her knees.

"Go away," said Tommy, kicking a loose stone in her direction. "I shan't show ee my garden."

"Tisn't a garden," retaliated Annabel. "My mother says it isn't no garden, it's just bits of grass."

Deep down in Tommy's heart there had sometimes been a suspicion that his garden was not quite as other people's, but he had resolutely put the thought from him. Now Annabel's scornful words strengthened his fears. He hit her quite hard, ran into the house and made his way upstairs so quickly that his toes hit the front of each step in his hurry. Into the ladies' room he burst without the preliminary knock insisted upon by

Mammy.

"Is my garden a garden," he demanded; "or is it just bits o' grass?"

"Do you love your plants very much, Tommy?"

Tommy's fingers closed tightly and his lips were compressed as he vigorously nodded his head.

"In that case," decided Miss Margaret, as she added more cream to the strawberries on her plate, "In that case it is most distinctly a garden."

"I should like to give ee a bunch...." Tommy paused for a moment. A bunch of what?

He decided that just "a bunch" would do, so he began again.

"I'd like to give ee a bunch out of my garden."

"Oh, but Tommy, it does seem such a pity to pick ...." Miss Margaret in her turn groped for a word. "The blades," she concluded satisfactorily.

"But just on'y *three* blades," pleaded Tommy.

"*Two*," decided Miss Margaret, and together they went downstairs to make the selection.

When the two blades had been most carefully chosen and most tenderly picked, something still troubled the gardener.

"What is it now, Tommy Tregennis?"

"I wish I could take Miss Lavinia a bunch from my garden, I do."

Miss Margaret hesitated. She did not know Miss Lavinia, and wondered if she was a woman of understanding, or if she would only scorn the gift that meant so much to the little giver.

"Pick just a tiny bunch," she advised, "I think Miss Lavinia would like that."

Tommy selected two blades from each of the three plants, but still he paused.

"Will my other grasses have flowers ever?" he asked, confident that the Blue Lady could always tell him everything he wished to know.

She stooped now to examine the others. "Yes," she told him; "they will be in flower quite soon."

Happily Tommy knelt once more and plucked his "miggie feather" to add to Miss Lavinia's bunch, then he ran off to school in such excitement that he quite forgot to call for Ruthie on the way.

Miss Margaret returned to her room, and taking from the shelf the *Oxford Book of English Verse*, she opened it at Thomas Edward Brown's poem "A garden is a lovesome thing, God wot." With a smile she laid the two blades of grass between the pages.

When children took flowers to Miss Lavinia they laid them on her desk unobserved by the rest of the school, if possible. Then when Miss Lavinia came into the room the giver's heart would beat quickly until she picked up the offering, smelled it, said "How very beautiful," and looked all around. Then of course the giver smiled a little conscious smile and Miss Lavinia would see this, and say, "Oh, is it from you Ruby, or Jimmy, or David?" as the case might be.

Tommy had never had this delightful experience, but this afternoon he glowed with joy for at last it was to be his. He slipped into the schoolroom when it was empty, placed his "bunch" on the desk, then ran out of the house again, and unconcernedly kicked dust in the gutter.

Here Ruthie joined him and kicked too. "Why didn't ee fetch me, Tommy?" she asked.

"I've put some of my grasses on the desk."

This seemed to Ruthie quite a sufficient reason. "Oh, Tommy," she said, "but hasn't it spoiled your garden?"

"No; leastways, not much; 'n besides, more'll grow." Tommy spoke as one who knows. The clock struck two and the children ran in to take their places at the long, narrow table.

Tommy's conscious smile began as soon as Miss Lavinia appeared in the doorway, and gradually it broadened as she walked to her desk. Then quite suddenly the smile faded and Tommy's mouth drooped ominously at the corners.

Miss Lavinia had brushed aside the grass and opened her desk without comment!

Large tear-drops began to fall on that part of the table that was Tommy's place, and Miss Lavinia's attention was arrested by a strangled sob.

"Why, what's the matter, Tommy?" she asked, it was so unusual for Tommy to cry.

"You haven't said his flowers was beautiful," volunteered Ruthie.

"His flowers?" echoed Miss Lavinia; she was deeply puzzled.

Ruthie ran to the desk and gathered together the six blades and the "miggie feather."

"They be from Tommy's very own garden," Ruthie further explained. "He waters they every night an' mornin', Tommy does, outside the kitchen window, and shoos off they cats, so's they can really grow."

Some of the older children laughed, but a glance from Miss Lavinia caused their laughter to be instantly suppressed.

Miss Lavinia left the desk and holding in her left hand the six blades and the flower of the grass she went to Tommy's corner of the table. With her disengaged right arm she drew him to her, and memories of her own far-away childhood gave her understanding, just as Miss Margaret had hoped.

"Tommy," she said, very gently; "Tommy, thank you very much for your present. It was kind of you to pick these for me from your very own garden, and they are very beautiful."

"Beautiful!" that was the word Tommy wanted.

"To-day I should like to see them in water on my desk, and to-morrow I shall press them between blotting-paper and mount them on a card; you shall write your name on the card and hang it on the wall."

While Miss Lavinia spoke Tommy's tears dried, and when she ended the broad smile was there once more.

When afternoon school was over Tommy ran home very quickly, for hanging over the river was a large,

black cloud, and he feared that rain might fall before he could water his plants. He was eager, too, to see whether the other miggly things had grown into flowers in his absence.

His hands were tucked away in his trouser-pockets, but every now and then as he ran one or the other was withdrawn; the arm thus freed from control made wild circles in the air, while in his excitement he blew through tightly closed lips in a vain attempt to whistle.

At the last turning he underwent a sudden metamorphosis, and becoming a ramping lion he plunged madly round the corner in case Mammy should be standing in the doorway. Then the shrill roar broke off abruptly and the waving arms fell limply to his side.

Perfectly still he stood there, while for the second time that day large tear-drops slowly gathered in his eyes and rolled unheeded down his cheeks. Deep sobs followed and Tommy groped his way slowly into the house.

"Oh, Mammy, Mammy," he moaned; "my garden's all picked and withered; my garden's all picked and withered."

Mrs. Tregennis was not in the kitchen; probably she was in a house near by, but Tommy could not take his sorrow to a crowd. Slowly he made his way to the upstairs sitting room, and there he found Miss Margaret writing letters.

"My Lady," he sobbed, "my Lady, my garden's all picked and withered."

"Oh, Tommy," she answered softly. Drawing him tenderly to her she dried away the tears as they came.

After a little pause, "Shall I come down with you to see it?" she asked.

Tommy sorrowfully shook his head. "I don't like to see 'e lyin' there all dead," he explained. So Miss Margaret went down alone.

There, scattered among the cobble-stones were the treasured blades of grass. They had been ruthlessly torn from their roots, and lay all curled up and shrivelled in the sun. Of all Tommy's garden not one green blade remained. Carefully Miss Margaret picked up the limp and faded leaves; none must be left for Tommy to see again lying there all dead. Just as she had taken up the last dead blade, big drops splashed upon the door-step, and the shower that Tommy had outrun came heavily down.

As Miss Margaret was closing the door Mrs. Tregennis ran hurriedly across the alley; over her shoulders as protection from the rain she had thrown a thick woollen antimacassar snatched from the back of Auntie Jessie's rocking-chair.

On the door-step she rested, panting, flushed and smiling. "Oh, Miss," she gasped, "what a shower, and Miss Dorothea somewheres along the beach! I must find Tom and send him with a cloak to the caves, may be she'll be shelterin' there."

"Yes," responded Miss Margaret in a way that plainly showed she scarcely heard what Mrs. Tregennis was saying.

Opening her hand she disclosed the dead grass blades lying there. "It's Tommy's garden," she explained.

Mrs. Tregennis opened the door again, stepped out into the drenching rain, looked down between the stones and understood.

"My poor lamb; where is he, Miss?"

"Upstairs in our room crying."

"Bless his little heart! I'm afraid Annabel did it, Miss Margaret, and in a way our Tommy did justly deserve it, for he's been very naughty to she, time an' again he has."

"Yes, I know, Mrs. Tregennis, but ..." Miss Margaret hesitated a moment. "You know it's largely my fault, too, for I haven't been a bit nice to that child ever once."

"Oh, Miss!" expostulated Mrs. Tregennis.

"No, you know I haven't," and turning Miss Margaret knocked at the door of Mrs. Radford's sitting-room.

An affected voice bade her "Come in." Mrs. Radford was reading, while Annabel learned to sew with a hot needle and sticky cotton on a long calico strip.

"Oh," said Mrs. Radford, languidly, in her best society manner, not rising to receive her visitor. "It is you!"

"Yes, may Annabel come upstairs with me for a little while?"

Annabel looked frightened, and closed her lips in a firm straight line.

Although Mrs. Radford constantly reminded herself that the upstairs visitors were quite common people, yet she felt gratified now, and motioned to Annabel to put her sewing away.

Miss Margaret took hold of Annabel's hand, and together they went from the room.

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## CHAPTER XIX

**D**OWNSTAIRS in the kitchen Tommy was being comforted by his mother. In the upstairs sitting room Annabel and Miss Margaret sat together and Miss Margaret was wondering how she should begin what she had to say.

Annabel's expression was one of sullen obstinacy, her lips were still set in a hard, straight line, and her eyes followed the intricacies of the pattern of the Brussels carpet. Miss Margaret hesitated to ask the child if

it was she who had torn up the blades of grass, for she feared to prepare the way for a lie.

"I am so sorry you spoiled Tommy's garden this afternoon, Annabel," she ventured.

Annabel's eyes were still on the carpet, and with her toe she outlined a full-blown rose. "It wasn't a garden; it was just bits of grass," she asserted.

"It was only bits of grass to you," Miss Margaret agreed, "but Tommy had watched it and watered it for weeks, and to him it was a real garden. Now you have spoiled it all, and made Tommy very unhappy."

"*I hate him*," said Annabel, defiantly, between closed teeth.

"Yes, I know, of course you do," and for the first time Annabel looked up.

Then Miss Margaret drew her to her. "I say, Annabel, don't you think you and Tommy and I might be real good friends now, and all just be very nice to each other?"

