A BOOK OF DISCOVERIES

By JOHN MASEFIELD

M28B66

A Book of Discoveries

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2008 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

http://www.archive.org/details/ofdiscoveriebook00maserich

" The boys had all they could do to keep the rollers going."

[*Page* 25.

A BOOK OF DISCOVERIES

By JOHN MASEFIELD
ILLUSTRATED BY GORDON BROWNE

London
WELLS GARDNER, DARTON AND CO. LTD.
3, PATERNOSTER BUILDINGS E. C.

TO

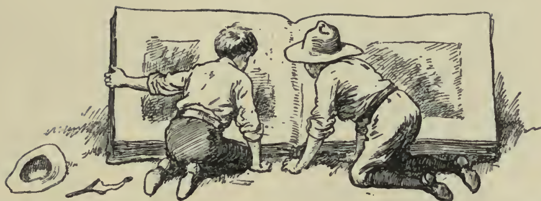
JUDITH

CONTENTS

	PAGE
CHAPTER I.	1
CHAPTER II.	15
CHAPTER III.	26
CHAPTER IV.	35
CHAPTER V.	52
CHAPTER VI.	69
CHAPTER VII.	91
CHAPTER VIII.	106
CHAPTER IX.	122
CHAPTER X.	133
CHAPTER XI.	149
CHAPTER XII.	175
CHAPTER XIII.	190
CHAPTER XIV.	198

Contents

	PAGE
Chapter XV.	210
Chapter XVI.	225
Chapter XVII.	241
Chapter XVIII.	252
Chapter XIX.	261
Chapter XX.	276
Chapter XXI.	291
Chapter XXII.	313
Chapter XXIII.	329
Chapter XXIV.	339



PAGE

"The boys had all they could do to keep the rollers going" - - - - - *Frontispiece*

"It stood in a clump of trees" - - - - 1

"Mac and Robin had often wondered what was inside the hole" - - - - - - 5

"They would feast like hunters together" - - 11

"Through a trap-door into the river" - - - 18

"Ghosts of old pirates with cutlasses" - - - 21

"Some governor over by the hedge" - - - 28

"A shelter a little bigger than a sentry-box" - - 37

"They saw that the new creek was a little narrow harbour" - - - - - - 41

"A battle was one of the safest places a man could be in" - - - - - - 44

"Each holding a flag of truce" - - - - 47

"'Please, sir, we're very sorry'" - - - - 53

"'A greater explorer than Columbus'" - - - 60

"Mr. Hampden watched them as long as they were in sight" - - - - - - 63

"'Something not much better than apes'" - - 71

"The sailors stole from one safe haven to another" - 83

"'I wonder what a cat's day is like'" - - - 110

List of Illustrations

PAGE

"'A highwayman called Bendigo'" - - - 115
"'Send £500, or we shall sell your son to the Turks'" - 116
"'He was shot on the London road'" - - - 117
"'Little shells which burst all over the place'" - - 126
"'This is the milestone. This is where we begin'" - 128
"'Creeping up on the Romans, dressed up as a wild boar'" 130
"'Goin' to do a bit of campin', like?' he asked" - - 131
"Robin read the rules from a bit of paper" - - 137
Brown Willy: profile of the hill - - - - 141
"The savage aloft there, leaning on his spear" - 147
"A figure in a black mask rose up and pelted them" - 159
"'They brought up the catapults to cover the attack'" - 165
Brown Willy, showing fortifications - - - 171
"The stones went rolling downhill into the enemy" - 178
"'I'd have sprung at him, and bitten a lump right out of him'" - - - - - - 202
"Very soon he had a column of smoke ascending" - 212
"Prisoners conversing by knocking on the walls" - 213
"He met Mac coming down" - - - - 219
"'Sir Walter Raleigh tried to find out about it'" - 229
"'I'd give the maroons some sardines!'" - - - 231
"'Are you Flint?'" - - - - - 247
"They sat round the blaze" - - - - 254
"'A skilled waterman to heave the lead'" - - 267
"The boys worked out the soundings" - - - 278
"'Tailor, I'm going to hang you up, like'" - - 283
"'A sailor swarmed up and made it fast'" - - 293
"'They sailed away'" - - - - - 301
"'A little cairn of stones'" - - - - 314
"'One of the bad Straits squalls'" - - - 319

Besides initials and tailpieces.

A Book of Discoveries

Chapter I

MAC and Robin were two brothers who lived with their mother at Waters Orton. Their house was built on the only flat ground within sight. It was at the top of a roll of hill which ran for some miles along the course of the river. It stood in a clump of trees full of rooks' nests. At twilight, when the rooks were homing, there was a great clack about the house; but Mrs. Shenstone, the mother of the boys, liked the cawing, since she had heard it every night for nearly twenty years. The rooks were great rogues, but they had been there so long they were almost a part of the house. The trees in which they

nested made the garden dark. It was a spring, not a summer, garden. After the trees were in full leaf the beds got little sun. Until May it was always very lovely every year with tulips, daffodils, and big double daisies.

Just outside the garden the hill tipped down to the river, so steeply that one could bowl a stone from the lawn into the water. It was not a broad river—it was only fifteen yards across—but just there it looked very wonderful. It went curving round the fold of hill on which the house stood, till it shut it in on three sides. Standing in the middle of the lawn, the boys could throw stones to their right, to their left, and straight in front of them, and hear a splash from all three sides where the stones hit the water. Long before our time the ancient Britons had had a camp on that knob of hill, so moated. They had run deep trenches, to cut it from the rest of the hill ; and there they had camped, safe and snug, with their cattle and their wives. Their trenches were all grassed over now. Within them, in the ground of a field now the Shenstones' pasture, were a few little hollows, which had once been the sites of their huts. Mac and Robin, digging in one of these hollows, once found a queer, curved bone. The Rector said it had once been the tusk of a wild boar, which the Britons had killed and eaten there, in the days when wild boars lived in Britain.

The river came to this horse-shoe bend from the hills twelve miles away. One could see the hills from Waters Orton, lying in pleasant rolls to the north, with one bigger, bluer hill standing out above them. " Brown

Willy" the people called this hill, though it never looked brown. It was always blue-looking, because of the rock upon it. The Rector said that "Brown Willy" was really ancient British for "Highest Hill." He knew a lot about old things, the Rector. Anyhow, the river rose on Brown Willy. It came trembling up in eddies into a pool like a big shallow dish. Then it wandered out in a tiny trickle, which stole down-hill, getting quickly bigger, till a mile from its source it was a sizeable brook. Then it wandered abroad into the valley, getting deeper rather than broader, turning a mill or two at its falls, and nourishing in its way a forest of alders. It took in other brooks as it went along. It ran through the Dead Man's Wood, where the Squire was shot by poachers, so the story said. The wood overshadowed it for nearly a mile of its life. Fallen branches dammed it, making pools, where water-fowl nested, almost out of sight of the sun. Great pale ferns grew about it. Water-weeds strove to stifle it. Here and there, where it opened out, water-lilies, yellow and white, grew in the open, so thickly that the rats could cross by them, hardly sprinkling their fur. Then, when it loitered clear of the wood, it stretched away through the meadows, watering many-blossomed brook-lime. Little brooks joined it from each ditch. It was well started now on its way to the Thames. Cows waded out into its shallows, switching their flanks. Water-rats swam and dived there. In the high, red-clay banks kingfishers nested. One or two herons came fishing. Under the alder-roots in these reaches one could sometimes hear a small pike, flogging with his tail. One or two main roads crossed it, but it avoided the towns to

which they led. It was a lonely river ; it saw very little of man. Four miles from its source it passed within sight of a village, but the villagers took little notice of it, except to drop their broken pans into it just below the bridge. The pans rusted away there, gradually growing in number, till, at the time of which I write, they made a shallow, in which bits of china gleamed among kettles, tins, and dishes.

Seven miles farther down it came into a lonelier part. The little folds of hill drew close, growing steeper as they approached, till the river was in a narrow valley, with steep, wooded banks on each side. In places where the hills drew away a little from the river edge there were fields of rich pasture and apple-orchards, or, perhaps, mere covert of bramble and gorse, too thick for hounds to break. As a rule, though, the river wandered on between two high banks, which were beautiful, even on the dullest day. In summer, when the yellow flags were in bloom, when all the woods were in leaf, and the fern was springing, it was more than beautiful. It was haunted then by a peace which was unearthly. To be there then was like living in a very beautiful picture. It was not like being in the world.

In one part, near the hill where the Shenstones' house stood, the bank became a low red sandstone cliff, where the martins had drilled themselves nests, out of reach of marauders. Eight feet above the water, and twelve feet below the brambles at the top, there was a hole in the cliff big enough for a fox's earth. Mac and Robin had often wondered what was inside it, but they had never been able to get near enough to it to find out. They

" Mac and Robin had often wondered what was inside the hole."

could not climb to it from a boat, nor could they get down to it from above ; but, passing it often, as they did, it occupied their thoughts. They wondered how it had come to be there.

A mile below the Shenstones' hill the river entered again into woodland. The woods grew down to the water on both sides. There were many rare birds in this part, for no man shot the woods. They were liker wild lands than any woods in England. Badgers lived there. There were even pine-martens in a clump of firs on the hill. Otters bred on the banks without fear of men. Nobody ever shot them or hunted them. Foxes bred in the woods, and grew up and went roving. No hounds ever came there to break their peace. The wild things lived happily there—more happily than in any place in England. The place was like forest not yet altered by man.

In the heart of the woods the water broadened out suddenly into a lake. The Rector said that once, centuries ago, there had been beavers there, and that the lake had been made by the beavers—a big colony of beavers. They had dammed up the river there, he said, to make a site for their lodges. Long after the beavers had fallen to dust, and about a hundred years before this story begins, the owner of the estate had widened and deepened the lake for his own pleasure. Now it was a broad expanse, half a mile long and five hundred yards across, with a little island close to one bank. The land of this bank was flat for a brief space. Reeds grew to a great height all along the flat. They grew so thick together that one could not see a foot into their depth.

This was a rare place for water-fowl. Strange, beautiful fowl like ruffs and bitterns came there. While they were there they were safe from pursuit.

The owner of that estate loved all wild creatures. The great house of his fathers had been burned down many years before. Since then he lived alone in what had once been a keeper's lodge. His chief pleasure was the study of the wild life on his estate. He knew it better, perhaps, than any man living—certainly better than any landlord. Most of the landowners of England value the life on their estates merely because they have pleasure in blasting it out with guns. Mr. Hampden valued it because he saw in every little mouse and warbler something living and lovely, with a tiny brain and knowledge of the world, which became more wonderful the better he came to know it. He got more pleasure and knowledge from his woods than the killing man could understand. Birds followed him for crumbs and currants whenever he went for a walk. A robin would perch upon his shoulder. Squirrels would come to him for nuts. He always wore soft hide mocassins when in the woods, so that he might walk noiselessly. Creeping gently, he could often surprise a vixen playing with her cubs, or see an otter at dinner, or a weasel hunting. He knew the birds and their habits ; the insects, the plants loved by them ; the trees where the squirrels nested ; the springs where the woodcock fed. Nature was a never-ending wonder-book to him. There is always something new in Nature. On days of great beauty, at sunset or at sundawn, he felt that he might suddenly become one with Nature, and understand what the wild things said

and see the strange, terrible heart of things visibly beating.

Mac and Robin were not like Mr. Hampden. They were two roving youths who liked adventure. They had the use of the old boat in the boat-house. They had a couple of catapults apiece, and a bullet-mould between them. They had persuaded Molly, the cook, to stitch them some canvas pouches which would button on to their cricket-belts. Each had three pouches—one for the catapults, one for bullets, and the third for small shot. With these upon them, they would sally out after breakfast to the boat. Their mother saw them no more till tea-time. They always pulled up-stream, partly because their bathing-place was under the sandstone cliff, but chiefly because there was a mill, only a little way down-stream, which blocked the other way for them. After bathing, they used to pull up to a wild bit of covert, all gorse and bracken, which they called "the happy hunting-ground." Here they moored the boat to an alder-tree, while they became Red Indians. Creeping along through the covert, they fired at whatever hove in sight. After their shootings, they made for what they called their camp, in the thickest part of the covert, at the top of the hill. Here they had cleared a little space near a spring. They had piled up the gorse and bracken which they had cut into a sort of hedge about the space. It was a little flat space about six feet across. At one corner of it they had made a cache. They had dug a hole about eighteen inches square. At the bottom and sides of the hole they had laid slates from the roof of an old ruined chapel at Waters End, a couple of miles away.