Then Annabel's lips trembled; but no tears fell.

"Does Tommy know?" she asked, and when she was told that he did not she went out of the room and stood at the top of the stairs. Bending forward, her hands resting on her knees, she peered down the steep staircase.

"Tommy," she called, "Tommy Tregennis," but there was no response.

"Tommy Tregennis, come here!" The call was louder this time.

"Tommy, Miss Margaret and me wants you."

At this Tommy's head was poked round the kitchen door.

All Annabel's usual diffidence in Tommy's company had vanished.

"Come here, Tommy!" she insisted, and Tommy, impelled by some new quality in her, walked slowly up the stairs.

"Tommy," said Annabel, rather hesitatingly, but looking straight into his eyes; "Tommy, I rooted up your garden."

For the second time that day Tommy hit her quite hard.

"Tommy!" called Miss Margaret, in a stern voice, and Tommy, followed by Annabel, obeyed the summons.

Then Miss Margaret explained to Tommy that he had often been very rude and unkind to Annabel, and that in the future they must all be friends. Whereupon Annabel held out her hand to Tommy, and Tommy promptly pushed it away.

Miss Margaret was wisely blind to this by-play, and began to unfold a plan she had formed.

"I'm thinking about the garden," she said, meditatively, and the children forgot each other and gave their attention to her.

"I think it will grow again; but it will be very slow. Wouldn't it be rather nice to plant some other flowers, and take care of them until the grasses come again?"

"How?" demanded Tommy.

"I thought we might have boxes made to stand on the ground under the window, and——"

"Not on my garden," interrupted Tommy.

"No, most certainly not. Not right on your garden, but quite close up to the windows. One will be an unusual shape, because under the kitchen window there's the drain to think of, too." Miss Margaret looked out. "It isn't raining now; shall we go and measure the lengths of our boxes?"

Downstairs they ran, borrowed Mrs. Tregennis's inch-tape, and outside under the windows they all three measured.

Here Miss Dorothea, returning from the shelter of the caves, found them and went with them up Main Street to the carpenter's, where they gave the order for the boxes to be made, painted green, and delivered on Monday without fail.

At the green-grocer's they ordered good soil for the new garden and sturdy little wall-flower plants full of tightly closed buds. Here, too, Miss Margaret bought Californian oranges, and paid for rosy-cheeked apples to be sent with the soil and plants on Monday.

"Now then, home and tea," she ordered; but at the cobbler's window she stopped.

"He lodges with my Aunt Martha," volunteered Tommy.

But the Blue Lady was not thinking of the cobbler, whose form could be dimly descried through the screen of hanging laces, patches of leather and cards of boot-protectors with which the window was dressed.

"It's Friday to-day," she said, impressively.

"Why shouldn't we have it to-morrow?"

"Have what?" asked Miss Dorothea. "What are you talking about?"

"Why, the pony and trap, of course," and Miss Margaret pointed to a little card in a corner pane, on which was unevenly printed:

PONY AND GINGLE ON HIRE

"For us," said Annabel. "I never!" and the children seized each other's hands in their excitement; but whose hand was put out first this time it was impossible to say.

There was scarcely room for them all in the shop of the cobbler who lodged with Aunt Martha. Miss Margaret bought from him numbers of pairs of cheap boot-laces, for which she had no possible use, because she was a little ashamed of their invasion of the tiny shop, when she learned that the pony and trap did not belong to him, but was advertised by him for a friend who lived at West Draeth, just to do 'e a turn. In the name of his friend, the cobbler promised that if the sun shone the following morning "the gingle 'e should be at the door of Tommy's house at ten o'clock without fail!"

In spite of his repeated assurance that there should be no mistake, Tommy was seized with a sudden misgiving on the way home and ran back to remind him not to forget.

"I've spoken to 'e," he panted, when he was in line again, "an' 'e says it'll be there." Then "I'm goin' to



tell my Mammy," he shouted, and was off once more.

When the others reached the house Tommy was in the middle of a voluble and wholly unintelligible explanation, from which Mrs. Tregennis tried vainly to extract some meaning.

"Will you have an orange, Annabel?" asked Miss Margaret at the door.

All Annabel's affectation had dropped from her this evening: she was just a normal child. As such she nodded, smiling broadly.

"Catch then," and Annabel made a careful cup of her hands, and caught.

As the ladies went upstairs they were followed by Mrs. Tregennis with the tea.

"Mrs. Tregennis, will you have an orange?"



**AT THE COBBLER'S WINDOW SHE STOPPED.**

"No, thank you, Miss, an' that I won't. Mrs. Radford's just been sayin' as how they must have cost you fourpence apiece, so really, Miss, I couldn't eat one of they, no, not if it was ever so."

"Does Mrs. Radford still think we are rapidly coming to the end of our money?" asked Miss Dorothea.

"Yes, Miss, indeed she does; she says 'tis like Oldham wakes, whatever they be, an' that it can't last out."

"Are you afraid, too?"

"Me afraid? an' that I'm not, an' you as always pays over an' above for what you have."

Mrs. Tregennis still stood in the doorway, holding the teapot in her right hand, and here Tommy joined her.

"Well, then," Miss Margaret's voice was quite pleading, "won't you have an orange?"

Mrs. Tregennis put the teapot down on the brown tile that served as a stand. "I simply couldn't, Miss," she stated emphatically; "it would choke me, that it would."

"Do you think it would be safe to experiment on Tommy? Tommy, would you choke if you were to eat one of the oranges we bought this afternoon?"

In reply Tommy stretched out both hands for the fruit, and his teeth had met in the thick rind before Mammy could improve his manners.

"An' what do you say, my son? I'd be ashamed!"

"Thank you," said Tommy, removing a large piece of orange peel from between his teeth.

"I should say 'Miss,' ma lovely," still corrected Mammy, but by this time a little fountain of sweet, yellow juice spurted upwards from the orange, and Tommy, sucking vigorously, walked away.

Later in the evening, as the ladies were going out once more Mrs. Radford opened her door and beckoned them into the room.

"It was kind of you to ask my babe to drive with you to-morrow," she said, in her most mincing tones, "but I have always most carefully protected her from the society of common children, and I would rather keep her by my side."

So the ladies went round to see Auntie Jessie, with the result that in all Draeth no child went to bed that night more happily than Ruthie Tregennis, Tommy's cousin and future wife.

But Annabel's pillow was wet!

## CHAPTER XX

**"I HAVEN'T** forgotten Blue Lady; I haven't forgotten, please, Miss Margaret, Miss," and Tommy turned over sleepily in bed, then awakened, yawned, rubbed his eyes and sat upright.

"What sort o' weather, Daddy?" he demanded. "Is't sun an' fine?"

It was.

Tommy then called down to Mammy in the kitchen, pleading to be dressed at once, so as to be ready when the gingle came. Mammy got out his brown jersey suit.

"Miss Margaret said old clothes, Mammy, so I shan't wear 'e."

"You'll do they no harm, and you'll just wear 'em."

"I wants my old clothes, Mammy, where be 'em. Miss Margaret said old clothes; she said old clothes, Mammy, she did."

It was not until Miss Margaret approved of the brown jersey suit that Tommy submitted and was dressed.

When he was ready he stood in the doorway, and to every one who passed he shouted the news. "I be goin' a-drivin' in a gingle to Polderry." And to the question, "Who with?" he gave the invariable answer, "With Miss Margaret and Miss Dorothea and Ruthie and me."

After breakfast the sun was hidden behind a cloud of mist. Tommy and the ladies consulted the glass on the front. It was very high, and all the watermen thought there was no fear of rain. Then Mrs. Tregennis packed the luncheon basket, and Tommy wished it was ten o'clock.

Miss Margaret had a happy thought, and suggested that they should go across to West Draeth and themselves bring round the gingle for Miss Dorothea and Ruthie. This was a grand idea. Hurriedly Mrs. Tregennis put on Tommy's boots and ran upstairs for his warm coat and his cap.

Miss Margaret and Tommy crossed the river by the ferry for quickness. "If you like, Tommy, you shall help me to hold the reins and to drive," promised Miss Margaret.

"If it be all the same to ee I'd rather have the whip," was the reply.

"But why?"

"For to hit 'em."

"But he won't want hitting," objected Miss Margaret. "I expect he'll trot along awfully well and won't want any hitting at all."

Tommy looked unconvinced, and as they left the boat at the slip he turned the conversation into other channels. "Lugger a-buildin' over there," he pointed with his thumb. "Must be for West Draeth as 'tis on that side. I seen one lanch one evenin' an' one lanch the next."

By the time Tommy had imparted all he knew of boatbuilding and launches they had reached Mr. Chard's door. The gingle was already outside, and while the pony was being brought round a small crowd of boys collected and watched with interest.

"Hallo, Tommy Tregennis."

"Hallo!"

"What be a-doin' over here, Tommy; ain't there room for ee to East Draeth?"

"Goin' to Polderry," said Tommy, proudly, and fell into the gingle as he spoke.

"Do these boys go to school with you, Tommy?" and Tommy told Miss Margaret that they did.

"They West Drayers do play their own side evenin's," he explained, "when they comes over to we they comes with their mothers an' just sits on our sands, an' that do be just so good as nothin', that be."

From every doorway people came out to see the start of the gingle for Polderry. Everybody waved and everybody shouted, and it was for all the world like a Sunday-school treat. Near the Post Office a louder cry than ever came from Tommy and was at once echoed by Ruthie, and both children rose up and waved their long white mufflers.

"We'm goin' to Polderry; we'm goin' to Polderry."

Miss Margaret's whole attention was taken up with the astonished pony, but, far away in the distance, standing on the quay, Miss Dorothea descried the figure of Uncle Harry and Uncle Harry was waving and shouting too.

Polderry was only five miles off along the cliff, but in driving you cover nearly twice that distance in order to have a better road. Miss Margaret had been directed to go past the station, up by the golf-links, through St Peter's and along the main road to Esselton, then they were to turn off to the right down the beautiful Brenton Valley and so to Polderry.

In the gingle Tommy sat up near the horse on the right-hand side with Miss Margaret next to him. Opposite Tommy was Miss Dorothea, so that Ruthie was near the door facing Miss Margaret. The reins, therefore, passed in front of Tommy, and suddenly he clutched them very tight while they were driving through the town, with the result that Jimmy, the pony, swerved to the left and almost ran into the corner of the bridge. Miss Margaret told him that he should help to drive when they were up on the wide country road, and very reluctantly Tommy let go. It was both surprising and disappointing when immediately afterwards Tommy again seized the reins, this time so tightly that it was with difficulty that his fingers were unclasped.

"You must be quite obedient," Miss Margaret reminded him.

So little, however, did Tommy realize what was meant by obedience that scarcely had she finished speaking than he again seized the reins with both hands, while a naughty look of defiance appeared on his face.

After this there was distinct depression in the gingle until Ruthie's shrill, bright voice pierced the gloom.

"There do be a nest on that wall under the ivy," she said, very confidentially. "'Tis a brave, big secret, an' no-one knows of it at all except only me an' Tommy, an' my daddy an' mammy, an' his daddy an' mammy, 'n Aunt Keziah Kate an' Granfäather Tregennis."

"Just a family secret," interposed Miss Margaret. "And what sort of a nest is it?"

"I don't know what sort o' nest it be. It do be a very nice little tight nest, an' 'tis quite empty this little nest, but I don't know what kind of nest 'e do be; just little an' tight."

Tommy disliked being ignored. "It hasn't got no eggs in it, 'tis empty; ef there was eggs in 'e I should know what 'twas."

"My daddy, he knows of a nest up here wanst," Ruthie continued, "that had twelve eggs in it, twelve speckly eggs."

"Oh, Ruthie, as many as twelve?"

"Yes, just so many as twelve."

"But what a very improvident mother-bird!" Miss Margaret objected. "How would she ever manage to feed twelve babies? And think of the very hard work it would be for the father to teach twelve children-birds to sing."

All this time Jimmy was pulling his load uphill, trotting every now and again, as though he were thoroughly enjoying the morning's work.

When the top of the hill was in sight, "Which way do we turn, to the right or to the left, Tommy?" asked Miss Dorothea.

"To the left," replied Tommy, without hesitation.

"How do you know which is your right hand and which is your left?"

Tommy became most communicative. "Why, I writes with my right hand over to school. There be two girls an' one boy in the second class as writes with their left hand, so they can't never tell. I wrote my name wanst six times on one side of my slate and six times on the other, an' it was so lovely I had to bring it home to show Mammy, Miss Lavinia said. 'Twas brave an' handsome, it was!"

"What be they white flowers?" interrupted Ruthie.

"Stitchwort," the ladies answered.

"'Tisn't, 'tis cat's eyes!" contradicted Tommy.

"Hush, Tommy," said Ruthie, "you'm a naughty boy. My mammy always calls they 'rattle-baskets' because it do rattle so when 'tis dry."

Ruthie's last words came spasmodically, for Tommy had unexpectedly leaned forward over the splashboard and hit Jimmy on the back with his white muffler. It had been a great disappointment to Tommy to find, when they started, that there was no whip in the gingle, and that the pleasure of hittin' 'en was not to be his. Realizing that the muffler would make a fairly good substitute, he used it with such effect that the startled pony broke into a quick gallop, and the ladies and Ruthie were jerked backwards in their seats.

When Miss Margaret had quietened the pony she spoke very seriously to Tommy.

Jimmy proved an unusually good pony for steep hills, taking them at a brisk trot. Going downhill, however, he was cautious and picked his way most carefully. Half-way down a steep, rough road Tommy again used his muffler as a whip. Then Miss Margaret was quite angry. As she felt that more words were useless, she merely loosened the muffler from his tight grasp and put it in the corner near the lunchbasket, where Ruthie sat.

It was most perplexing and embarrassing to have one's principal guest in constant need of correction.

Tommy was evidently quite surprised at Miss Margaret's decided action in the matter of the muffler, and for some moments afterwards sat silent and subdued. Then slowly, very slowly, his left hand stole towards her disengaged right resting upon the cushion. This seemed a sign of repentance on Tommy's part, and Miss Margaret's fingers closed tightly over his as she smiled across at Miss Dorothea.

Her happiness in Tommy's regeneration was short-lived. Snatching his hand away, "Get me some o' that stuff, Miss Margaret," he shouted, "get me some o' that stuff for a whistle."

"What stuff?"

"Suckymores, suckymores for a whistle."

They were still driving down the steep, rugged road, so Miss Margaret turned Jimmy to the grass of the hedge-bank and Miss Dorothea, Ruthie and Tommy got out. Miss Dorothea was able to break off some grand sycamore twigs for whistles, enough for all the boys in Miss Lavinia's school.

"Whoa, Jimmy; steady, Jimmy!" and Miss Margaret pulled hard at the right rein, only just saving Tommy from being knocked down by the wheel and run over.

Tommy tried to look natural and unconcerned, but Miss Dorothea had seen the cause of Jimmy's start. Tommy had picked up a hazel switch and, thinking himself unobserved, had hit the pony sharply on the flank.

It seemed quite useless to reprove him any more, so Miss Margaret sternly ordered him to return to the gingle. This he obstinately refused to do. He was goin' to walk for a bit, he was goin' to run on behind, he was. When Miss Dorothea walked towards him he ran away. He was literally lifted into the gingle, and then sat in Miss Dorothea's place, refusing to move, as he wished to be next to Ruthie. Ruthie herself explained to him that in that way the balance would be all wrong, but he still remained obdurate. Once more he was lifted up and put into his proper place.

Then, although Miss Margaret took the reins, she did not drive on. Instead, "Miss Dorothea," she said, "shall we go on to Polderry, or shall we drive straight back home?"

"Oh, Miss Margaret," pleaded Ruthie, "please, please, go on! don't ee go home. Tommy *will* be a good boy, won't ee now, Tommy?"

Tommy shook his head affirmatively.

"Well," said Miss Margaret, "you must quite understand that if we go on you are to be good. If you are naughty again I shall turn Jimmy round and drive home at once."

Unfortunately Tommy was used to threats that were seldom carried out. The policeman would come for him, Mammy said, when he was naughty, and, although he had often been really quite naughty, still the policeman had not come. At other times he was told that he would be sent to London to live with the monkeys in the Zoo. At first this possibility had filled him with dread, but now familiarity had blunted the sharp edge of fear.

Something in Miss Margaret's manner, however, warned him that hers was not an idle speech, and he decided that he must be really careful for the rest of the drive.

A little farther on, down the same hilly part of the main road, a lady approached them. "Have you just come through a village?" she asked, as they were passing by.

They had noticed on the right, down a side road, a few scattered houses, but scarcely thought it could be called a village.

"Had it any shops or a garage?" she asked again, and seemed disheartened when they told her that there were no shops nearer than Draeth, five miles away.

Afterwards they understood her anxiety, for right in the middle of the roadway stood a big, immovable motor. Two men were crawling under its body, and Miss Margaret had to call out sharply to one of them to withdraw his feet before she could drive Jimmy and the gingle past.

At Polderry it was decided that the very first thing to do was to eat the lunch that Mrs. Tregennis had packed in the big round basket.

When Tommy and Ruthie found that the yellow part of their eggs was green outside they were much surprised.

"Be they raw?" asked Tommy.

"Hard-boiled," answered Miss Dorothea, and Tommy ate his egg quickly, all by itself.

After this he gave back his slice of bread and butter. "Don't want 'e now, I wants a piece of cake."

"You must eat the bread and butter first," he was told.

"No, shan't," he said, and passed it on to Ruthie, who could not take it from him because Miss Margaret shook her head.

"Shan't *eat* 'en," Tommy stated, emphatically.

But this was a case in which Miss Margaret undoubtedly held the upper hand. She made no reply to Tommy's assertion, and when he tried to extract a piece of cake from the basket it was placed beyond his reach.

"*Shan't* eat 'en," he said again, but again no notice was taken of his words. Defiantly he picked up the bucket and spade and began to dig in the sand.

A tempting row of Cornish splits, halved and spread with jam and cream, was prepared by Miss Dorothea.

Tommy soon returned. "Can I have a split, please?" he asked, in quite a different voice.

"Yes," he was promised, "as soon as ever the bread and butter's eaten."

He shook his head, and almost at once asked again, "*Please* can I have a split, 'n jam 'n cream?"

"Tommy," said Miss Margaret, very definitely, "don't be such a foolish boy. Until you have eaten the bread and butter you can have nothing else. Try to understand that I mean that."

Tommy's hands hung limply at his sides. He gazed in open-mouthed amazement at Miss Margaret. She did really and truly mean it, he supposed. It was very odd and very surprising, and he picked up the rejected bread and butter and slowly began to eat.

"Oh, my cake," exclaimed Ruthie, as half a slice of saffron-cake broke in her hand and fell into the sand.

"You can't eat that now, Ruthie," laughed Miss Margaret, as she was about to pick it up. "It will be much too gritty."

Then Miss Margaret realized that she had made a grave tactical error, for at once Tommy's bread and butter fell at his feet.

"That must be eaten," said Miss Margaret quickly, and Tommy put his heel upon it and ground it deep down in the sand. Out of the corners of his eyes he glanced at Miss Margaret, but apparently she was quite unaware of his action, so he sidled up to her and once more pleaded for a split.

At this point, with disconcerting suddenness, the rain began to fall. Hastily the luncheon basket was repacked and Miss Margaret, Miss Dorothea and Ruthie ran to the shelter of a coach-house near by, where they were given permission to stay. Tommy remained behind and resumed his digging in the sand. When no notice was taken of his absence, he decided that making castles in the rain was poor sport. Accordingly he rejoined his party and found them merrily continuing the interrupted lunch.

Confidently he approached Miss Margaret, asking for "a split an' cream, please."

"But I can't give you a split," she said, "you were to have it when you'd eaten the bread and butter, and not until then."

"I did eat the bread and butter in my hand."

"What about the piece in the sand?"

Then Miss Margaret *had* seen him tread on it: this was unexpected.

"Couldn't help droppin' 'e," he said, now almost tearfully.

"But why did you bury it deep down in the sand?"