When this was done, they had only to lay another slate across, as lid, to make a neat little water-tight vault in which they could hide their treasures. When the treasures were in and the lid in place, they merely filled in the earth, trod it down, and lit a fire on the top of it, to remove the marks of their handiwork. In this cache they kept (to be melted down in time into catapult bullets) a chunk of old lead-pipe from the chapel ; a length or two of elastic ; a bit of kid glove and twine, for catapult repairs ; a paper full of pepper, a piece of alum, a block of salt, for the curing of skins; some likely-looking cattie-prongs, tightly bound across with twine, till they had seasoned ; a whet-stone ; the skins of one or two mice, maturing, as the boys planned, for the post of book-marks for Mrs. Shenstone ; many little rolls of string; a pair of egg-blowers, coarse and fine ; a tin full of cotton-wool, for the carrying of birds'-eggs ; and a few egg-piercers, made of sail-needles stuck into wooden handles. In another rather bigger cache they kept provisions of bread, nuts, cocoa, sugar, eggs, and sometimes apples, together with a saucepan, some matches, and two cups ; for whenever it was fine they cooked and ate their lunch in camp. They used to light a fire in a fireplace built up of a few bricks, which they had carried there. One of them kept the fire going with dry leaves and twigs, while the other filled the saucepan at the spring. Then they would boil their eggs, brew themselves cocoa (or jelly, when they had the money), and feast like hunters together, rising up from time to time to make sure that no enemies were creeping on them through the grass. Once, when their shooting had been successful, they

added to their dinner a sparrow and a tomtit which they had killed. The dish was more trouble than it was worth, they decided, for the plucking of the birds took them a long time, and the flesh, when boiled (which also took a long time), gave them only a bite apiece of very indifferent meat. When the corn was ripe in the fields,

"They would feast like hunters together."

they used to pluck a few ears and winnow them in their hands, so that they might make a dish of corn, boiled up with sugar. This they called "succotash," after an Indian dish, about which they had read in a story-book. Once, after their dinner, they tried another Indian custom, which was less successful. They tried to make

Indian tobacco of the dried inner bark of the willow-tree. Unfortunately, the English willow is not the proper kind for the purpose. They smoked the stuff (after they had dried it at the fire) in a clay-pipe bought at Waters Orton. It made them feel so queer that they gave up that side of Indian life altogether.

One morning, early in August, when the summer holidays were still but a few days old, Mac and Robin climbed to the highest part of the camp, just beyond the orchard. They flung themselves down on the crest of the citadel, looking down into the trench. They lay very still there on the soft turf full of grasshoppers, hoping that some rabbit would be fool enough to come out of his burrow, so as to give them a shot. But the rabbits had other aims in life. They lay very close; not one appeared.

"Bother these bunnies!" said Mac. "We haven't had a shot."

"Well, let's go down and bathe," said Robin. "We can come here again after tea. They're sure to be out after tea. It would be rather fun if we could get a few planks up that oak, and lay them across the branches, so as to make a platform, like they do in the Pacific; and then we could have a rope-ladder, and haul it up after us, so that no enemies could come up. And then we could lie down on the planks, and the rabbits would never see us. We should be able to pot them like billio."

"Let's get up the oak and see," said Mac. "There are some old boards up in the loft, 'cos I saw them when I was looking for the rat-trap. But we should want a

ladder to get them up the tree. I dare say Jarge would help us. I say, Robin, there are two branches. They'd be just the thing."

" How are we to get up ourselves ?" said Robin. " It's a long way up to the lowest bough."

" I know what we'll do," said Mac. " We'll get a hurdle, and stand on that."

" No, we won't do that," said Robin. " That's not what the Indians would do. They'd fling their lassoes over the boughs, and then pull themselves up."

" It's not so easy to fling a rope up," said Mac. " It sticks in the boughs. Remember how we tried once with the clothes-line when we were after the kite's nest ?"

" Then I know what we'll do," said Robin. " We'll get that old nobbly log, and lean it up against the tree, and stand on that."

" It isn't long enough," said Mac—" it's not nearly long enough."

" No ; but I know what," said Robin. " We'll stand on the log as far as we can get, and then we'll drive in nails. We've got those tenpenny nails we got to make darts with ; and there are some wall-spikes in the tool-shed. We'll drive in one or two of those for our hands, and then we'll bag a bit of clothes-line. And when we get up we'll tie it to the bough, and let it dangle down, like a sort of handle, to pull ourselves up by."

" Yes," said Mac ; " and I don't think we'll ask Jarge to help. We'll keep it secret. Come on, and we'll bring the log, and then we'll get the nails and things."

" We could saw the planks if they're too long," said Robin. " They'll never be wanted. They're bits of

the scaffolding the men had when they mended the chimney. And I know how we could pull them up. We could put the clothes-line over the branch above our branches, and then tie it to the planks, and pull them up from down below, and then one of us go up and lay them across, while the other lowers them to him."

They set to with a good will at the work. In about an hour's time they had finished. They sat together on a little wobbly platform of planks while they picked the tree-dust out of their eyes. "This won't do," said Mac. "All this shrubby stuff and twigs are in our way, and this wobbling isn't safe. We'll have to tie the planks somehow."

"I know how to tie them," said Robin, "'cos when we had the scaffolding I got one of the men to show me how the planks were tied, 'cos I thought we might one day want to do this; only we'll want all the rest of Mary's clothes-line."

"Mary'll be in an awful wax when she finds out," said Mac, shinning down to get the line; "but I don't see what else we can use unless we tear up a sheet, like the prisoners used to."

"No. Get the clothes-line," said Robin. "Mother'd be in a wax if we took a sheet."

Chapter II

HEN they had made their perch secure with a lashing, they chopped away some of the smaller branches which were in their way. They stood up, and leaned over a branch which made a breastwork for them.

" Give me the chopper, Rob," said Mac. " If I could get this beastly branch off, we should be able to see for miles, and we could make this our lookout place, and pretend we were in a lighthouse."

" Or like Sir Francis Drake, looking for the Spaniards' treasure-train ; pretend there was a lot of gold and silver coming, and we were robbers."

" Run and get the saw, Rob," said Mac, pausing in his hacking. " This branch is as tough as old boots."

" You go and get the saw, and let me have a hack."

" No, I'm not going to get the saw."

After a time, with the aid of the saw, the branch cracked. A few more vigorous strokes made it split itself up by its own weight. It drooped down, so as to screen the platform from below. Those standing on it now had a clear view over a couple of miles of valley.

" Shall I saw it right off ?" said Mac.

" No ; let it hang as it is. It's splendid as it is. Besides, if we cut it off it'll fall down, and it'll be spotted, and we shall get into a row."

" We'd better get down now, and put back the tools in the tool-shed."

" Yes ; and we'll have our dinner here."

" Oh, but we can't fag up to the camp to get the things from the cache."

" Who's going to ? We'll go and ask Mary."

" And I know what," said Mac : " we'll get some tins, and keep some things up here. Nobody ever comes here. We'll keep raisins. And I know what : we'll get some flour from Mary, and we'll get a brick, and make some tortillas."

" What are tortillas ?"

" They're a sort of cake the Indians make."

" How do you make them ?"

" Oh, you get a brick, and make it very hot in a fire. We could make a fire in the ditch there. And when the brick's very hot, you just spread your flour on it, and it turns out a tortilla."

" Doesn't the brick ever burn the flour ?" said Robin. He had tried outlandish dishes before.

" I dare say it does sometimes," said Mac, " when the Indians aren't quick enough. I wonder where we could get a brick."

" There are some bricks coming loose in the wall by the filbert-tree," said Robin. " But I call them rather measly bricks. They've got such a lot of wood-lice about them. Wood-lice are poison, aren't they ?"

" Are they ? But we should wash the brick, and then it would be all right."

" But you couldn't be sure you'd washed it all off. I know, 'cos of Jarge's dog. Poison sticks in a thing for years. And, then, the hot might bring it out into the tortilla. And, then, I saw a centipede there yesterday. And that just shows you."

" I know where we could get a brick," said Mac. " Up against the stable, where the lime is. There's a couple of bricks, left by the men when they did the chimney."

They washed their brick under the pump in the yard.

" Mac," said Robin, " you'll have to mix your flour with water, won't you? 'cos, if you don't, I don't see how you can spread it."

" Yes," said Mac; " of course I shall. You mix it up into a paste, and then smear it on with a sort of brick-layer's trowel. What could we use as a smearer? I know what we could use—the back of the copper coal-scuttle shovel."

" Isn't copper poison, though?" said Robin. " It gets green stuff on it, called verdigris, and it's deadly poisonous. There was a chap in Italy who used to mix it with people's wine, and they swelled up and died, and then he dropped them through a trap-door into the river."

" There's no verdigris on this," said Mac, " 'cos Polly cleans it every morning. You go and bag it out of the study while I go and see Mary."

They lit their fire in a sheltered part of the ditch, where countless generations of rabbits had torn away the ground into a miniature quarry. On the floor of this space they spread their provisions. They had two eggs, a tin full of oatmeal, a little tin of raisins, and a fruit-tin,

with a string handle, full of water. Robin had also brought a tin dish, in which to mix the meal, and a lump of mutton-fat.

"What d'you want fat for?" Mac asked him.

"Through a trap-door into the river."

"It's to grease the brick with," he answered. "Mary says you always have to grease a thing you cook with, or else it sticks."

"All right," said Mac. "Now, how much water ought

we to mix with the meal? I suppose only about as much as we used when we mixed for the guinea-pigs." They thrust the brick into the blaze, and began to mix the mess in the dish.

"How shall we know when the brick's hot enough?" said Robin.

"Oh, you have to have it pretty hot, but not red-hot," said Mac. "I should think it's about hot enough now. Slice off some of your fat on to the brick, and I'll smear it down with the smearer." Some of the fat went into the fire. Flames ran along the surface of the brick, and licked off the smear. "Be quick, you ass!" said Robin. "You'll have to dab on your meal before the fat's burnt. Get your tortilla ready, and I'll lift up the brick a little, and you dab it on."

Very rapidly Mac dabbed a mass of wet meal on to the brick, and smeared it down flat over the surface. They had expected to see it turn into a kind of griddle-cake, but, instead of that, some of it blackened into a cinder on the brick, and the rest fell into the fire.

"The book said it was quite easy," said Mac; "and look at that, now!" He scraped off a bit from the ruin.

"I suppose to make tortillas one wants practice. Will you try, Robin?"

Robin looked at the burnt meal and then at the meal in the dish. "No," he said, "I don't think I'll try, 'cos if I burn mine, we shan't have anything to eat with our eggs. We'll boil our eggs, and eat this oatmeal with them. I know what we'll do. We'll eat our dinner up the tree, and pretend we're Australian gold-diggers, eating damper."

They ate their damper up the tree, and pretended that they liked it. "I say, Mac," said Robin, standing up after dinner, "you can see like billio over the valley. Look at all those woods. Are those Mr. Hampden's woods?"

"Yes," said Mac; "they're all his. Jolly fine, aren't they? Mother says there's a mystery about them. Nobody ever goes into those woods. We've never been in them ourselves."

"I wonder whereabouts his lake is," said Robin. "I'd like to get to the lake, wouldn't you?"

"It's not so easy to get there," said Mac. "He doesn't let people go. And people say the woods are haunted."

"I say, Mac," said Robin, "do you think there's treasure buried there? There generally is in haunted places."

"I expect there must be," said Mac. "I wonder whose treasure it would be."

"I expect it would be pirates' or highwaymen's."

"Pirates, I should think," said Robin, "'cos of the lake. I expect they'd a ship on the lake; and they could have landed and sacked the towns. Is there an island on the lake?"

"Yes."

"I shouldn't wonder," said Robin, "if they buried the treasure on the island."

"They generally buried it on an island," said Mac—"generally on a sandy island. I wonder if this is a sandy island. And then they made a map of the island in blood, and stuck a skull on a sword, to point to where the treasure was. And then they wrote on the map,

'North-east from Dead Man's Head, ten paces. Beware of the Pirates' Revenge.' And always after that the island would be haunted."

"Ghosts of old pirates, with cutlasses."

"What sort of a ghost would haunt it ?" said Robin.

"Oh, generally ghosts of old pirates, with cutlasses; but sometimes women they'd killed. You can always

tell when it was a woman they'd killed, because they wear white, and go about wringing their hands."

"And what was in the treasure generally?" Robin asked.

"Generally silver bars," said Mac, "and pieces of eight and ivory; and a lot of lace done up in oilskin; and gold cups and rings; and rubies and diamonds as big as birds' eggs."

"Wouldn't it be fun if we found it, Mac? Should we tell anybody?"

"No; I don't think we'd tell anybody. We'd have to tell mother."

"D'you think there'd be swords and pistols as well as jewels, so that we could be pirates? Perhaps we might find the pirate-ship hidden under the jungle in one of the creeks, with all the cannons in her, and the black flag, with the skull and cross-bones. And it would all be ours, and we could be pirates."

"I don't think we should find that," said Mac doubtfully; "but we might. But generally they scuttled their ships so that the men-of-war shouldn't take them. Still, we might find one sunk, with the masts sticking out of the water, and we might let down a rope, with a big stone on it, and then climb down the rope under the water into the cabin, and get all sorts of things."

"How could we get to the lake, Mac?" Robin asked. "We could get there, couldn't we? It's not far round the bend there, is it?"

"Dunno," said Mac; "it's not so easy to get there, 'cos if you go on this side, you've got to get through old Hampden's garden, and he's sure to spot you; and if

we go on the other side, the ground's all preserved, and old Wyse's keeper would collar us. And if we try to go all round Hampden's place and get in at the back, it's such a beastly fag. And we don't know the way, either. But I'm not afraid of its being haunted," he added. "I asked Dr. Parkin, and he said that ghosts were only imaginary."

"I know how we could get to the lake," said Robin—"in the boat."

"No, we couldn't," said Mac. "There's the mill—we can't get past the mill."

"Yes, we can," said Robin. "We'll row down to the mill, and we'll try and get hold of Jarge. Jarge is down there, carting manure, and we'll get him to lend us the horse a minute, and we'll fasten the horse to the painter, and haul the boat past the mill, and put her in on the other side."

"You'd very likely knock the side in, dragging her over the ground like that," Mac answered. "She's a rotten old tub."

"No, I shouldn't," said Robin; "'cos I know you put rollers under the boat, and the boat just rolls along on them, and doesn't touch the ground; and we can use those old fir-logs for rollers. You put them in as she goes along. We saw them doing it once at Bride's Bay."

"Come along," said Mac. "We'll each carry down a couple of logs, and then we'll bring the boat down."

When they got to the mill-pond they found Jarge sitting on the ground, with his back to a stump, smoking his after-dinner pipe. Darby, the cart-horse, was switch-

ing flies at a little distance, having just finished his nose-bag. Jarge grinned when he saw the boys.

"Where be gwine now, Master Mac ?" he asked.

"Jarge," said Mac, as he dumped out the rollers, "will you lend us Darby for a minute ?"

"What div'ee want with Darby, Master Mac ?" Jarge asked, with some suspicion.

"We want to haul the boat round past the mill and put her in down below," said Robin.

"You woan't be able to row below the mill," said Jarge. "The halders and things be growed so thick. Better keep en where it is, Master Mac. There be no space like, not to row. Look how the halders be growed. You can't row there."

"Oh yes, we can," said Mac. "So will you, Jarge? You might. It'd be awfully decent of you if you would."

"Well, I will if you like, Master Mac. But I'll only have to fetch en out again. Zook yer, Darby! Bring that there line, Master Robin. How shall we put her in on the other side ? The banks be steep, not like here."

"There's the cows' drinking-place just a little below. We could put her in there," said Robin, who had thought of this.

Jarge hitched up Darby to the painter, and placed the rollers in position. He cracked his whip and called. The horse strained forward. The boat slid gracefully out on to the rollers. "You keep en so as er woan't farl over," said Jarge. "Zook e yur, Bor. Mind out of them ant-mucks."

"Shove in the rollers in front of her," said Robin. "Don't let her fall off."

" I say," said Mac, " doesn't she simply go it ? It's like the Greeks before Troy. Mind the gate, Jarge."

Old Darby doubled up the incline and down on the other side, so fast that the boys had all that they could do to keep the rollers going.

" Jolly hard work, I call it," said Mac, fanning himself while they prepared to launch the boat in the new place. " I wonder if the Greeks ever had horses to pull their boats up. I say, Jarge, thank you for doing it for us. Isn't Jarge awfully decent, Robin ? He's always doing something for us."

" Jarge is a brick," said Robin.

Jarge grinned, and watched them as they got into the boat.

" I told ee, Master Mac, how it'd be. 'Ow be yer gwine to get under all them halders ? You can't row thur, owsomever."

" Oh, we'll manage, Jarge," the boys answered. They took out their oars and shoved off.

Jarge turned away back to his work with Darby. " I wonder what prank them young devils be up to," he muttered. Turning round at the gate, he saw that they were already out of sight under the thickly-leaved alder-boughs. " They be just about the odds and ends of a pair, Master Mac and Master Robin," he muttered.

Chapter III

IN the lower reach the boat brushed her way along under the alder-boughs. There was no chance of rowing. The two boys had to crouch down and pull the boat along by the boughs. The river was much narrower below the mill. It was so narrow for the first quarter-mile that in many places the alder-boughs of one bank touched those of the bank opposite. It was a lonely part even for that lonely river. The water-fowl, which went cocking silently into the cover of the flags as the boat approached, had never seen human beings so near at hand. " It must be jolly deep here in this narrow part," said Mac, probing with an oar. " We could have some grand diving here, if these alders were away."

" Hush !" said Robin. " Let's pretend we're Sir Francis Drake going to surprise the Armada."

" It's jolly still here," Mac answered, " even as it is. We could hide here for days, and nobody would spot us. I vote we come here some time and have a camp."

By-and-by the river broadened. The banks at the same time became clear of alders. The boys could see

well ahead, down a clear, shallow, rather rapid reach, in which a few weeds broke the current to dancing ripples.

"I'm glad we're out of those alders," said Mac. "Now we can row. I say, there's a strong stream here. How are we to get back?"

"Never mind about getting back," said Robin. "We aren't there yet. We'll always be able to get the boat back. I dare say Jarge'd help us. There's a bridge on ahead. What asses we were never to come this way before!"

"Pretend the bridge is a rapid, and we're about to shoot it," said Robin. "We'll have to crouch down, or we won't get under. I never knew it was so jolly here. Isn't old Wyse an old governor to preserve like he does? What does he want with his beastly birds? I say, there's a heron. Shall we have a whang at her as we go by?"

However, the heron had met these boys before. She knew the main facts about them, and desired to know no more, so away she sailed. The boat loitered on into an apple country, full of trees in fruit, on both sides of the water.

"These must be old Wyse's apple-orchards," said Robin. "Dodge down and let her drift. There's some governor over by the hedge. We'll be stopped if we're spotted."

"Yes," said Mac; "and keep her close under the bank. I say, isn't it like Rube the Scout, when he was in the canoe and he heard the Red Indians talking on the bank? Look up, Robin, and see if they've seen us."

" I'm not going to look up," said Robin. " We ought to have brought some branches and things to cover ourselves with. That's what Rube did."

" They're looking this way," said Mac. " But I don't think they could see us except by a fluke. Bother! Here they come. Row, Rob."

"Some governor over by the hedge."

" No, don't be an ass !" said Robin, peeping. " They haven't seen us. Look there! They're not coming this way at all."

They drove past the danger into a shallow pool, where some cows were resting from the heat.

" I vote we call this place The Lagoon," said Robin " It's just like a lagoon, except that lagoons have got alligators in them. Wouldn't an alligator jolly well give those cows toko ? I vote we stay here, Mac. We might get a pot at a kingfisher."

" We won't stay here," said Mac. " It's too near old Wyse's place. There's Wyse House. It was besieged in the Civil Wars. You can sometimes find cannon-balls in the moat, all smashed in with hitting the stones."

" Are the woods ahead of us Wyse's ?" said Robin.

" No," said Mac. " Old Hampden's got the land on both sides just below old Wyse's. I heard the Rector say so. I say, isn't it just like a canyon just in front of us ?"

Indeed, it was very like a canyon. The banks drew together and steepened. They were covered with wood from the water to the summit. A curve of the stream took the boys out of sight of Wyse's into the heart of the gorge. It was so still there in the drowsy heat that the only noises were the droning of the yellow-hammers, the slow, plaintive pipe of the bullfinch, and the dip of the oars as the boys paddled, facing the bows, like Indians in a canoe. They did not like to talk. The place was impressive. It was new to them. They were looking out at it like discoverers. The boys laid what they called their " trusty Remingtons"—*i.e.*, their catapults—beside them, in case an Indian should steal down. They nudged each other with little whispers. " Isn't this stunning ?"

" I say, look out for an otter."

" Mind you don't lose your oar if you fire."

They stole on through the gorge, and round another curve into a more level, more densely wooded tract, with a heronry on one hand and a grove of Scotch firs, with flaming boles glowing out like blood, on the other. The boys had never seen a wilder landscape. On in front of them was a stretch of rapids, with a deep calm channel at one side. Paddling hard, with their hearts in their mouths, they shot the rapids without getting upset. Then, for a minute or two, they were in calm. Ahead of them, a spit of ground, covered densely with reeds, shimmering and bluish, ran out to meet another spit from the other side. The two spits, with the reeds upon them, shut the river into a narrow compass. The boys paddled on to the break in the bar, wondering what lay beyond. They shot through the opening into what seemed to them an inland sea. It stretched on and on before them, and away to each side, blue under the sky, ruffled with wind-ripples. The woods ringed it in. It was shut away from the rest of the world. Nobody was in sight. They could see no house nor any smoke of a house. It was as lonely a spot as when the beavers lodged there. Far away down the lake, in the wildest part of it, a little island stood up. It, too, was covered with trees.

"I say," said Mac, "did you ever see such a place?"

"No," said Robin, "I never did. Just think of the birds'-nests. There goes a wild-duck. Doesn't he stick out his neck? I say, Mac, if we only had a gun! I wish we could have a whang at something."

"Better not," said Mac. "We're too easy seen here. We'll see if we can find a creek or some place where we can hide the boat. Let's get on to the island."

" We ought to muffle our oars," said Robin, " 'cos sound travels like billio over the water."

They put their handkerchiefs in the crutches and paddled on, hugging the bank. They saw no sign of anyone on either shore. Birds called from among the reeds. One or two foreign water-birds, with strange, gay feathers, slid in and out of the alleys between the stalks. They seemed to have no fear of the boys, only a sense that the place was nicer lonely. They were as tame as farmers' ducks. One of them, strangely ruffled, tempted the boys to shoot, but the bird glided swiftly into the thicket, and the shot struck the reeds.

" We'd better get to the island," said Robin, " if we're going looking for treasure. Besides, we're too open here. A keeper could spot us a mile away."

" I vote we land among the reeds, then," said Mac ; " and we could jolly well tweak these water-fowl. I wonder what they're called."

" No, let's stay in the lake," said Robin. " It's so like explorers. I wish we'd got real paddles instead of these oars. Then we could pretend we were Red Indians. I say, Mac, we're nearly up to the island now. Shall we push out from the shore now ?"

They pushed out towards the island. It was a little hump of land about fifty yards across, and four yards high at its highest part. It was covered with a dense undergrowth, from the midst of which a few great trees rose. " Let's see if there's a landing-place," said Mac. " It looks a jolly difficult place to get ashore on."

" Islands generally are," said Robin, " because of the

surf. I wonder if there's any surf on this one. Some surf comes up so suddenly."

"I say," said Mac, "do you really think this is a haunted island? It looks rather haunted. Do you think it's safe to go any nearer?"

"But if it's haunted," said Robin, "that's a sign that there's treasure on it. I vote we try." They pushed in a few strokes more. The darkness of the thicket, too close for the sun to pierce, was full of mystery. It was all very still there—much too still to be good. The water wapped along the shore as the wind sent it slapping. The thicket shivered a little and fell still. There seemed to be no birds in that island. An awe of the place touched the boys to the sense that they were trespassing.

"I don't quite like it," said Robin, scanning it.

"Nor I," said Mac. "But isn't that a creek there, on the other side?"