"I thought somebody might come along an' not know, an' pick 'e up an' eat 'e, an' it wouldn't be nice for they."

"Very well," said Miss Margaret, "I'll give you another piece exactly the same size, and when you've eaten that you can have splits and cream and just whatever you like."

But Tommy refused and kicked a ball savagely round and round the coach-house to soothe his outraged feelings. Violent exercise, however, did not allay his hunger.

"Please can I have a split," he asked once more.

Without speaking, Miss Margaret offered him a piece of bread and butter exactly the size of that which he had hidden in the sand, and Tommy ate it without remonstrance.

After lunch the picnic-party played ball-games in the roomy coach-house, but when at the end of an hour the rain showed no sign of abating, the ladies, in spite of Ruthie's earnest pleading, decided that it would be wiser to go home.

Somewhat dejectedly they walked to the inn for the gingle and Jimmy. Tommy brought up the rear, trailing his long spade after him and rattling his bucket against his knees each step he took. "Well," Miss Dorothea overheard him say, "Well, Ruthie; now this day do be bravely spoiled."

On the homeward drive Miss Dorothea told the children the history of Little Black Sambo. Then Ruthie told a story in which full-stops occurred in the middle of sentences whenever it was absolutely necessary that she should pause for breath.

"There was wanst a little boy an' he had a rabbit and it lived in a house in the garden an' he went up to feed it with green stuff one night an' he. Left the door open an' he met a man an' he said to the man what have you got in your pocket an' the man said a little rabbit an' the boy took this little baby rabbit an' took it to his home because he'd lost his own rabbit. Through leavin' the door open an' he met a man an' he said to the man what've you got in your pocket an' he said a very little bird so he took it to his home and put it in a house in his garden."

At some length the story went on. Always the boy met a man, and always the man had in his pocket some strange and unexpected animal which the boy took to his home and put in a house in the garden.

But finally, "An' the boy went out again an' he met a lady wheelin' a pram an' there was a baby in the pram an' the boy said what've *you* got in your pocket an' the lady said I haven't got nothin' in my pocket an' neither she hadn't got nothin' in her pocket for she only had a little baby an' the little baby was in the pram."

Then Ruthie looked round the gingle, smiling, and the wet audience of three, realizing that in this unfinished and unsatisfactory way the story ended, thanked her politely, and wondered whether the boy kept all his new pets safely or whether, like the original rabbit, they too escaped.

Going up the hill from Esselton they again passed the big, immovable car; it was still standing right in the middle of the road. All the passengers sat very closely together under the hood, evidently awaiting relief. Fired by Ruthie's example, Tommy decided that he, too, would tell a story.

"There was wanst a rabbit—. An' it went down to the beach—. An' there was another rabbit, too—. An' a great, big giant came down—. An' he took away one of the rabbits, did the giant—. An' the giant ate it all up."

They were passing St Peter's by this time. Draeth and home and Mammy were very near and Tommy felt unhappy inside. "I do be feelin' brave an' bad," he said, lifting tearful eyes to Miss Margaret. But Miss Margaret was busily occupied with the pony and the reins, and had no sympathy to extend to a conscience-stricken boy.

In pelting rain the gingle drew up in front of Mr. Chard's door. "Been a-sailin', Tommy Tregennis?" asked some of the West Drayers, but Tommy felt too bad to reply.

"Been a good boy, my lovely?" asked Mammy, as she drew off his boots.

"I dunno!"

"But you must know," said Mammy, as she buttoned the strap shoes. "Been a good boy?"

There was no answer.

"Well, have you been naughty?" Mammy persisted.

Tommy wriggled down from the chair. "I dunno, and don't ee bother I no more, Mammy, ask Miss Margaret what I been," and he ran from the house, unmindful of the rain, to seek the soothing presence of his never-failing admirer, Aunt Keziah Kate.

After tea Mammy had a long and serious talk with the ladies. "'Underds of times," she admitted, she threatened Tommy, and nothing happened. "When there's visitors here I feel I must go the easiest way," she explained.

"He's too good to be spoiled," urged Miss Margaret.

"We don't want to spoil him, Miss, his daddy an' me, and we must try and be firmer with him, for he do indeed be gettin' out of hand."

At six o'clock Miss Margaret heard Tommy go into the bedroom, and soon afterwards there was Mrs. Tregennis's heavier step on the stairs. There was a rustle of bed clothes and a creaking of springs, and by these signs Miss Margaret knew that Tommy was in bed.

"Tommy," said Mrs. Tregennis, "do you know why your Mammy do be feelin' very sad?"

"No Mammy," was the reply, "but shall us talk a bit about you, when ee was just a very little girl."

"No, my son," said Mrs. Tregennis, with great firmness; "we'm not goin' to talk about me when I was small; we be goin' to talk about you, instead, my son."

Then the door was closed and Miss Margaret heard no more.

## CHAPTER XXI

**A**FTER the Polderry picnic the relations between Tommy and his ladies were distinctly strained. In many little ways they worked for his regeneration and tried to bring home to him the enormity of his offences.

On the following day, which was Sunday, he himself showed tact in avoiding the upstairs sitting-room. Mammy brought up the letters and whenever the ladies approached the kitchen they found Tommy fully and unobtrusively occupied with urgent affairs in the corner farthest from the door.

On Monday morning when he was running along the quay from school, his quick eye saw a halfpenny lying in the dust near some drying tackle. This was unprecedented good fortune. It was the first money that Tommy had ever found. After picking it up he looked round for possible claimants, but as none appeared he put it in his pocket and pursued his homeward way.

He found only Mammy indoors. She was very busy just then, and although she was moderately enthusiastic over his find, he felt the need of wider sympathy and ran out into the alley on the off-chance of meeting with Jimmy Prynne.

Jimmy Prynne was not in sight, but coming up from the sea were his ladies. They carried travelling-rugs and books, and were laughing together as they walked. Tommy had always taken them into his confidence at once no matter whether it was in joy or sorrow. To-day he felt an unaccountable diffidence in approaching them.

Somewhat hesitatingly he drew near and their laughter at once ceased. "Found this!" and he held his dusty halfpenny up to view.

Miss Dorothea said nothing, Miss Margaret merely remarked "Oh," and passed on.

Quite obviously they had not seen his treasure. "'Tis a 'a'penny," he insisted. "I found 'e on the quay all in a 'eap o' dust."

Miss Dorothea passed into the house. Miss Margaret smiled politely, and "Oh," she said once more.

Tommy was sick at heart. It was as though the very foundations of his world were giving way.

In the matter of finds he seemed to have struck a run of luck, for on Tuesday he came home with a knife picked up on the shingle near the Frying Pan steps. It was an ivory-handled knife and had four blades of different sizes; they were all rusty and all broken.

"I'll give ee my knife, Daddy," said Tommy, at tea-time, pushing it across the table.

"Mustn't do that, must never give nothin' as cuts."

"Why?" asked Tommy.

"'Twill cut love. If so be as I took that knife I shouldn't love ee any more. 'Tis all right if 'e do be bought, so here be a 'a'penny for ee."

Daddy thrust the knife into his deep, trouser pocket, and Tommy put the halfpenny into his.

Tommy felt that his ladies would surely be interested in this day's event. There was not only the thrilling incident of the finding of the knife, but there was the subsequent financial transaction with Daddy, and a second halfpenny in his trouser pocket to-day. He poured out his story to them as they were mounting the stairs. To his amazement it left them cold.

When next they passed the kitchen door he entreated his Daddy to show the knife to them, and Tregennis displayed the four broken blades from which he had removed the rust with bits of cinder.

"You will find that most useful, Tregennis," said Miss Margaret. To Tommy she spoke not at all.

In the doorway she relaxed just a little. "You have really been quite lucky, Tommy," she remarked, and went with Miss Dorothea down to the sea.

Later the ladies had occasion to buy stamps. Coming from the post-office they saw Tommy sitting on the quay-wall, knocking off bits of mortar with his heels.

"Our one-time friend!" laughed Miss Dorothea, but Miss Margaret looked straight ahead.

When Tommy saw them he slipped from the wall and ran behind them whistling and singing to attract attention. As this proved a dull and ineffectual game he dodged in front kicking an old salmon tin before him as he ran. By the Three Jolly Tars Teddy Falconer was playing. When he saw Tommy he hastily picked up his ball and shrank into the doorway of the inn. Now Tommy would have been distinctly glad for this incident to pass unobserved, but it was at this moment, unluckily, that Miss Margaret became aware of him.

"Why does Teddy look so frightened?" she asked.

"'Tother day I did kick his ball for 'e, and ..." with a dramatic gesture towards the shrinking Teddy, "'e did run into his house to tell his Mammy."

The look that Miss Margaret gave Tommy showed him that his position was in no wise strengthened. He fell behind and walked home dejectedly to tea.

At half-past six that evening, when the water was high, there was to be a launch, Tregennis said. Miss Dorothea was tired, so Miss Margaret went alone to see the new lugger take the water. She missed the launch because it was all over half-an-hour before she got there, but she found instead, playing on the quay, Mary Sarah and Katie, and the whole Stevenson family.

Of course the Stevensons were there, Mary Sarah explained, for they were the O'Grady's cousins. Mary Sarah was as much as five, and in virtue of her age she took the lead. Mary Sarah enlightened the others as to the identity of the Lady, and vouched for her respectability, so to speak. The Lady had often spoken to her, she told them with an air of superiority, and she had often spoken to the Lady when the Lady was sittin' up on the top o' the cliffs.

When the conversation dragged a reference was made to sweets, and the whole party repaired to Mrs. Tregennis's house.

"Mrs. Tregennis," called out Miss Margaret, "here's Mary Sarah O'Grady, and Katie O'Grady, and their cousins the Stevensons and me. We've all come here for sweets. Have you any to give away?"

There was a blank moment when Mrs. Tregennis announced that she hadn't got no not one.

Tommy, who was in the kitchen at the time, was delighted to think that sweets were not forthcoming for Mary Sarah and Katie, and the whole family of Stevensons.

Then Miss Margaret brightened up. "I remember!" she said, and ran upstairs two steps at a time.

When she returned she had in her hand a good-sized paper bag which she gave to Mary Sarah.