"Yes," said Robin—"a little creek going into the island."

The boys looked at each other. They both half expected to see the wreck of a ship lying on the mud there.

"Shall we go in?" said Mac.

"Yes," Robin whispered. "You take both oars, and I'll have my catty ready in case anything comes out. I say, Mac, do you think there's any ghosts on the island?"

"I shouldn't be a bit surprised," said Mac; "or, perhaps, gipsies would have a camp, and capture us and sell us. It's just the place for gipsies. They could sally out, and poach, and perhaps rob people, and then hide here during the day."

" Mac," said Robin, " I don't think there can be gipsies here, for there go a couple of birds."

" So they do," said Mac. " Well, that's a sign it's all right. I say, Robin, let's creep out and camp here one night, and fish, and have what we catch for breakfast, and perhaps stay a day or two. And we could rig up hammocks between the trees."

" Mother wouldn't let us," said Robin ; " but it would be grand if she would. Mac, this creek's shallow ; we shall have to pole her in."

" No, we shan't," said Mac. " We'll just pull her in by the boughs. Catch hold of the boughs and pull." The boat's nose shoved some rotten boughs aside as it slid up the gloomy little creek into the heart of the island. The creek was a sort of narrow pocket, three or four yards across at the broadest part. A box-tree, grown to a good height, blocked one side of it with a dense, dusty mass of little leaves. On the other side was a weeping-willow, with branches which stretched almost across the water. The boys ran the boat under one of the branches, tied the painter to it, and clambered ashore along it.

" Load your catty," said Mac, " and be ready to fire at the slightest sound. Load with ball-cartridge."

They loaded with ball-cartridge. They cast anxious glances at the thicket all about them. They listened for any sound which might teach them what lived there. There came no sound except the flopping of the ripples along the shore and the rustling of leaves aloft. It was safe enough.

" Mac," said Robin, " whereabouts would the treasure be in an island like this ?"

" Up at the highest point," said Mac ; " or down on a sandy spit is a good place, 'cos pirates don't like digging. Look out for a mark on a tree—a skull and cross-bones mark. It'll be on an old tree, and the bark will be swelled over it a bit. And we may, p'raps, find a skeleton in the grass to point the way. That's what they sometimes put."

Chapter IV

THEY crept over the island to the point fronting the farther shore. Here they made a discovery. Someone had dug into the side of the island, so as to form a shelter a little bigger than a sentry-box. The place was roofed and lined with corrugated iron, now stained with age. There was a sort of locker on the floor, to serve as a seat. It was evidently a lookout place. A man sitting there could scan the greater half of the lake. But why, the boys asked, should one have to watch on that side? What enemies lived over there, in the woods across the lake?

"Whoever it was, it must be a long time ago," said Mac.

"The ground isn't trodden. And look how the plants are coming in. Nobody's been here for ages. Perhaps he was shipwrecked, and used to come here to look out."

"P'raps," said Robin. "But look here; the top of this seat is loose, so as to make a sort of box underneath. Let's lift it."

"It comes right off," said Mac. "What's underneath? Off she comes!"

They lifted a decaying plank, slimy underneath, and furrowed with rot into beds for slugs. Under it was a receptacle in which a few wood-lice, surprised by the light, slowly crawled to shelter.

"What's the heap in the corner? It looks like cloth of some sort." He groped with a hand, and pulled out his find. It was a mouldy old bit of rag, which had once been blue. It was difficult to say what it had been—perhaps some sort of clothes. There was nothing else in the box except a rusty fish-hook, still attached to salmon-gut. Both objects might have been there for years.

"Look about," said Mac; "we may find something else. Let's lift the seat and look under it."

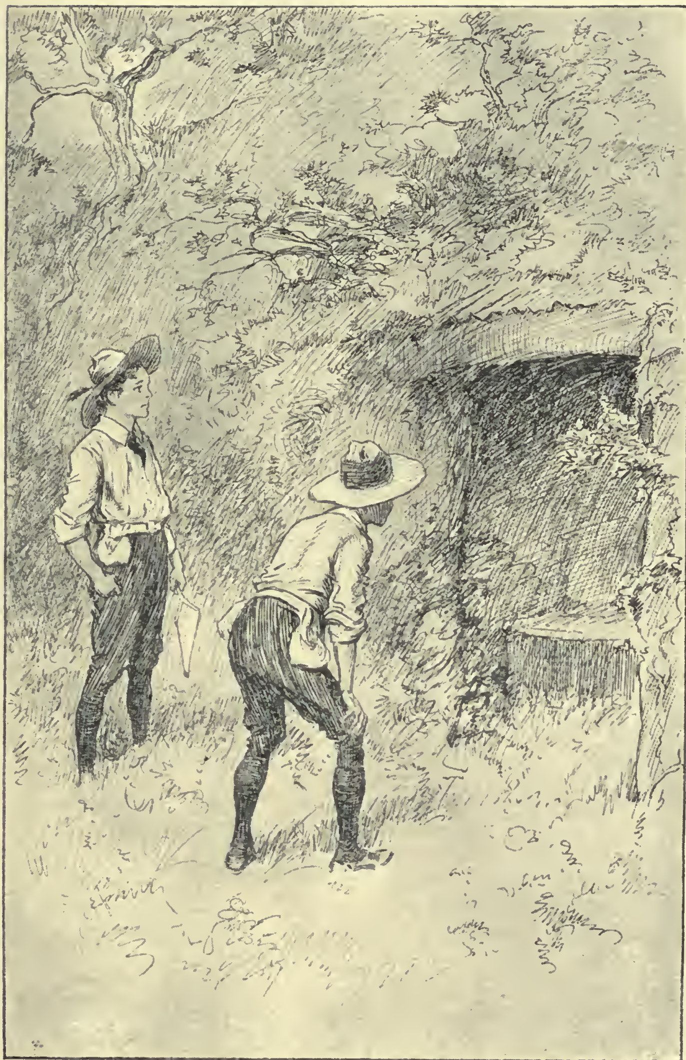
This they could not do, for the wood was sunk into the ground. They could see no other relic.

"I wonder where he slept," said Robin. "Robinson Crusoe slept up a tree the first night. But I expect this man had a stockade somewhere, or slept in a hammock between two trees."

"We'll go on into the thicket behind the house," said Mac. "Perhaps we shall find something there. You look out to the left. I'll look out to the right."

They handled their catties, and plunged into the thicket.

Twenty yards farther on, at the very top of the island, they came upon a boulder of rock as big as a dinner-table. They clambered up to the top of it, hoping to get a good view; but the trees were too thick: they couldn't see much. They found two other relics here, though. An old, weather-beaten, much-burned pipe, with a deeply bitten mouthpiece, lay on the very top of the



"A shelter a little bigger than a sentry-box."

rock. Below the rock, in a hollow, was a round iron ring, with curious grooved back. It was the cringle of a sail, but, as the boys had never seen such a thing before, they were much puzzled by it. They took both pipe and cringle as spoils of the day. They felt that they were on the point of great discoveries.

" Hush a minute !" said Robin. " Did you hear that ?"

" What was it ?"

" Listen ! Now it's gone. Why didn't you keep quiet ?"

" Hush ! Hark !" A sort of whisper of sound came to them from the other side of the island.

" It sounded like a splash," said Mac. " Is that what you heard ?"

" A sort of a splash. Let's listen a minute. It may sound again." They listened attentively for a minute, but heard no more.

" What was it, d'you suppose ?" said Robin. " Could it be old Hampden coming ?"

" No," said Mac ; " but I know what it may have been. It may have been a fish leaping."

" That's a sign of rain, isn't it ?" said Robin. " We'd best be skating back home."

" You're afraid," said Mac. He was a little afraid himself.

" I'm not," said Robin. " I'm not at all afraid." He listened attentively, till some nearer noise reassured him : a twig fell. " I know what the noise was," he said. " It was a bit of dead branch falling into the water."

"Shall we just go back and make sure?" said Mac, anxious to test the strength of Robin's conviction.

"No," said Robin. "I'm sure it was nothing. It couldn't have been anything else."

"I don't think it was anything, either," said Mac. "Well, come on, then. We'll go all round along the edge of the island. I vote we do. What do you say?"

"Yes," said Robin, "we will. You've got the pipe?"

They pushed on from the boulder towards the water.

"It seems to me," said Mac, "that this wood has been cleared at one time. Look how potty the things are just here."

They forced their way through a tangle of brushwood to the edge of the island.

"I say," said Mac, "there's another creek. Just climb up here over these rocks. But go easy, 'cos we're in sight here from the other side."

When they had clambered up to the top of the rocks they saw that the new creek was a little narrow harbour, evidently six or seven feet deep. The sides had once been levelled, but they were overgrown now, like the rest of the place. A flat stone, like a paving-stone, was clear of grass in one part. Perhaps all the edge of the creek had once been paved. This one stone remained above-sod to tell of the past.

"I say," said Robin, "it's been a little harbour; and there's been a quay all round it. Look here!"

"But look at the water," said Mac. "It's deep, and clear of weed, and there's a stunning dive off the stone. D'you think it's safe? Shall we bathe?"

"We could be seen from the other side," said Robin.

"But, then, I don't see how they're to catch us. I vote we do bathe. Only, how about drying? We'll have to use our shirts for drying."

They bathed. While they were drying (which they did mostly in the sun) they wondered who had made the place. It had been made long ago, and then deserted; but whether the Phœnicians had made it in

"They saw that the new creek was a little narrow harbour."

their search for tin, or whether the pirates had made it as a hiding-place, the boys could not be sure. There was not much to tell them either way except the paving-stone. Searching about for evidence of the builders, the boys saw something gleam far down under the water. They could not see what it was. It gleamed, and then seemed to move sideways as the water moved;

then it gleamed again quickly, a silvery something. They craned their heads over the quay. They could not see what it was. It was a gleaming thing, perhaps as big as a saucer. The question arose, Was it the lid of a tin or a silver ingot ? Who could tell ?

" It can't be tin," said Mac, " because tin would be rusty. It must be silver ; or perhaps it's some old kind of patent tin the Phœnicians or pirates had. And it may have writing on it, or signs where to get the treasure. I vote we try to get it up and see."

" How are we to get it up ?" said Robin. " It's a good five feet down. We couldn't dive to it."

" No," said Mac. " But I know what. We could tie a stone to the painter, and let it down to the bottom, and then climb down it, like the divers do."

" We might do that," said Robin doubtfully, fearing that he would be selected for the job. " But I know what would be better. Get an oar and jab it out. It's probably only caught in something. And if we jabbed it out, we could get it without going in."

" Well, get the oars, then," said Mac.

" All right," said Robin. " But you come, too, 'cos supposing there's any danger ?"

When they had finished dressing, they loaded again with ball-cartridge, and set off to the boat, taking care to go another way than the way they had come. They had read somewhere that that was what the Indians, or perhaps even wild animals, did, lest an enemy should be following the tracks made by them in coming. Their new way led them along the south shore of the island, in sight of the end of the lake. The island was reedy on

its south shore. It sloped gradually away into shallow water, which was both muddy and weedy. The boys found some fresh-water shells in the mud of this shore. Mac made a rough map of the island in his pocket-book, taking the compass bearings from the sun by the help of his watch. While he was drawing, an old dog-otter slipped into the water just under their noses.

"I say," said Mac, "aren't the things tame? Why didn't you have a whang at him?"

"I won't whang at an otter. There aren't many of them. I know what we'll do when we get home. We'll make a big map of the island, and paint in the different bays and things. And then we'll come here some other time and make soundings, and write in how deep the water is, and then have pictures of ships on it, like in the map in 'Treasure Island.' What fun it would be if we had a cannon! I believe I could hit that tree there with a cannon from here."

"It's not so easy as you think to shoot with a cannon," said Mac, "especially an old cannon. Hardly any cannon-balls hit people. I asked old Billy Porter. He was in the Crimea. He said a battle was one of the safest places a man could be in."

"I expect he was only yarning," said Robin. "He's always yarning, old Billy is. He's the biggest yarner there is. He's always yarning. I wonder, would a cannon recoil very much if we tied the painter to it?"

"I don't know," said Mac. "Billy says it takes two years to learn how to shoot with a cannon. We'll go on now and get that oar."

"I wonder," said Robin, as they burst through the

bushes to the creek, " if that thing in the water really is a silver ingot. I s'pose if it is we should have to melt it down."