"Now Mary Sarah," she admonished; "you share them out, turn and turn about. Be quite fair. They're such pretty children," she remarked to Mrs. Tregennis.

"They did oughter be," was the reply, "for they be Irish to the very finger-tips."

Miss Margaret again turned to the group of children. "What have you got, Katie?" and Katie withdrew from her mouth a big bull's-eye.

With bulging cheek, and somewhat inarticulately, Mary Sarah spoke. "Her do have a shocking bad cold," she said with the wisdom of three times five; "they mints will be brave an' good for she."

This incident made a deep impression upon Tommy. So far the ladies had been his own special property; he had shared them quite occasionally with Ruthie, but with her alone. That Mary Sarah and Katie and the Stevensons should adopt them was by no means in accordance with his wishes. Something must be done, and that something clearly must be the strengthening of his own moral character.

Weeks before Miss Margaret had initiated Tommy into the mysteries of an early morning rite. You first of all clasped hands (right hands it had to be, Tommy's left was always rejected), and then you said "Good morning," and smiled, and after that you shook the hands up and down and jumped once to each shake. Both shaking and jumping got quicker and quicker, and at last ended with an abrupt stop, and your arms fell stiffly to your sides.

To Tommy this ceremony had become an integral part of the morning. It was strange, too, how only Miss Margaret knew the proper way. When Miss Dorothea tried to shake hands with him once he found that she had absolutely no knowledge of the right method of procedure and he had been obliged to tell her so.

For three mornings now the ceremony had been neglected. On the Wednesday Tommy determined that it must no longer be omitted, and when he saw Miss Margaret he held out his hand and smiled. Miss Margaret smiled too, took his hand in hers, shook it just once, said "Good morning," then turned to Mrs. Tregennis and gave orders for the day.

"Why wouldn't Miss Margaret shake hands with me proper?" he asked afterwards.

"Don't ee know?" Mammy replied, "I guess *I* know. You think, my son."

So Tommy thought.

There was great excitement in Draeth the next day, for a big Conservative tea-meeting had been arranged for the afternoon, and The Member was to be present.

At one end of the tea-table Mrs. Tregennis presided. She was accompanied by Tommy in the dandy-gorri-set sailor suit, and by Tregennis. Tregennis felt very stiff and uncomfortable, for as this was such an important occasion Mrs. Tregennis had decided that he must discard the fisherman's jersey in favour of his wedding suit. In all the eight years he had been married this suit had not been worn above a dozen times, for, as he declared to Miss Margaret, "It has to be some fine weather, Miss, when I puts on they."

This afternoon the wedding suit was worn, and Tregennis, Mrs. Tregennis and Tommy sat down to tea with their fellow-Conservatives and with all the quality of Draeth. An excellent tea was provided at sixpence a head; The Member made a few remarks on the political outlook which were well received, and the meeting broke up amid general congratulations. As Mrs. Tregennis explained afterwards to the ladies she herself was not a Conservative, in fact, her father was a Liberal, so if it came to a question of family she was a Liberal too. She knew naught of it, but always hoped that the best man would get in, politics or no politics. Tommy, she supposed, would be brought up as a Conservative and follow in his father's steps.

"But that is too dreadful to contemplate," exclaimed Miss Margaret. "Tommy, come here."

This was a tone of voice Tommy had not heard for five days. He came with alacrity.

Miss Margaret held out a bottle of boiled sweets that were just the very best kind he liked; hard and scrunchy they were on the outside, soft and sticky within.

"These," said Miss Margaret, "are Liberal sweets. Each time you eat one you must say, 'I'm a good Liberal.'"

Tommy grinned.

"That do be bribery and corruption," objected Tregennis.

"Never mind," Miss Margaret replied. "Now, Tommy, what are you to say?"

Tommy had taken two sweets at the same time and there was a bulge in each cheek. In reply to Miss Margaret's question he bit first on the right side of his mouth, and "I be a brave good Liberal," he asserted. Then he bit on the left side and the formula was repeated.

Afterwards, "I don't care which I be, 'servative or Liberal," he affirmed, "but I do like they sweets better'n either."

The next morning Miss Margaret shook hands with him in quite the proper manner. They jumped quite thirteen times and the ending was exceptionally sudden and abrupt. While Miss Margaret stood stiffly in front of him Tommy made a little dash forward and threw his arms around her. She stooped and kissed him and Tommy went off happily to school.

So big was the bottle of Liberal sweets that even on Saturday there were still some left. Just before tea Tommy asked many times that Mammy would get these from the cupboard and let him eat them then.

"Not before tea, ma handsome; not till ee do go to bed."

"Wants they now to wanst, *please* Mammy," Tommy stated.

"Not till ee do go to bed, I tell ee."

"Gimme one of they Liberal sweets *now*."

"Tommy," it was Miss Margaret's voice. "Tommy, I want to give you a box of chocolates to-morrow, but if you ask once more to-day for the bottle of sweets, I shall keep the chocolates for myself."

"There, you hear," said Mammy, "an' you do know now, Tommy, that what Miss Margaret says that she do mean."

Tommy nodded a little shamefacedly. "Yes, I know," he assented; "I remember."

When Tommy came in from play two hours later he walked up to the kitchen cupboard.

"Mammy," he demanded eagerly, holding up his hands to the shelf out of reach, "Mammy, I tell ee, do give I one o' they Lib...."

Then came recollection. "Oh," he said, "I had a'most forgot."

His outstretched hands dropped to his sides, he clutched the stuff of his trousers to keep the restless fingers still, and with very tightly closed lips turned his back on the cupboard and the kitchen, and walked upstairs to bed.

Thus it was that Tommy took the first conscious and determined step towards the improvement of his moral character.

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## CHAPTER XXII

**I**N the upper windows of the double-fronted house near the church plain short blinds had replaced the long Madras muslin curtains. Again the gay Brussels carpet in the best sitting-room was covered with newspaper and the ornaments were put away. All visitors had left Draeth, for the Summer was over, and with the summer Tommy's sixth birthday had come and gone.

Being six did not bring with it the rare delight that Tommy had expected. For one thing he missed his ladies; for another he was troubled by the growing sadness of his Mammy's face. Twice when he came in unexpectedly he had found her in tears, and yet she had assured him that she had no headache anywhere.

It was most unfortunate, too, that just when things were a little dreary Granny Tregennis should be so very tired. Whenever Tommy ran in to see her now, he found that she was still in bed, and although she wanted him to play with her on Saturday mornings yet, when he went upstairs, she seemed to have but little pleasure in the play-toys that were kept in the fireplace cupboard.

"My Granny did ought to have a brave long sleep," he asserted with puckered brow.

"She do be goin' to have a brave long sleep, ma handsome," Mammy's eyes filled with tears as she spoke and this seemed to Tommy inconsistent.

On the front, looking for occupation, he fell in with Old John. Old John was a life-long friend, but of late there had been so many other interests to attract him that Old John had been neglected.

Now Tommy hailed him. "Gotten a noo pair o' trousers," he shouted, and almost overbalanced in his effort to stand on one leg with the other stretched out at right angles in front of him.

"Hm!" said Old John.

Taking his pipe from his mouth he examined the trousers critically. "Hm!" he said again.

"My Mammy's blue skirt," Tommy explained, proudly, while he reversed his position. He now stood on the left leg and thrust forward the right.

"Hallo!" he cried, for Mammy was approaching to bring him in to bed.

"Tommy 'e do tell me 'e've gotten noo trousers."

Mammy nodded.

"Made out o' your blue skirt, Ellen Tregennis?"

Mammy nodded and smiled.

"You'm gotten as good a little woman as ever is in the world for your Mammy, Tommy." Old John looked at Mrs. Tregennis, who laughed in acknowledgement of the compliment.

"We'm forced to do as careful as we can," she said. "When Tom can't go neither boulder-fishin' nor whiffin' we be livin' on our means like the gintry; then I make clothes for Tommy, so's he'll be respectable. 'Taint no mortal use, Old John, for we to *look* small and *be* small both, so there's where 'tis to."

"Makes 'en out of hers!" This was a fact that Tommy was very proud of.

Again Mammy laughed. "Well, 'tis so," she admitted. "Tom an' me we wears the clothes, then Tommy wears 'en, then they do be made into mats an' we treads on 'en. Blouses bain't no good though, for 'e," she added ruefully; "very wastely things they be to tear up for 'e, the sleeves do come s'awkward!"

"An' Tom now, 'e do be a brave good husband?" queried Old John.

"That he be. I wouldn't stand no nonsense, I wouldn't be 'umbugged about with 'e, me at my size."

Mammy smiled and led Tommy off to bed.

At the top of the alley Tommy stopped. "I'll be back in a minute," he said as he turned towards Main Street.

"Where be a-goin'?" asked Mammy.

"Where be I a-goin'?" Tommy echoed in surprise. "Why I be a-goin' to say good-night to my Gran."

"I shouldn't go to-night, ma handsome; Granny's tired."



Tommy turned and looked at his mother in amazement. Every night ever since he could remember he had run along to say "good-night" to Granny.

"She'll want me, an' I must go," he demurred.

"She do be too tired for ee to-night, my lamb."

"Do ee mean, Mammy, that 'er do be too tired for me to say good-night to she?" Tommy was frankly incredulous.

Mammy nodded and again the tears came. "She can't do with ee, not to-night," she said very softly.

Much puzzled Tommy was led into the house and undressed; still puzzled he went upstairs to bed. Half-an-hour later he fell asleep, wondering.

The next day, Saturday, a reluctant Tommy was sent to spend the morning on the beach, while Mammy went along to be with Aunt Keziah Kate, for Granny's tiredness was nearly over.

In the old-fashioned bedroom there was little to do but wait.

"She do be slippin' away fast," said Aunt Keziah Kate.

Gently she stroked the frail old hands that lay on the coarse coverlet. There were no tears in her eyes. There would be plenty of time for weeping afterwards, now they must just wait.

"It do be just like Gran." Mammy hastily brushed away a tear. "Never wasn't no trouble to no-one, wasn't Gran. All her life she've spent in considerin' others. As long as visitors was here she've keppen up; now that the summer's over she do be quietly slippin' away."

The old woman, lying so quietly on the bed, opened her eyes and her lips moved slowly. Aunt Keziah Kate bent to catch the whispered words.

"Saturday?"

Aunt Keziah Kate nodded.

"What be the time?"

Aunt Keziah Kate told her.

"Then where be Tommy?"

"You don't want 'e mother this mornin', do ee?"

An almost imperceptible movement of Granny's head was the reply, and Tommy was hastily found and brought up from the sunshine of the beach to the dim light of Granny's room.

"Go very quietly, my lamb," warned Mrs. Tregennis.

"But I allus do," answered Tommy, rather indignantly. "She don't never hear me come; it do be a surprise for she."

Then he creaked across the room on tip-toe, stepped first of all on to the hassock and from this to the chair. When he raised the curtain the sight of the lined face lying so still, so very still, upon the pillow stopped the "Bo" before it left his lips.

Instead, "Granny, Granny," he whispered. "I do be come to play with ee, my Granny."

The tired old eyes opened very slowly, and for a moment it almost seemed as though she smiled. "Ma lovely," she whispered.

But there were no play-toys to-day, for in the same room where a new life had begun so many years ago an old one was soon to end. There was no storm now. Outside the sun shone brightly, and a little breeze gently moved the old chintz window curtains made so many years ago by Granny's busy hands.

Granfäather Tregennis had come into the room and large tears were rolling down his cheeks. Tommy thought that grown men never cried. His wonder deepened when Granfäather, who was quite grown up, knelt down on the other side of the bed and covered his face with his hands.

Mammy and Aunt Keziah Kate were crying too.

Tommy's heart tightened with despair. Granny had forgotten him, for again her eyes were closed.

Then he remembered something that would surely arouse her interest, and from his trouser pocket he pulled out yards of tangled, woollen chain; the very chain that Granny had taught him to make in the far-away Christmas holidays.

"I made this for ee, Granny," he said, putting into her hands a motley string of pink, and green, and blue and red. "I did make 'e for ee all myself, no-one else did never do none of 'e at all."

Once more Granny opened her eyes. "Thank ee ma lovely," she whispered, and a little sigh fluttered between her parted lips.

Then Tommy was led away.

When Aunt Keziah Kate would have removed the tangled chain the feeble fingers closed and held it more firmly.

Afterwards, when Granny was at rest, Granfäather Tregennis took it from the cold hands and put it away in a drawer with his few treasures—a dry, withered rose given him by Granny many, many years ago, and an artificial spray of orange-blossom worn by Granny on their wedding-day.

**O**N the day of Granny's funeral Old John took care of Tommy.

Old John lived up towards the Barbican, in as neat a cottage as you could find in Draeth. No woman ever did a hand's turn in his little, two-roomed crib; the old sailor washed and mended, cleaned and scrubbed, and kept his home so well that, as Mrs. Tregennis remarked, 'twould be possible to eat anything as 'e'd made, an' eat it off his floor at that, an' she for one would gladly do it.

It was not until Old John was getting on in years that he had married and set up a cabin of his own. He had given up sailin' then and turned fisherman, because he wouldn't leave his bonny little maid so much alone.

Only to himself, never to any other, did Old John confess that the bonny little maid had proved a misfit. God, how he had loved her! Nigh on eighty was Old John now, and still he dreamed of her at night. Too much given to newsin' she had been and that was all the trouble.

"Ousin' and tea-drinkin' don't hold in our line o' life," Old John had told her, but she had only laughed and followed her own bent. Under her care, or lack of care, the trim cottage by the Barbican had become a dirty hovel.



**ON THE DAY OF GRANNY'S FUNERAL, OLD JOHN  
TOOK CARE OF TOMMY.**

Before his love could wane she died. Thirty-five years had gone by since the night that Old John held her for the last time in his arms. In her place she left a son, and the son was more of a misfit than the mother who bore him.

"One o' they creeperses!" was the judgement of Draeth, and Old John knew that the judgement was just. But not only was his John sly, he was idle and lazy as well.

"If I could only have had a son like Tommy, an' a wife like ...," then Old John checked himself sharply; there was disloyalty in the thought and he gave undivided attention to his guest.

"What be we a-goin' to have for dinner?" Tommy was asking.

"Fish," replied Old John.

"What did ee eat for breakfast?"

"Fish as I caught at sunrise."

"An' what'll ee have for supper?"

"Fish again."

"Seems a lot o' fish in one day," Tommy stated.

"Why, yes; of course. 'Twouldn't be so cheap to live else, Tommy. Don't ee know thicky tiddley verse:

Fish for breakfast that we 'ad,  
An' for dinner 'ad a chad,  
An' for tea we 'ad some ray,  
So we 'ad fish three times that day!"

The young voice and the old one said the lines over and over in a monotonous sing-song until Tommy knew them off by heart.

Movements overhead showed that John was getting up. Although it was nearly half-past nine he had not yet left the bedroom. When he came downstairs he looked sulky and unwashed and ate his breakfast in sullen silence.

"Fish to sell?" he muttered.

Old John pointed to his early morning catch.

As well as being sly and lazy John was also a bit soft, and never acted on his own responsibility.

"How much be I to get for they?" he asked.

It was only a small catch and Old John lifted the fish from the basket to estimate their value.

"Should fetch tenpence," he decided, "but make what ee can. If ee can't get tenpence, take eightpence; an' if 'ee can't get eightpence, take sixpence; but make what ee can. Should fetch tenpence, though," he said again as he replaced the fish and passed the basket to his son.

John always followed the line of least resistance. Half-way to the quay he met a man who handled his fish with a view to buying.

"What do you want for they?" he was asked.

"My fäather said get tenpence if ee can, or eightpence if ee can; or sixpence if ee can; just make what ee can. So what'll ee give for they?"

Long before his return was expected John slouched into the cottage kitchen and threw four pennies on the table. "For they fish," he said, and walked away to join a knot of idlers on the front.

Old John sighed as he gathered up the coins. He felt very old these days: he wasn't by no means the man he used to be, and it was very difficult to live.

"Goin' a-whiffin' again to-day?" Tommy asked him, and he brought his mind to bear upon the needs of the moment.

"Not whiffin', but afore tea I must see to my lobster pots," he replied. "Did ought to get a good catch, too. What be a-goin' to do, Tommy, when art a grown man? Fishin'?"

Tommy shook his head. "No," he stated, emphatically. "My Mammy says it do be starvation to put a lad to fishin' now. I'll be a p'liceman an' scare they children bravely, that I will." Tommy drew himself up in proud anticipation of his authority-to-be.

"Bit lonely, bain't ee sometimes, Tommy?" was Old John's next essay.

Tommy did not understand, so Old John tried to make his meaning clear.

"'Twould be nice for ee to have a baby sister to play with an' look after," he said. Then he knew that he had blundered.

Tommy clenched his fingers, set his teeth together and breathed hard. "Ef a baby sister do come to *my* house," he declared, "I shall upstairs with she, an' out through the toppest window 'er'll go."

"Well, well, well!" Old John was at a loss. When you are close on eighty it is not easy to sustain a conversation with a boy of six.

"Where be my granny?" Tommy asked, unexpectedly.

Old John was confused. It did not come easy to him to talk o' things as 'ad to do wi' religion.

"In heaven," he answered, hesitatingly.

Tommy went to the door and looked earnestly upwards at the clouds,

".....white as flocks new shorn  
And fresh from the clear brook."

His eyes filled with tears, but he blinked them bravely back. Mammy had said not to cry, and he tried hard to be a man.

"I wonder if God wanted she as much as us," he said. Then a feeling of unutterable loneliness came upon him. His bravery fell from him, and he ran sobbing to Old John.

"I be frightened," he sobbed. "I want Mammy; will Mammy have gotten home?"

Clumsily Old John held him in his arms, and, six years old though he was, Tommy fell asleep just like a little boy. Since Saturday everything had been so sad and so unusual; he had not been to school and the days had dragged. He had gone to bed late and got up early, and now he was quite tired out. Old John carried him upstairs and laid him gently upon the unmade bed. There Tommy slept until he was awakened for the dinner of fish.

Before tea Tommy left Old John's cottage, and Old John went to see to his lobster pots.

In her unaccustomed black Mammy's pale face looked still paler. Daddy was wearing his wedding-suit and a broad black tie. It was all so unusual that Tommy felt almost a stranger in his own house. Auntie Martha came in early in the evening and brought with her a coat of Mabel's which she thought would do for Tommy to wear to school in the coming winter months.

"It do be a bit small for Mabel, anyhow," she explained, "an' now as her do be a-wearin' black it ain't but little good to she."

It was a fawn coat with brown velvet collar and cuffs—a beautiful coat, Tommy thought. This present was a gleam of brightness in a dreary day, and he wished the winter would come quickly that he might wear it at once.

"Come along to bed, Tommy," said Mammy, "and bring the noo coat with ee."

"All right, Mammy," he replied, "won't be but a minute," and he walked to the door.

"Where be a-goin'?" Mammy spoke very gently.

"To say good-night to my Gran."

Then realization came. "She isn't there," he whispered, and, turning, went silently upstairs.

In his prayers that night he stumbled. "Bless granfäather——" he prayed, and stopped. Then, "an' please God kiss my Granny good-night for me," he asked, "an' make me a brave, good boy."

As Mrs. Tregennis went downstairs Tregennis came in from the sea. "Ellen," he said, in an awestruck voice, "Ellen, Old John 'e be drowneded."

"Can't be," said Mrs. Tregennis. "Why, he was here but an hour ago. You see'd 'e yourself, Tom."

Tregennis nodded. "He was lobster-catchin', Crudely way. The men were seine-fishin' an' up on the cliffs the 'ooers was a-'oooin of 'em on. Old John he looked up at the 'ooers an' somehow missed atween the rocks and his boat and slippen down. Seiners they came up quick, but they haven't found 'e yet. I wanted just to come in an' tell ee, Ellen, didn't want ee to hear accident-like. I must go back now and help," and Tregennis returned to do what he could.