" I say," said Mac, cutting in upon his brother, "is this our creek ? Yes, it is. Where's the boat gone ?"

"'A battle was one of the safest places a man could be in.'"

" The boat's gone !"

True enough, the creek was empty. The boat *had* gone. The boys stood dumbfounded. What could have happened to it ?

" Could it have broken loose ?" said Mac.

" No," said Robin ; " it must have been taken. The

painter was tied quite tight. I gave it a good yank, to make sure."

"Could anybody have been on the island all the time?" It was an uncomfortable thought. It gave them both a thrill.

"That must have been the splash we heard."

"No," Mac added, after thinking for a while; "I don't think he could have been on the island. There are no tracks. Look here! He could only have got at the boat from this side, and these marks on the soil are made by us. You see? That's where we trod. No one else has been here. Someone's come by water."

"That means," said Robin, "that old Hampden's spotted us, and sent his keeper."

"He hasn't got a keeper."

"It might be some gipsy or highwayman, who lives in the woods there."

"I say, what shall we do?" said Mac. "We're shut up on the island. How are we to get off?"

"I s'pose we couldn't swim," said Robin. "It's rather far to swim. And then, if we swum, we should have to leave our clothes behind. And even when we get ashore, we shan't be able to pass old Hampden. And how about the boat? We can't leave the boat behind."

"We'll creep down to the shore to see if we can see the boat," said Mac. "Come down to the edge, and peep through the bushes."

After working through the scrub to the edge of the lake, they gently put aside the bushes. They peeped through at the mainland fronting them. An army in

position might have been waiting in the woods there, for all the boys could tell. They saw nothing but the wood, the saucy water, and the swaying of the leaves under the wind. There was no trace of any living thing. Even the birds seemed to have gone. Yet somewhere in that mystery their boat was hidden, and there, too, was the unknown thief who alone could help them off the island.

" No sign there," said Mac. " But he must be somewhere there. He is a mean spess to come and bag our boat. I wonder if we could make a raft."

" We might find a log or two which would float," said Robin dejectedly. He had not much faith in rafts. They had tried to make a raft once before, and it had been a most dismal failure. Still, a raft was better than dying of starvation on the island. They grubbed about among the bushes for about twenty minutes, but found no logs likely to float.

" We want an axe and rope, really," said Mac gloomily. " What asses we were not to stay, one of us, as a boat-guard, while the other explored. What are we to do now ? We might try to swim it. I dare say he's watching us all the time. I dare say he'd be decent over it if he saw us try to swim it."

" I heard the Rector say once," said Robin, " that old Hampden's awfully down on trespassers. And we've got our catties, too ; and we were whanging at his precious birds. I dare say he saw that. What d'you think he'll do to us ?"

" I suppose he'll prosecute us. And mother 'll take the boat from us, and we'll be in hot water till we go back to school."

" Each holding a flag of truce.

" What shall we get, if we're prosecuted ?" Robin asked. " They send the governors to gaol. Dick Truefitt got a month, just for going after a rabbit."

" I s'pose there are no rabbits here," said Mac, " 'cos we may have to stay some time, and I don't know what else there is to eat, unless we could catch a fish with that fish-hook. We could use the wool of our stockings for line, I s'pose, and there's plenty of slugs and things for bait."

" I don't think we'll be able to stay here," said Robin. " We can't let mother worry about us. She'd think we were drowned. We'll have to swim for it, and chance it."

" No," said Mac ; " it isn't safe to try to swim it. He's got us this time. I shan't let you swim it. We must put out a flag of truce. We'll cut a long stick from the willow and tie a handkerchief to it, and perhaps light a fire, so as to make a smoke."

" Mother'll be in an awful wax," said Robin.

" So'll old Hampden," said Mac. " I vote, if it's old Hampden himself, we'll just tell him everything, and give him up our catties. He might let us off if we told him everything. Now I'll get the sticks, and we'll wave down there, opposite where we were bathing."

A few minutes later the two boys were standing disconsolately by the reed-bed, each holding a flag of truce. They waved for some time, and shouted. A strange-looking boat emerged suddenly from among the reeds of the farther shore. She advanced towards them without apparent means of propulsion. She had neither sail, oars, nor steam. A man sat in the stern-sheets, steering

with a tiller. The little boat stood out and faced the boys. The man in her pointed.

"He means us to go to the other side of the island," said Mac. "I suppose he wants us to go round to that harbour place. Is that old Hampden? It doesn't look like a governor."

"I think it's old Hampden," said Robin. "But I can't see under that hat of his. I suppose that's one of these motor-boats. Doesn't it go along smoothly?"

"Yes, it does," said Mac gloomily. "But we'd better not talk of that now. We mustn't keep him waiting. We're in for it, anyway. We'll only make it worse if we make a fuss."

They crossed the island to the bathing-place, feeling their hearts sink a little lower at each step. Going to the head to be swished was a pantomime to this. There you knew what to expect. But to go before old Hampden, whom everybody believed to be mad, and to have to sit with him in the boat, and walk with him up to the house, to a punishment which might be gaol, or, for all they knew, a public birching, was worse than being expelled. They stood disconsolately on the grass of the quay, waiting for their gaoler. They heard the boat come nearer and nearer, with a little noise of throb and bubble. She made a curve at the harbour-mouth, and glided gently alongside the quay, where the man in the panama hat promptly hooked her to a ring. Looking down gloomily, Robin saw the silvery thing gleaming again, as it caught the sunlight. He determined that he would never again bother about what pirates did. They might leave their treasure where they pleased, for all he cared.

He lifted his eyes shamefacedly to the man's face. Mac was standing on one leg, digging the toe of the other foot into the ground, as was his way under strong emotion. The man's face was a set blank. The worst of it was, he never spoke. He just sat there impassive, waiting. It was old Hampden, sure enough. Much good might it do them !

Chapter V

" LEASE, sir," said Mac brokenly, "we're very sorry. We came trespassing into your lake, and had a shot at your birds with catties. Here are our catties, sir. And please, sir, the boat isn't ours. It belongs to Mr. Pile. Mother only hires it from him."

They gave up their catties. Mr. Hampden put them on the seat beside him. The boys waited for him to speak. He didn't speak. He just looked grim. He looked at them one at a time till their eyes fell. Mac began another speech. He got as far as "Please, sir"; but here his voice failed him. He continued to scratch the ground with his toe. Mr. Hampden pointed to a seat in the boat's bows, in a way which told the boys that they were to get in. They got in. Mr. Hampden knocked the hook from the ring, and turned a little wheel. The engine began to work. A turn of the hand brought the boat out into the lake. In twenty seconds more she was past the point of the island, and standing in to the main. The boys' hearts could hardly sink lower. They felt them, as it were, knock at the bottom during this

"'Please, sir, we're very sorry.'"

passage. Whenever they dared to look up, they met Mr. Hampden's eyes, set and stern. Then they would look down again, or perhaps glance at each other, or cast a hopeless glance at the land. They were standing in towards a bed of reeds, which seemed to stretch for some distance inland. As they drew nearer to the reeds, the boys saw that there was a single narrow opening in them. The boat entered this, sped up it, between the tall, shivering stems, turned sharply, and entered a pond, at the end of which there was a boat-house. To the two wretched boys it seemed very big for a boat-house. Just inside it, as they could see, was their famous boat, the *Revenge*, now a prize of war in the enemy's dockyard.

The motor-boat slid past her into her berth in the boat-house. The boys got out. Mr. Hampden secured the boat and looked at his watch. " Half-past three," he muttered. He turned to the boys.

" What were you boys doing ?" he said sharply.

" Exploring, sir," said Mac.

" Please, sir," said Robin, " we wanted to see where the river went."

Mr. Hampden grunted. He was very terrifying when he grunted. He snapped the catties at the forks, and dropped them into the water.

" Can't have cruelty," he said. " So you were exploring. Are you interested in exploring ?"

" Yes, sir," said Mac.

" What sort of exploring ?"

This was rather a hard question to answer. Mac could only answer : " Boat-exploring, and what the pirates did."

" What the pirates did ?" said Mr. Hampden. " I

thought the pirates cut people's throats, and stole. Is that what interests you ?"

" No, sir," said Mac. " I mean going about and living on islands."

" I thought they lived on ships," said Mr. Hampden.

" Please, sir," said Robin, " they lived on islands sometimes, 'cos they had to bury their treasure." Mac gave Robin a vicious glance, to tell him to shut up, and not to be an ass.

" Are you fond of raspberries ?" said Mr. Hampden suddenly. The boys trembled. They feared he'd gone mad suddenly.

" Yes, sir," said Mac, remembering that it was wise to humour madmen. He glanced again at Robin, whose lips were moving.

" Dotty old fool !" were the words in Robin's heart.

Mr. Hampden led the way out of the boat-house and up the wood to a walled garden, which he opened to them

" Here are some raspberries," he said. " If you look in the tool-shed there you'll find a basket. We'll pick some for tea. The white ones over there are the best."

The raspberry-bushes were so full of fruit that they soon filled the basket. They carried the spoil down to the boat-house. Mr. Hampden took out a key and unlocked the door of a one-storied shed which stood near by.

" Come in," he said kindly. " We'll have tea in the work-room. Are you explorers fond of ships ?"

The boys looked at each other, hardly knowing what to say. They were still a little afraid that the man was

mad. The chance that they were not to be prosecuted made their hearts leap ; but still, there was their boat to get back, and the trespass to be explained. And this queer man was acting queerly. They went into the shed with grave misgivings.

The inside of the shed was a well-lit, cheery work-room, about thirty feet long by twenty broad. The walls were lined with matchboarding. The floor was covered by a neat straw matting of a very fine web. There were big, comfortable, cushioned seats at all the windows. At one end of the room was a long, solid work-table, with a rack of tools underneath it, ready to hand. At the other end was a writing-table, on which stood a microscope-case, a few books, writing things, and a big open folio manuscript book, about half written. But what struck the boys most was a wall-shelf which ran all round the room, about four feet from the floor. It was covered with models of ships of all kinds, some of them under sail ; some of them with sails furled ; some with oars ; and one of them, a long shining one, which seemed to be of silver, with funnels, to show that she was a steamer. Their hulls were gaily painted. There were little bright guns on some of them. Most of them had flags flying. Generally, they were not flags known to the boys.

" So you think I'm a mad old fool," said Mr. Hampden, catching hold of Robin's shoulder. It was exactly what Robin had thought, and the discovery was shocking to him.

" No, sir," he stammered.

" Not ?" said Mr. Hampden—" not quite mad ? Only

a little queer? And wh t do you think of it? Your name is Mr. Mac, I believe?"

"Please, sir," said Mac, "we were afraid you would send us to gaol."

"What good would that do you?" he asked. "Do you think it would cure you? Make you give up making catties?"

"No, sir," said Mac, getting courage.

"Then what sense would there be in sending you to gaol? Do you want to go?"

"No, sir," the boys answered.

"Much better stay here and have some tea," said Mr. Hampden. "But you'll have to work. You"—here he turned to Robin—"what's your name? Robin?—Robbin' Hen-roosts, or Robbin' Birds'-nests, or Robbin' Mail-bags? What! None of them? Plain Robin Redbreast? Well! Be off with you, and get some dry sticks. They're in the locker outside. Can you lay a fire, Mac? There's a newspaper, and here are matches; and here's Robin Redbreast with the sticks. Robin, the kettle's in the locker under the seventy-four there. Mac, you've laid the fire. The spring's just behind the house. It runs into a big stone trough there. I'll lay the table while you fill the kettle and set it to boil. Robin Redbreast, the larder's the locker underneath the torpedo-boat. Just hand the things out, will you?"

Presently they sat down to a very jolly tea of raspberries, chocolate biscuits, plum-cake, and scrambled eggs. Mr. Hampden showed them how to scramble eggs, and how to whisk omelettes. They enjoyed the tea

immensely. They found that Mr. Hampden was very far from being mad.

"Please, sir," said Mac, at the end of tea, "will you tell us what all your ships are for?"

"My ships?" he said. "I wanted to know what sort of ships the people sailed in long ago—I mean the people who interested me—the explorers, Columbus and the others."

"Will you tell us where you got them, sir?" Robin asked.

"Got them!" he exclaimed. "I didn't get them. I made them myself."

"Oh, sir!"