But not until late the next day did they find Old John's body. John, his son, put on his father's best clothes, and idled on the front while the fishermen of Draeth dragged the water near the Crudely rocks. When he found anyone willing to listen to him he spoke. "Funny thing," he muttered, "very funny thing. Fäather's been to sea all these years, an' never got drowned afore. Very funny thing it do be for sure, an' what be I a-goin' to do now?"

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## CHAPTER XXIV

**M**RS. TREGENNIS sat at the kitchen table. With a short and rather blunt pencil she was making calculations on a half-sheet of note-paper. Never before in the month of April had they stood so well and known so little fear. Mrs. Radford had been so very difficult and had tried Mrs. Tregennis so sorely that early in January she had been asked to leave; still during all the months she had lived there her money had come in safely week after week and had been a great help. Then Tregennis had been at work more or less regularly since the beginning of January, not fishin', 'tis true, but diggin' and cartin', which he found very hard, but to which he stuck doggedly all the same.

The digging and carting had been in connexion with the building of the new Council Schools, which stood rather high up above the West River, just opposite the station. Some weeks Tregennis had earned as much as eighteen shillings, and as a result of this the little sum in the bank, which represented summer visitors and summer fishing, had remained untouched.

So Mrs. Tregennis was adding up. There was over eight pound from that catch on the wreck when the boulder parted, and two weeks afterwards there was nigh on three pound, and then there had been two pound five, an' fifteen shillin', an'—

At this point Mrs. Tregennis lost count. Her little sums were all upset by Tommy's return from school.

Tommy was evidently very angry. He half-kicked the door open, then banged it behind him and stamped into the kitchen. When Mrs. Tregennis looked up she saw that his fingers were tightly clenched and that he was gritting his teeth. Without speaking, she put the lead pencil to her lips and slowly made more figures on the piece of paper.

Tommy took off the coat he was wearing, threw it on the floor and kicked it into the fender.

Then Mammy arose.

"Well, Tommy Tregennis," she said, "'an' shall I bring some more of your clothes for ee to kick about the place? Will ee have the brown jersey suit, my son, and the long sailor trousers?"

Tommy stood rigid and defiant. His eyes flashed as he answered his mother. "I shan't wear 'e never no more." He pointed dramatically with his right hand in the direction of the fireplace. "Never, no more, I tell ee, no, *never!*"

"Pick you that coat out o' the ashes," Mrs. Tregennis ordered.

For a moment Tommy hesitated, then reluctantly he obeyed.

Mrs. Tregennis took it from him and put it on a chair. It was the coat that had once been Mabel's—the coat that was trimmed with brown velvet and that had been given to Tommy on the night of Granny's funeral.

There was a brief silence, then Tommy spoke again. "I shan't wear 'e, never no more," he repeated. If it had not been for the fact that he was going on seven and had not cried for more than a month, Tommy would certainly have cried now.

Mrs. Tregennis realized this. "Why not?" she asked sympathetically.

Then two tears came, but Tommy blinked them bravely back. Even to Mammy he hesitated to give his reason, for shame had overwhelmed him, and the mockery had hurt.

He clenched his fingers as he lived through the whole scene once more, then he swallowed hard and explained. "The boys they do be a-sayin' as Tommy Tregennis 'e do wear an old maid's coat." Then, "Mammy, Mammy, I *can't* wear 'e never no more! I needn't, Mammy, say it, oh, *say it!*" he implored.

"Well, ma lovely," replied Mrs. Tregennis, "your Mammy would much like to wear a beautiful silk gownd like the queen wears in London, but she've gotten to wear just this." As Mrs. Tregennis sat down she drew aside the apron that covered her plain serge skirt.

Instantly Tommy's arms were around her neck. "Mammy, Mammy," he relented, "I'll wear 'e, sure I will; I'll wear 'e an' never heed they boys, then ee can have a brave silk gownd, Mammy, just like the queen do wear to London."

"Oh, never mind," said Mrs. Tregennis, "I'm not so set on a silken gownd if it comes to that, wool'll do me in my line of life, an' I'll give your coat to some little boy as is smaller 'an you, an' that'll be fine all round." As she and Tregennis agreed afterwards Tommy'd really wore that coat a lot, an' so they didn't ought to grumble, an' he was really very good about his clothes, pore lamb; an' if he was cold he could wear his best

blue coat to school, 'twouldn't do it no harm, not with care, and summer would be upon them very soon and no coats needed then.

This happened to be the last day of Tregennis's work at the new school buildings, and the following morning, with something of relief, he went out shrimping. He came home with two quarts and more of very fine shrimps, which Mrs. Tregennis boiled and took round for sale in the afternoon. When she returned, having disposed of all the plates of shrimps, she found that Tommy was home from school and was in a state of great excitement.

For the first time he had been allowed to write in ink! He had made only one quite little blot and one very small smudge!

"Miss Lavinia said 'twas brave an' handsome, Mammy," he told her. "She said to take it home, Mammy, 'cos 'twas so fine an' lovely, so here 't be for ee to see."

"Tom and Sam dig in the sand. The ant can run on the sand. The sand is wet but the ant runs fast on the wet sand."

Mrs. Tregennis and Tommy together read out the written words, and looked with pride at the "good" in red ink at the bottom of the page.

"This do be some fine, ma lovely," said Mammy, appreciatively, and, going to the cupboard, she took her purse from the second shelf and gave Tommy a penny.

"There's a penny and a saucer; run an' get some cream for your tea, ma handsome, because your ink-writin' do be that beautiful."

Off Tommy ran to the one dairy in Draeth where cream can be bought by the penn'orth.

It was all so thrilling and exciting that Tommy quite forgot his manners, and on his return, rounding a corner, he ran up against Auntie Jessie, and Auntie Jessie had seen him lick his finger after sticking it well into the cream.

"My!" gasped Tommy.

"*Well!*" said Auntie Jessie, and walked on.

Tommy felt dreadful. "Now I shall get it somethin' awful," he muttered. "Now I shall just be 'bout half killed." Then, holding the saucer well in front of him, he ran quickly home.

"Mammy," he explained, somewhat breathlessly, "I didn't know as I was a goin' to do it. 'Twent in quite of itself, it did. They be all a-comin' to tell ee, Mammy, but don't ee hit I for I've telled ee of it first. I didn't know as I was a-goin' to do it, but there 'twas, an' Auntie Jessie she saw an' 'll tell ee, but 'twent in of itself, it did, sure as sure it did, Mammy."

"What be all this about, Tommy Tregennis?" Mammy inquired. "Try to talk a bit of sense, do ee now." And then she heard the story of Tommy's lapse from decency.

Like Auntie Jessie, Mammy merely said, "*Well!*"

"I've never done no such thing afore, Mammy," argued Tommy, "'an' I've seen other boys an' girls a-puttin' their fingers in pennorths of jam one, two, three *an'* four times."

"Oh, *they* children!" replied Mammy, and Tommy knew that somehow his line of defence was weak.

"Mammy," he said, very pleadingly, "Mammy, it did just slippen in, it did," and he held the guilty finger up in front of him and looked at it sadly as he slowly shook his head.

"Don't ee do it never no more, then," admonished Mrs. Tregennis, "an' here's your Daddy so we'll have some tea."

"Cream on a week-day!" exclaimed Tregennis, in surprise.

"Yes," assented Mammy, "our Tommy's done some brave good ink-writin', so we be all havin' a treat." "We'm properly livin' high," she continued, "just like the gintry we be," and as she spoke she took a small teaspoonful of cream from the saucer into which Tommy's finger had slipped by mistake and emptied it carefully on to the side of her plate.

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## CHAPTER XXV

"There's no dew left on the daisies and clover,  
There's no rain left in heaven;  
I've said my seven times over and over:  
Seven times one are seven."

**T**OMMY was standing at the table before breakfast, reciting in a breathless, sing-song voice. Before school closed for the summer holidays Miss Lavinia had taught him the poem so that he could say it as a surprise to Daddy and Mammy this morning. For this morning was the 29th of August, and Tommy's birthday, and he was just exactly "seven times one."

His parents listened to him with pride, but Mammy could not help feeling a little sad, for she realized how very quickly Tommy was growing up. Because she was always busy the months simply sped along. This spring had passed unusually quickly, and now here was the summer almost over and Tommy was actually seven years old!

Mrs. Tregennis had been very successful in letting her rooms this season; since the first week in May the

house had been full. She and Daddy and Tommy were all greatly disappointed that Tommy's Ladies were not coming to Draeth this year. They had sent some of their friends, certainly, and they proved to be very nice people and paid Mrs. Tregennis well. But, of course, it was not the same. From these friends, too, Mrs. Tregennis had heard disquieting rumours, and she was much afraid that it would be a long, long time before the Blue Lady and the Brown Lady would come again to Draeth to stay.

"And show me your nest with the young ones in it,  
I will not steal them away;  
I am old, you can trust me, linnet, linnet;  
I am seven times one to-day."

Tommy ended the surprise poem with pride, for not one stumble had he made all the way through from beginning to end. Daddy showed his appreciation by giving him a sixpenny bit, as he wished him "Many 'appy returns o' the day."

This awakened memories of the past, and Tommy became reflective.

"My poor Granny used to give me a half-a-crown on my birthday," he remarked, reminiscently. "She didn't never have ought to 'a done it," he continued, shaking his head, "for she couldn't rightly afford 'e. Still, she did allus give me a half-a-crown did my poor Gran!"

Further reflections were interrupted by the postman.

"Well, I be glad an' yet I'm not glad," Mrs. Tregennis said, when she had come to the end of her letter and passed it over to Daddy.

"He did ought to be shot!" was Tregennis's fierce comment when he had read to the end of the first page.

"Who did ought to be shot, Daddy?" Tommy's efforts to balance the sixpenny-bit on the extreme tip of his nose were interrupted while he put the question.

"Miss Margaret's been gettin' married, ma lovely," Mrs. Tregennis told him.

This seemed no explanation to Tommy, and he persisted in his question. "Who did ought to be shot, Daddy?" he repeated.

Tregennis looked across at his wife. "There ain't no man in this world good enough for Miss Margaret," he asserted. "He did ought to be shot even for so much as lookin' at her, but as for wantin' to marry her—well ——" Here words failed him.