"You are great explorers," Mr. Hampden said. "I think I must make a model of your ship. What is your ship called? The *Saucy Polly?*"

"No, sir," said Mac. "We generally call her the *Little Revenge*. But sometimes we call her the——" He stopped, a little ashamed.

"The what?" said Mr. Hampden.

"The *Pirate's Bride*, sir," said Robin. Mac kicked him under the table for being an ass.

"Oh, indeed!" said Mr. Hampden. "The *Pirate's Bride*. A very pretty name, too. Come on down to my dockyard, and I'll show you where I try my models."

He led them down through a thick stretch of wood to a deep, land-locked pool, fifty yards across, which branched off at right angles from the lake. The land about the pool was low and treeless. It was rocky, with sparse grass in the earthy bits. At the lake end of the

pool a few rocks rose from the water. On the side on which the boys stood was a small wooden landing-stage, to which a curious kind of box-like, basket-like boat was moored.

" D'you know what that boat is ?" said Mr. Hampden.

" It's like a coracle," said Robin.

" It is a coracle," said Mr. Hampden. " I made that after seeing a Welsh boatman make one. They're very jolly when you get into the way of them. I'm afraid the wind's fallen, or we could have a yacht race here. This

" 'A greater explorer than Columbus.' "

is where I race my models. Just lately I've been trying my steamer model, but she's burst her crank, and I haven't got another one. So that's no go. How would you like to go exploring on a boat like this coracle ?"

" Please, sir," said Mac, " I don't think I should like it at all. There's no room in her !"

" Well," said Mr. Hampden, " the man who first went to sea in a coracle, or on a log, or in a burnt-out hollow tree, was a greater explorer than Columbus. Columbus discovered a new land, but the savage who first went across a river or out to sea discovered a new element."

"Please, sir," said Robin, "who was it who first discovered boats?"

"I don't know," said Mr. Hampden. "But you can figure it out for yourself how they were discovered, can't you? I should call it invented myself. Try to think."

"I don't know how they were discovered," the boys said, after a pause. Mac added later that "everybody would know that wood would float."

"Well," said Mr. Hampden, "you shall come here to-morrow to figure it out for yourselves. D'you think you could?"

"What? Come here, sir, or figure it out?"

"Both," Mr. Hampden said.

"I should think we could," said Robin, "if it's fine."

"It will be fine," said Mr. Hampden. "What! You two call yourselves explorers and can't tell the weather? Surely you can see that it's going to be fine?"

"No, sir. Please, sir, how can you tell?"

"Well," said Mr. Hampden, "I see it by so many signs that you might almost say that I feel it. In the first place, there's a northerly wind, which has dropped. The sky to the west is free of cloud, and yet all the horizon is dim with haze. There's a promise of mist already on the rim of the lake across there; and the white drifting mist over water is one of the surest signs of hot, fine summer weather. The fish aren't rising in the lake, nor leaping out of it. Then the midges aren't biting, and the gnats are dancing, and sound isn't travelling well. We're not hearing distant noises—cows, or dogs, or church-bells. The air is dim, and as if it were solid rather than clear and watery. There's a promise

of strong, pure rich colour in the sunset. The ducks are quiet. There is practically no cloud at all in the heavens, but what there is is light, dim and in small rolls, of the kind called 'cumulus.' What there is is high up, and almost stationary. Such movement as it has is from the north, following the direction of the wind down here. Then the pimpernel is wide open, and my hair is dry. You young rogues have just been bathing, and drying with a handkerchief, so you needn't feel your own hair. Then, you may have noticed that just outside the door of my workroom there's a piece of skin dangling from a string, which I felt as I went outside. It is as dry as old parchment. If it were going to rain, it would feel moist, because of the salt in it. Last of all, the swallows are flying high. I dare say I could think of some other signs if I gave my mind to it. If I had an old wound, or even a bad corn, it would give me a twinge or two if rain were coming. If you keep your eyes open, you'll learn other signs for yourself—so many, in fact, that it will become a sort of extra sense in you, and you'll be able to say in the morning, 'It feels like rain,' or 'The wind's going to blow. I'm not going to look for America to-day.' At what time have you young men got to be back at home ?"

"About six-thirty," said Mac. "We're expected in by then. We have supper then. But it doesn't matter our being late."

"Doesn't it ?" said Mr. Hampden. "Well, it's six now. And how are you going to get your boat over the rapids ? How long d'you think that'll take you ? Did you ever pull against a three-mile stream ?"

" Mr. Hampden watched them as long as they were in sight."

" No, sir," said Mac.

" Well," said Mr. Hampden, " you'd better be off, if you don't want to frighten your mother. You won't be back much before eight. I shall expect you to-morrow at what time—ten o'clock ? Or do you lie in bed after exploring ?"

" We'll be here at ten, sir, if we may," the boys said. " And, please, sir," said Mac, with a rush, " might we bathe off the island ?"

" Yes," said Mr. Hampden, " if you can figure out that puzzle. But I expect you not to bring any more of those catties. Is that a bargain ?"

The boys promised not to bring any more catties. They started off to get the *Little Revenge.* When they said good-bye to Mr. Hampden at the boathouse, they thanked him very warmly for all his kindness to them. He helped them out of the boathouse, and bade them to hug the shore when they got into the river, so as to avoid the current. He hoped that they would enjoy getting over the rapids. The boys pulled off together, heartily giving way. Mr. Hampden watched them as long as they were in sight. " What it is to be young !" he said to himself. " How old we should feel if we didn't see young people now and then ! Well, I think they enjoyed themselves." A favourite robin hopped towards him. He took a currant from his pocket and put it between his lips. The robin flew to him, perched on his shoulder, fluttered up, and took the currant. A few other birds—a thrush, a tit or two, some sparrows, and a couple of blackbirds—appeared suddenly from nowhere in particular, with a general air of expectation. He had a little

grain and a few more currants. He enticed them to come to eat out of his hand, which they did shyly, one at a time, with little rapid backward darts after each peck.

Meanwhile the evening gathered. The light became more of a glow. It was as though, the fire being out, the embers smouldered. The boys pulled out of the lake into the quicker water, marvelling at the colour of the woods, now that the flush took them. The water-fowl were about. An early owl cried once, and was silent. A night-jar in a beech-tree spun his rattle. There were little splashings from the water-rats. A big fish rose with a swirl at a floating water-lily bud. Soon the babble of the water was all about them. They felt the rush and chuckle. They felt the sharp, bobbing slaps of the dance of the boat against the current. They saw an alder-bush stay within ten yards of them during nearly five minutes of pulling.

"I say," said Mac, "we can't pull against this. We'll have to tie the boat up and walk."

"Try and pole her up," said Robin. "The Indians pole their boats up rapids. You stand up and shove the pole down to the bottom, and then give a sort of shove, like you do in a punt, and then the boat goes on."

"Hold tight to your oar, then," said Mac, standing up to pole. "And mind you keep the boat trimmed, or we shall upset. And mind you keep time." They stood up, one on each side, forcing forward.

"One, two, three," said Mac. "Pole her up."

They dug their oars down and shoved. Luckily for them (as sometimes happens), they did it fairly well for the first few times. The boat visibly advanced a little.

"Splendid!" cried Mac. "This is better than rowing. I say, isn't this like a canyon, with all those trees there? And then the rapids there. I say, I know what we'll do at the rapids. We'll get out and wade, and make what they call a portage. There goes an otter; or is it a water-rat?"

At this instant, as he shoved on his oar, he overbalanced, and fell forward. The oar slipped forward with a splash, and floated off. The boat rocked, and almost upset.

"Look out, you donk!" said Robin.

"Look out for my oar!" cried Mac, jumping up, too late, to grab for it.

Robin swung his oar over, and tried to knock the floating oar towards the boat. He hit it once, but the current was swift there. The oar danced over a ripple, and away.

"Now you've done it," said Robin, swiftly backing the boat to go in chase. "We shan't get it back in a hurry." He went forward with his oar, and paddled with it hard, now on one side and now on the other, in a style which he, in his innocence, called "gondoliering." Mac stood just behind him, making it plain that he thought his brother's rowing inferior. He kept urging, "Now let me have a go."

When they captured the missing oar, they were below the rapids, with all their labour to do again. "This settles it," said Robin. "I'm not going to drag up those rapids again. We must tie the boat up and walk it. Shove her into the bank. We'll have to take the oars with us, or hide them in a ditch somehow. I doubt if we'll ever be able to get the boat back again till we've practised poling."

" Oh, come on. Don't funk it, man," said Mac. " I know what we'll do. We'll crawl along by the bank, and pull her up by the bushes."

Mac was the stronger of the two. His counsels prevailed. They wearily set to work to pull the boat along by hauling on the boughs of the alders. There came a faint puffing noise behind them ; there came a hail. Mr. Hampden was there in his motor-launch, offering them a tow. He ran his boat through the difficult water in mid-stream. " Can you catch a line ?" he called, as he bobbed past. He had a line ready coiled in his right hand. He was steering with his left. His eyes seemed to be everywhere at once—now on the water, now on the boys, now on the run of the stream ahead. " Stand by to catch," he called again, taking advantage of a smooth. His right hand flicked suddenly. The line shot out and up, unflaking as it went. It fell across the boat with a smart rattle. Mac caught it, and hitched it to the ring in the bows.

" Let go of the bushes," said Mr. Hampden. " Steer your boat with the oars, and keep her trimmed. Let her get astern of me. Are you ready ? Pull in on the line a little, and make fast. Don't come too near. Make fast there. I'm going ahead now."

Twenty minutes later the boys were running over the last couple of fields to their supper.

Chapter VI

THE next day the boys were afloat betimes. They shot the rapids in the style described in one of their story-books. The boat got a jolt on a boulder, but escaped shipwreck. When they were in the smooths below the rapids, they held water for a minute, while they tried to fix in their minds the safest course to follow in coming down. They drew maps of the rapids in their pocket-books, marking the bad boulders and the places where the fall seemed fiercest. The water was too shallow to be dangerous to good swimmers, but it was quite fierce enough to be dangerous to an old, not very handy, boat like the *Little Revenge*.

" I suppose," said Mac, " if this dry weather keeps on, we shall have to come down the calm bit in another week. The water's falling. I dare say all this rapid bit is quite dry when there's a drought, except just the side. I wouldn't care to come down this in a flood, would you ?"

" No," said Robin. " Mac, did you notice where it was we bumped ? Wasn't it just by the alder, where that wisp of hay's caught ? We ought to mark that

'dangerous.' It might have twisted us round, broadside on."

"I didn't notice where it was," said Mac. "We ought to have noticed. That was a bad stone. I thought we were over."

"Well, some day," said Robin, "we'll land and make a proper plan of it from the bank, or one of us land, and shout out directions to the other. It 'd be rather fun, having a match to see who got down quickest."

"Or, tell you what," said Mac, "when the water's right down, we might wade out and hike out a few of the stones."

"I don't think that 'd be much good," said Robin, "'cos in currents like this the stones shift with each spate. It's funny it should be so bouldery here, and not at all bouldery farther up. I suppose the woods up there are bouldery, and then they roll down."

They swung the boat round, and pulled on.

They found Mr. Hampden at work in the workroom, turning a new spar for one of his models.

"Well," he said. "I hope your mother gave you good spankings for being late. Didn't she? Not? Well, that's very strange. So now you're here, and don't know what to do till it's time for bathing?"

"Please, sir," said Mac, "what is it you're making?"

"I'm making the mast of a galley. D'you know what a galley is?"

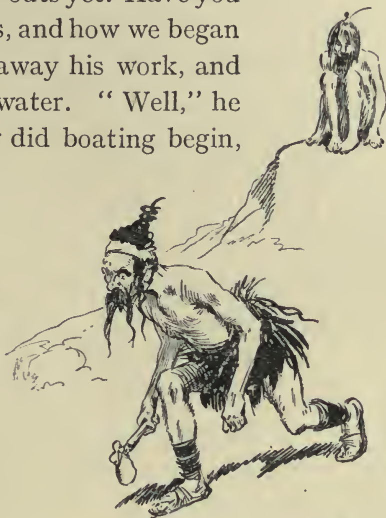
"A thing they put slaves in, sir."

"A sort of sugar plantation?" Mr. Hampden asked. "They put slaves in sugar plantations, didn't they, and

then hunted them with bloodhounds. Eh? Isn't that what they did?"