Meanwhile Mrs. Tregennis had taken off the wrapper from an illustrated paper that the postman had brought, too. Turning over the pages, she came to one down which a thick, red line was drawn, and there was Miss Margaret's likeness just staring her in the face!

Silently Tommy and Tregennis looked as Mrs. Tregennis pointed.

"'Elliott and Fry,'" read Mrs. Tregennis, meaninglessly.

Tregennis nodded. "Them's the chaps as took it."

"Then this is *him!*" said Mammy, and put her finger on the portrait next to Miss Margaret's own.

Then she drew in her breath sharply. "Why, she be marryin' a *Sir!*" she exclaimed. "They'll never come here no more."

She looked sadly round the tiny kitchen. There was the line on which Miss Margaret's wet skirts had hung, time and time again. That was the rocking-chair Miss Margaret had sat in many a day when the evenings were turning cold. Under the table was the Dobbin that the Blue Lady and the Brown Lady had given to Tommy at the very first of all.

"An' now she be married to a Sir," she murmured, "an' she'll never come here no more!"

It was Tommy's seventh birthday, yet gloom was upon them all!

The handle of the outside door was turned and Granfäather Tregennis stood on the threshold.

"Mornin'," he said, nodding all round comprehensively.

Then he gave his whole attention to Tommy.

"'Appy returns to ee, my man!"

Awkwardly he stood there for a moment, fumbling with something he held in his hand.

"This do be the half-a-crown as your Granny always gived ee when your birthday comed nigh."

As he put the money on the table there were tears in his eyes, and he turned abruptly and left.

"Granfäather do be breakin' up," sighed Mrs. Tregennis. "Never been the same he haven't since Gran died. He do miss her somethin' awful, and we shan't have him long. Ah, well," she sighed again, as she rolled up her sleeves to the elbow in readiness for the washing-up; "there do be a sight of weariness in the world as well as joy. We've no cause to grumble much, 'tis true; but somehow this mornin' I be altogether down, and there's where 'tis to!"

Just before tea that day, when Tommy was playing on the sands, Mrs. Tregennis introduced a subject that was much on her mind.

"School begins Monday, Tom," she reminded him.

"Both?" he asked, laconically.

Mrs. Tregennis nodded affirmatively.

"Seems on'y right to tell Miss Lavinia," she went on to say. Then, after a rather long pause, "I suppose she'm well enough off; I suppose she've enough to live?"

"Should think th' old doctor 'e left she a bit," answered Tregennis, reflectively. "Her've enough to live I should reckon."

"Seems hard like to take the children away; she be such a kindly dear soul is Miss Lavinia," and as Mrs. Tregennis cut the bread and butter she pondered as to what was the best thing to do.

On Monday the new Council Schools would open. The buildings were very grand and modern, and the

head master was coming down from a college in London. There was no school-money to pay, it seemed, although the education was to be of the best. Mrs. Tregennis knew that nearly all the children were leaving Miss Lavinia's for the new school, and she and Tregennis had decided that Tommy should go too.

For years past there had been so many parents anxious to send their children to Miss Lavinia that she had made no rule about giving notice. If, on the morning that school reopened, she found that one or two of her scholars had left, she sent round a message at once to some of the addresses she kept written down in a note-book in her desk, and in the afternoon the vacant places were always filled.

This time Mrs. Tregennis knew that there would be many vacant places, and she felt somehow that Miss Lavinia was not prepared for the change the new school must inevitably mean to her. So she talked the matter over with Tregennis, and they decided that after tea she should go on and just tell Miss Lavinia that Tommy was leaving, it would seem more polite like. So after tea Mrs. Tregennis and Tommy went on.

They found Miss Lavinia standing on her door-step; she was dressed for walking and was locking the door behind her when they approached. At once she unlocked the door, re-entered the house, and showed her visitors into the best parlour. Here she left them for a few moments while, with old-fashioned courtesy, she went upstairs to remove her bonnet and mantle so that Mrs. Tregennis should not feel that she must hurry away.

Tommy had never before been in Miss Lavinia's parlour, and he stood by the highly polished round table in the centre of the room, lost in admiration of the stuffed birds and wax flowers that were placed under glass shades on mats of gaily coloured wool. There were piles of books, too, on the polished table. These were arranged corner-wise with regard to each other. They all had leather bindings, and there were three or four in each pile.

When Miss Lavinia came into the room she walked across to the window and drew up the dark green blind half-way, so that a stream of evening sunshine darted across the parlour and myriads of tiny dust-particles danced in the shaft of light.

Miss Lavinia bade Mrs. Tregennis be seated, but Tommy still leaned up against the polished table.

There was a moment's awkward pause, then "Is Tommy tired of holiday and ready for school?" Miss Lavinia asked, smiling.

Mrs. Tregennis found difficulty in answering. "'Tis just about that I've come, please, Miss," she said, after some hesitation. "You see, Miss, all the others is goin', too, and there's nothin' at all to pay, an' we'm only poor, an' they say the learnin's to be of the best, and all the other boys be goin', so I suppose our Tommy did ought to go, too."

"Go? Where?" But even as Miss Lavinia's lips framed the question she knew what the answer would be.

"To the new Council School, Miss Lavinia," faltered Mrs. Tregennis.

Then the two women looked at each other without speaking. Both were troubled, and there seemed nothing more to say.

It was Mrs. Tregennis who broke the silence. "We know what we owe you, Miss Lavinia, his Daddy an' me. You've done a lot for our Tommy, Miss. He've come on well and learnt a lot. Not only schoolin' I'm thinkin' of, Miss Lavinia, but in his manners an' all, an' in doin' right and tryin' to be brave. He'll not get that at the new school, I'm thinkin'."

"Thank you, Mrs. Tregennis," Miss Lavinia was smiling bravely. "Tommy has always been one of my best little boys, and, for myself, I am very sorry that he must go."

Again there was a pause. Miss Lavinia seemed to pass through a little struggle with herself. Then, "And did you say there were others?" she asked.

Mrs. Tregennis flushed deeply. "Yes, Miss Lavinia, Ma'am, and didn't you know, Miss? All they boys be goin': Jimmy Prynne, and David Williams and the Tomses, an' all of they."

Mrs. Tregennis rose from her seat. "I be so sorry, please, Miss Lavinia," she said, impulsively, holding out her hands to the little figure, sitting perfectly upright on the Chippendale chair. "Oh, Miss Lavinia, I do be that sorry!" Then, hesitatingly, "If I may make so bold, does it *matter*, Miss Lavinia?"

It was now Miss Lavinia's turn to flush. Her eyes were very bright and her chin was uplifted.

"Thank you, Mrs. Tregennis," she said, and lied bravely; "I am very sorry to lose the children, more sorry than I can tell you, but of course it does not matter in that sense."

Mrs. Tregennis was relieved. "That's just what Tom said; he said 'twould be all right in that way, did Tom. Still, I do be very sorry for Tommy to go."

Mrs. Tregennis moved slowly to the door, then turned again. "Tommy said his piece beautiful this mornin', Miss Lavinia. Thank you for teachin' him. It was lovely."

At first Miss Lavinia was puzzled, then she remembered.

"Why, of course, it's Tommy's birthday," she said, and walked across the room to the polished mahogany table.

From the top of a pile of books she took one that was much smaller than the rest, and had a padded binding of crimson leather. After turning over the pages she put it down in front of Tommy, dipped a pen into the ink, and bade him write his name upon the dotted line, to which she pointed.

"This is my birthday book, Tommy," she explained, "and when you have written your name there I shall always know when your birthday comes round each year."

Slowly and carefully Tommy wrote, his tongue curling round the corner of his mouth the while. The one dotted line was not long enough, so he finished on the line below. His name looked very beautiful when it was written there, and Miss Lavinia blotted it carefully before replacing the little crimson book on its own pile on the shining table.

When her visitors had left Miss Lavinia sat alone in the best parlour, looking out across the river with tired, unseeing eyes.

Tommy and Mrs. Tregennis walked slowly home. Tommy was very silent, for his thoughts were fully

occupied with Miss Lavinia's crimson Birthday Book in which he had written his name so lovely.

At first he was perplexed and wondered why Miss Lavinia had wanted to have his name written there, but after a little thought it became quite plain to him. Every year, when the twenty-ninth of August came round, Miss Lavinia would remember him, Tommy. Every year, on the evening of that day, she would enter the best parlour, and, after closing the door behind her, she would walk across to the window and raise the dark green blind a little way. When the blind was drawn a broad shaft of light would cross the room and hundreds of little bits of dust would come in with the light and dance gaily all together in the golden beam.

Then Miss Lavinia would push to one side the piles of books, and, kneeling, facing the stuffed birds and the gay wax flowers, she would rest her elbows on the brightly polished table and pray for him, Tommy, that he might be a good boy and grow up to be a brave, true man.

Tommy had no doubt at all that this was just exactly what Miss Lavinia would do. He could see it all quite clearly as he walked slowly home with Mammy.

On Monday morning, at a quarter to nine, an unaccustomed sound broke over Draeth. It was the ringing of the big bell in the tower of the new Council Schools.

Against her better judgement, Miss Lavinia was drawn by the sound to the window of the best parlour. Here she saw the boys and girls who had once been hers trooping, laughing, and heedless of her pain, to the big new school.

Tommy and Ruthie were the last to pass beneath Miss Lavinia's window.

At Miss Lavinia's open door Tommy paused.

Ruthie laughed. "Come on, Tommy," Miss Lavinia heard her say as she pulled him towards her, and hand in hand, the two children ran along the street and over the bridge.

Miss Lavinia saw them enter the big iron gates, and saw their hesitation when they were parted. For Tommy had to turn to the right and pass through the doorway, over which "Boys" was moulded in the stonework, while Ruthie walked across the playground to the entrance for the girls.

Miss Lavinia clasped her hands together for a moment. Then, as the clock was striking nine, with firm lips and head erect, she turned from the window and walked slowly to the schoolroom, where Annie Geach, Ruby Dark, Lizzie Wraggles and one little new girl were waiting for her to read the morning prayer.

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\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK TOMMY TREGENNIS \*\*\*

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