"Yes, sir," said Robin. He had just been reading "The Creole." He knew all about slaves.

"Well, a galley's a little like a sugar plantation, because there are slaves in both," said Mr. Hampden, smiling. "But I'm not going to tell you about galleys. You don't know about dug-outs yet. Have you discovered yet about boats, and how we began to use them?" He put away his work, and led the way out to the water. "Well," he said, after a pause, "how did boating begin, do you suppose? Suppose you were two savages, living in that hole in the ground there, or two half-monkey-men, perched up in the tree there, how do you think you would take to the water?"



"'Something not much better than apes.'"

"I expect——" said Mac, and then stopped. "Were men really half-monkeys once, sir?" he asked.

"Something not much better than apes, I expect," said Mr. Hampden. "But it's a point not yet cleared up and settled finally. If it happened, it happened long ago. Actual proofs have not yet been found, and may never be found. But we know, from some skulls which have been found, that man was once a great deal more

like a great ape than he is at present. And many things tend to show that all existing forms of life are adapted and generally improved from earlier, less complex forms. Man certainly sprang from some type more brutish than any now existing. And that's as far as I can go, knowing next to nothing about it."

"Well, did they live up trees, sir, when they were half apes ?" Mac asked.

"Yes," said Mr. Hampden. "Some big apes are supposed to build little rough shelters on trees, and many primitive men do so always. They have little platforms, high up on the branches, with some sort of thatched roof. And then they climb up by a rope, and pull the rope up after them. And there they are, very snug, till somebody comes and burns the tree down."

"What sort of weapons have they, sir ?" Mac asked.

"Weapons ? Do you mean the apes or the men ? I don't think the apes have anything. The men have chipped flints, or jade, or some other hard, smooth stone, polished into axe-heads, or just some nice nobbly bit of rock, twisted tightly with a withy—like this." He bent down and twisted a bit of string about a stone, so that the stone, tightly gripped by it, made a kind of hammer-head. "There," he said. "If you've seen men fastening up faggots with withy, you'll know the sort of handle they use. They sometimes use raw hide, I believe, for the hide shrinks as it dries, and grips the stone even tighter. And then with a thing like this they whack the little boys who come after their waterfowl with catties. Eh ? Would you like me to whack you with this ? Don't you think you deserve it ?"

" Please, sir," said Mac, edging away with a grin, " didn't men first take to the water by accident, in floods ? Didn't they get on logs when they got carried away by the water, and then find they could direct them ?"

" I don't know," said Mr. Hampden. " Most primitive people who live by rivers are extremely clever swimmers. I suppose that either they or the very, very primitive men before them discovered that some logs were big enough to support them in the water ; and from that they would soon learn how to propel the log by paddling on one side or the other with their hands and feet. The next step would be to get a log which would keep them dry, and let them carry things with them, and a paddle which would save their legs and arms from being snapped off by crocodiles. So then, when they got a good big log, they hollowed it out by burning."

" How did they burn it ?" Robin asked.

" I suppose they lit fires on it, and then chipped out the charred wood with their axes. It would be easy to do that. And when they had chipped out all the charred wood, they lit another fire, and charred the hole a little deeper. Or they might have built a big fire and heated a lot of sticks red hot, and then rubbed the log with the red-hot ends, and kept on doing that till the hollow was deep enough. They probably didn't want a very big hollow—room for one or two men, and for whatever they might kill when they went hunting. As for paddles, I don't know what they did. I expect they found paddles more trouble than the boat itself. They would know that it would have to be something like a hand at the

end of an arm. It must have taken them a long time to make anything like that. I fancy that paddles were so much trouble to make that the first boats were made very small, so that they could be managed with only one. Coracles have only one. You make your stroke, and then give a little quick twist with the blade, to keep the boat on a straight course. Otherwise, of course, you'd pull her round and round and round like a merry-go-round. Of course, if you preferred, you could dip the oar now on one side, now on the other ; but that is both more tiring and slower. But logs weren't the only primitive boats by any means. I expect they had rafts made of logs tied together, and rafts of saplings laid on blown-up skins, like great bladders, and boats like baskets with hide stretched over them—just coracles, in fact. And then, of course, they had small swimming-bladders, like the ones you see at swimming-baths. They would swim with those when they were going farther than usual, so as to rest themselves for the job in hand, which, I expect, was generally jabbing somebody or something with a sharp bit of flint, or fetching him or it a crack on the skull with a club. You see, primitive man spent most of his time either fighting or hunting."

"And when did they begin to use sails, sir ?"

"Oh, I expect sails soon came," said Mr. Hampden. "I don't suppose it took you long to find out how helpful the wind might be on that straight stretch up above where you live. But if the earliest boats were on rivers, sails would be of comparatively little use, and so they wouldn't develop much. But in tribes living near lakes, or on the sea, where sails would be important, I expect they

developed quickly. Generally primitive people don't do more than suits their development. They're like you. You don't do more Latin grammar than your master sets you, do you ?"

" No, sir," said the boys together.

" It was the same with primitive men," Mr. Hampden said. " Their masters were Hunger and Fear. When they had provided for those two masters they didn't bother to go farther. And the stricter those two masters were, the sharper the pupils became, and the more they learned. The sort of problem they had to face was often something like this : ' If I can't catch a fish, I shall starve ; and if I can't manage my boat, I shall drown.'

" As long as the boats were wanted only for fishing or for ferrying, it didn't pay primitive man to make them better than just good enough for the purpose. But, of course, the purpose varied enormously as the conditions varied. He might want a boat to sail in light airs, or a boat strong enough to stand a steady fresh gale, like the monsoons or the trade winds. Or he might want her light and finely built, so that she might go against currents. Or he might want her to stand a nasty short, choppy sea, like the sea in the Channel, or a great steady roll, like the sea on the North and West of Ireland. Or to land on steep shingle, like the shingle at Deal, or on flat sand like Polzeath, or among rocks, or over the bars of little rivers. Every place has some special character which tends to modify the boats in local use. And the worse the boats are, the more they suffer from a place's special disadvantage. In fact, the worse the place is, the stricter Master Fear gets, and the sharper

his pupils become. Now here, in a calm pool like this, it is hardly ever dangerous even for a light canoe. As long as you can swim, you can put out here in a washing-tub without risk. The place is full of fish. And you're two young savages coming down to get provisions. What would you do ? I'll suppose that you are furiously hungry, and that winter's coming on, and that if you don't get a store of fish dried, you and your tribe 'll die. What would you do ?"

" I should get a log burned out, and go out in that," said Robin.

" I shouldn't," said Mac. " I'd net the mouth of this pool, and try to drive all the fish into the net. A boat wouldn't be much good for a whole tribe. Had they got fishing-nets, sir ?"

" I expect they had," said Mr. Hampden. " But come —it's your bathing time. I've got a dug-out in the boat-house. We'll all get into the coracle here and go round to the boathouse, and then you shall race to the island—one of you in the dug-out and the other in the coracle."

They got into the coracle, and shoved off from the shore.

" Sit still, now," cried Mr. Hampden, " because these ships aren't built for pantomimes. Now, you see how I twist the paddle at the end of the stroke ? You see if you can do that."

The boys tried, with varying success. Mr. Hampden showed them how to keep some object on the shore—a tree, rock, or house—straight in front of them as a steering-mark. The coracle twisted about a good deal at first, but they soon got into the way of her. When they got to the boathouse they found the dug-out. She

looked like a very big, rough, oblong, wooden sugar-bowl. She had one little thwart, low down, and one little rough paddle.

"I bought this from a savage in Australia," said Mr. Hampden. "That was twenty years ago and more. I paid him three empty green glass bottles and a shilling's worth of soft copper wire for it. He wanted the bottle-glass to chip into arrow-heads. Here's one on my watch-chain. D'you see? I saw him make that one. How would you like that to come whizzing into you?"

"Please, sir, it wouldn't really hurt, would it?" said Robin.

"Not hurt?" said Mr. Hampden. "If this was shot on a reed-arrow from one of the bows those fellows had, it would very likely go right through you."

The boys looked at the thing with greater reverence when they heard that it was dangerous.

"How did he make it?" they asked.

"Make it?" said Mr. Hampden. "Well, you must remember that he had been making his own arrow-heads out of flints ever since his boyhood, so that he had the knack of it. He broke the glass carefully, and then chipped it into flakes by tapping it with a knob of flint. Then he took one of the flakes and chipped it with tiny little taps till he had it shaped as you see. He was a clever workman. It didn't take him very long. But when you get home, you get a ginger-beer bottle, and see if you can make one. It is most frightfully hard. When it was finished he wanted to set it into a split cane, and then lash the cane with a gut thread, but I wouldn't let him, as I thought I would keep it as a

watch-chain charm. You must never despise savages; they are often very wonderful. A savage can generally do more than the average European man, who depends so much on the work of others. The man who made this arrow-head and this dug-out also made his own fishing-lines and fish-hooks. He made those out of sinew and sea-shells. He could swim practically all day. He could run forty miles without getting blown. He could get himself food, of a sort, all the year round, and he could kill pigeons with a boomerang. Supposing you were planted down suddenly on the coast where he lived, how much do you suppose you would be able to do for yourself? Robinson Crusoe had a ship to draw upon; but supposing you hadn't got a ship—only just your own wits, and a jolly big healthy appetite? Eh? You'd have to make better shots with your catties than you did at my waterfowl. So now draw lots for which of you shall have the coracle, and then go over to the island and have your swim. I've put you in a spring-board, so that you can have a dive. Now you are to race from the door of the boathouse to the mouth of that creek, where you moored your boat yesterday. You're not to race in the creek, or you'll upset yourselves. And remember that if either of you gets excited and tries to go too fast, he'll find that the boat will get excited too. So keep your heads."

The boys drew lots. Robin drew the coracle. The very close race was won by him. The boys bathed, changed boats, and raced back. The coracle won again.

"The fact is," said Mr. Hampden, "the dug-out needs a lot more knowing. You didn't get all that you could

out of her. You must practise in her. Now, are you cold after bathing, or shall we take a boat down to Dead King's Pond, and see if we can catch some perch ?"

"Yes, sir, yes ; we're not cold," the boys cried. "But why is it called Dead King's Pond, sir ? Did a King die there, sir ?"

"No, I don't know," said Mr. Hampden. "But just by the edge of the lake there is a round barrow, which is supposed to be the grave of some old chief, and so I call that bay of the lake Dead King's Pond, from the barrow. I daresay he was a King, because the barrow is pretty big."

"Please, sir," said Robin, "are there any traditions about it ? Is it haunted ?"

"No," said Mr. Hampden. "I asked Matthew, my carter, about it once, and he said it 'wur just a oald tump, like.' As for haunted, all places are haunted if your nerves are upset. Are your nerves upset ?"

"No, sir," said Robin. "At least, I dare say they would be if I saw a ghost."

"Well, till then, cheer up," said Mr. Hampden.

"Did you ever open the barrow, sir ?" asked Mac, "to see what was inside ?"

"No," said Mr. Hampden. "Let the poor old fellow be. He was a King. Who am I to go digging up Kings ? Besides, you wouldn't rob a man's grave, would you ?"

"No, sir," said Mac ; "I suppose not, sir. But mightn't there be very interesting things inside—swords and treasure, and perhaps his crown ?"

"There might be a few old broken bones," said Mr. Hampden, "and perhaps a broken pot or two, and

perhaps a flint arrow-head. But what do I want with them? I can get whole bones at the butcher's, and perfect pots at the potteries, and rifle cartridges at the gunsmith's, so why should I bother? Besides, nearly all these barrows were opened by thieves in the Middle Ages, and pillaged. They used to use the things they found in the practice of magic."

"Magic, sir?"

"Yes, magic. It was practised by a lot of people. It is practised still. But come on into the boat. I've got the rods there."

"Are we likely to get perch, sir?" Mac asked. "It's rather sunny, isn't it?"

"It is rather sunny," he answered. "But the Dead King's Pond is a dark sort of pocket, rather overshadowed; and there are springs bubbling up at the bottom, and there are generally perch to be found over the springs. We might try. Perch like to stay in one place, and to keep together. And they can give you a nasty prick with their spines if you're not clever at handling them. So look out, if you've never caught them before."

They rowed down to the end of the lake, into a narrow alley of water which led to the Pond. Here they put out their lines. It was, as Mr. Hampden had said, "a dark sort of pocket, rather overshadowed." The water was black-looking and grim, evidently pretty deep. The shore was rocky near the lake, and densely wooded beyond the rocks. At the farthest end of the Pond, where the ground was flat, the dead King's grave rose up, in a neatly rounded heap, twenty feet high. It was not overgrown with the usual August profusion. It had been

kept neat. Whoever the King may have been, he had a pleasant place for his grave.

"Please, sir," said Robin, "didn't they use to bury their ships in barrows?"

"I don't think they did in this country," said Mr. Hampden. "They did in Norway. Great chiefs were often buried in their ships. One or two of the ships have been found, with the bones of the chiefs inside them. But that was long after coracles and dug-outs. I've got a bite. No, no! He's off! Look here! I'll take the oars now, while you two fish."

"Please, sir," said Mac, "after the people had got sails, they surely had to make their boats deeper, or they'd have been blown over. Did they make them deeper?"

"Yes," said Mr. Hampden; "they would have been blown over. They had to do something of the kind. But perhaps their first device was the outrigger—a sort of little extra boat, or log, running parallel to the main boat, and pushed out from it by poles. This is always kept on the lee side. It makes it impossible for the boat to upset, because, no matter how hard the wind blows, this outrigger acts as a prop to it. Of course, this outrigger boat was very light. It was easy to make and replace; and it added very much to the boat's security. I should think that this device was discovered before people learned to build boats—while they were still making them of logs. They use them a great deal in the South Seas to this day. They are marvellously fast—about the fastest boats going. I've got a model of one in the work-room. I've never built one here, because

the lake's not big enough really. One wants the sea for them."

"Who was it first really began to build boats, sir?" Mac asked.

"That's rather a stiff question," said Mr. Hampden. "The Egyptians and Phœnicians, especially the Phœnicians, were among the best of the very early navigators. They had small but quite good ships, with oars and sails. The sails were square. The ships could only use the sails when the wind was dead aft. At all other times they were rowed. The crew sat on benches, and pulled at the oars, which pointed through holes in the ship's side. You can see for yourselves that the ships could not get very far while they depended on rowers. Men soon get tired of rowing, especially in such hot seas as the Southern Mediterranean. Then they have to be relieved by others. And it needs a lot of rowers to move a ship at any speed against even a small wind. And if you have a lot of rowers, even if they are slaves, serving without pay, you have to feed them fairly well and give them drink, and food and drink are costly, and take up a lot of room. The early voyages were mostly coasting voyages, in which the sailors stole from one safe haven to another along the coast. I expect that at first, when the ships were still very small and light, seamen landed at night, and hauled their ships up the beach and camped beside them till the morning. In such small ships there was no room for covered cabins, and no flat space where the men could stretch themselves."

"Please, sir," said Robin, "if the ships were small, I suppose there wasn't very much trade?"

"No. There was a great deal of trade," said Mr. Hampden, "even in very early times. But the trade was perhaps mostly in luxuries and small articles. Homer speaks of a Phœnician ship being 'full of trinkets.' We know from recent discoveries that the shores and islands of the Mediterranean were full of populous and thriving towns. Nearly every town was an intensely jealous little State, guarding some advantage which made it desirable. The advantage might

"The sailors stole from one safe haven to another."

be a safe anchorage, or shelter from a prevalent wind, or a stream of good water, or firewood, or the terminus of a road, or the nearest port to any well-known trade-route. And to coasters creeping along, day by day, as the early ships crept, every town was important, partly as a landing-place, and partly as the home of law and order. There were many pirates hanging about the coast, lurking for what they might come across. Any little seaport with respectable inhabitants was a

refuge from them. If you will imagine this lake as the Mediterranean, and old Mr. Wyse's field there a haunt of pirates, and your boat as a ship coming with wine and oil and gold, you will understand how risky navigation was, and how seamen felt when they ran upon 'old Hampden's,' eh? Because if I'd been a pirate, like old Mr. Wyse, you'd have been seized, and your ship taken, and yourselves sold into slavery. How would you have liked to be a slave, and have to dig in some old hunk's kitchen-garden all your days?"

"I shouldn't have liked it," said Mac.

"I should have liked to have been a pirate," said Robin. "What weapons did they use, sir?"

"Weapons? Bows and arrows, spears, darts, and knives. In those early times most of the weapons were of bronze. Most ships of war had a great big bronze beak under the water for use as a ram. They would try to come charging down on to the side of an enemy, and knock a big hole in her under the water. Another favourite dodge was to glide alongside and smash all the enemy's oars. But pirates didn't want to sink their prizes. I expect they merely towed them into some snug creek, where they could ransack them. Then they would either keep the goods, or take them off to some distant port where they could sell them."

"And what happened if the pirates were beaten? Were they ever beaten?"

"Oh yes," said Mr. Hampden. "Every now and again some city or other would get very powerful. And then she would stamp out piracy in the neighbourhood, or perhaps even over a large tract, if her ships were much

interfered with. Then the pirates 'got sold' in more senses than one, if they didn't take to honest living in time. If you want to know what life in a ship was like in those days, you must try to imagine the ship—a little, rather neatly made, wooden ship, with smooth sides, painted red or black, and perhaps greased, so as to slip through the water easily. At the bow she had eyes painted, so that she might see her way. She stood low in the water. There was a sort of cage-work at the stern to shelter the steersman. The stern was slightly raised. Forward was the one mast, on which a single square sail was set from a yard. The yard seems to have been fixed. When they wanted to furl the sail, they had to pull the foot of it up close to the yard with ropes, and then go aloft to make it fast.

"The sailors were probably very powerful men, with great arm muscles from so much rowing. They rowed in the open, sitting on benches, one or two men to an oar. The oars were poked through small oar-holes in the ship's sides. In very big ships there were sometimes two, three, or four banks of oars of different lengths projecting from the ship's sides, either in tiers of oar-holes, one above the other, or so arranged that three or four oars came through each hole, though the rowers sat on benches, above each other. Rowing was not the only hard work the sailors did. A sailor even now has to be an all-round man. But in those days he had to do everything by his own strength and mother wit. There was no Jarge to come along with a farm-team to drag his boat over a field for him. And no old Hampden with a motor-launch for the rapids. He had to know what

wood was good for the different parts of ships, what was good for the keel, and what was best to withstand the worm under water, and what was best for the sides above the water. You know that wood immersed in sea water attracts boring worms, which will bore neat holes, smoother than you could bore them with an auger, through even the hardest oak in an astonishingly short time. The old-time sailor had to know what woods the worm didn't like. He had to try all sorts of things to keep the worms away, as by partially charring the outside of the under-water planks, or by nailing hides over them, or by smearing them with lime or some other wash, or paint. Then he had to know how to cut all the plank and timber necessary for a ship in all the different curves and thicknesses. He had to know how to join them together and caulk them to make them watertight, and how to cut, step, and rig the mast ; how to shape the oars ; how to twist ropes from hemp or cowhide ; and how to cut out and mend sail. There was probably no caste of dockyard workmen to do all these things for him. He had to do them himself. And by learning to do them he became a very clever person. You may have noticed how clever fishermen are. They do many of these things for themselves even now. But the early sailor had to know more than all this. He had to know how to fight with all the weapons then in use. He had to know how to load a ship, and how to pack the goods in a hold so that they wouldn't work loose in bad weather. He had to do all this loading and unloading by hand. There were no strong steam winches to hoist his heavy boxes for him. He had to do it all himself.

" Besides all these things, he had to know his work as a sailor. And that was very much the kind of knowledge which you would gather of this lake and the way to it if you came here every day. He would learn to know all the signs of the weather at each season. He would learn how to steer by some of the stars and by the different landmarks. He would get to know by heart all the peculiarities of the coast, just as you have got to know the river here, where all the currents are, and the tide-rips, the rocks, the reefs, and kelp. Then he had the pirates to look out for and avoid, just as I suppose you look out for old Wyse, when you come past over his fishing-grounds. Then he had to know how to enter all the ports, perhaps in the dark. And, beside all this, he would have to know a good many languages, and be able to drive a bargain in them, because he would have to do his own buying and selling. You may have seen the French onion-sellers in the towns near our coasts selling onions at the cottage-doors. Well, the old Phœnician traders had to sell their goods in something the same way ; only, as they never knew when they might meet enemies, they went armed, in parties, instead of like the onion-sellers. And when all his cargo was sold it had to be paid for, and the payment was probably not often in money, or even precious metal, but in kind, either raw or manufactured. And the poor old sailor had to reckon up his takings in all sorts of ways. He didn't make out his accounts, as you would, in round sums : 'From Mr. Ramses, two pounds ; from Mr. Sennacherib, two pounds ; from Mr. Themistokles, five pounds.' It wasn't such plain sailing as all that. He had to set down the most various

things—cows, hides, pigs, copper, pottery, woven stuffs, wine, jewels, gold, jade, tin, furs, ivory, balm, grain, dried fish, perfumes, armour, boys, dwarfs, slaves, etc. And he had to reckon up not only what these things were worth in the countries in which he got them, but what they would fetch when he got home. Merchant captains have to do these things even nowadays in little-known and savage lands. In more civilised lands they generally get them done by the agents of their firm. But in those old days they did them as a matter of course. You will see, therefore, that the sailor, especially the sea-captain, of long ago was a man who could not get on without a great variety of talents, as well as a great deal of physical strength."

"And how far did they go, sir?" Robin asked. "The Phœnicians came to Britain, didn't they?"

"Yes, it is thought so. Early navigators—Phœnicians, Greeks, and Egyptians—crept from coast to coast on the Mediterranean, planting colonies wherever they thought there would be profit or advantage. Wherever they could work mines, fisheries, plantations, or establish a good strong position, they planted a little colony—nearly all the ports on the Mediterranean were early colonies: Syracuse, Carthage, Marseilles, Saguntum, and Tarragona, and numberless other less important places—and at last stole along the coast to Britain. Some of the Phœnicians are supposed to have crept to trade for tin in Cornwall, or among the submerged parts of Cornwall, of which the Scilly Islands are the hill-tops. You will remember how often in the Bible you come across mention of Tarshish. You may recollect how Jonah ran away

into a ship bound to Tarshish, ' and paid the fare thereof,' just as you would pay for a ticket in a steamer bound to America. Tarshish, or Tartessus, is thought by some to be Cadiz. Others think it was just inside the Mediterranean, very close to Gibraltar. We know from Ezekiel that ' Tarshish was thy merchant, by reason of the multitude of all kinds of riches, silver, iron, tin, and lead ;" and besides these minerals there were, and are still, very valuable fisheries. If you look in Ezekiel, you will see that the Phœnician ships were built with ' boards of fir-trees of Hermon,' that their masts were made of ' cedars of Lebanon,' their oars of ' oaks of Bashan,' their benches of box-wood inlaid with ivory, their ' sails of fine linen, with broidered work from Egypt, blue and purple from the isles.' Xenophon, in his ' Œconomicus,' praises the beautiful order of a big Phœnician ship which he saw at Athens. He makes it clear that even then ships were fitted ' with many machines to oppose hostile vessels, many weapons for the men, all the utensils for each company that take their meals together,' besides the freight of merchandise, and the men themselves. Yet all these things, he says, ' were stowed in a space not much larger than is contained in a room that holds half a score dinner-couches.' How big do you suppose that would be, eh ? Xenophon says that an officer, called ' the man of the prow,' had charge of all the ship's gear. You may judge from all this that the Phœnician ships were handsome and their discipline strict. You can't have an orderly ship without a pretty strict discipline. The Greeks said that the Phœnician ships were faster than their own. I dare say they made sixty or seventy miles a day at their

best pace. Would you like to hear what they did in the way of discovery, or are you bored by this time? You don't seem to be catching many fish."

"We should like to hear very much, sir," said Mac. "The fish aren't biting."

"I wish we had a dart tied on to a line," said Robin; "then we could jab it down, and I dare say we could catch them that way."

"Well, you wouldn't," said Mr. Hampden. "But there's no harm in your trying some day, as long as you don't fall in when you 'jab it down.'"

"Well, won't you tell us about the Phœnicians, sir? What did they do besides go trading? Did they only go trading?"

"Very few people go anywhere without some hope of profit," said Mr. Hampden. "Adventure for adventure's sake doesn't appeal to men as clever as the Phœnicians. But trade has a way of exciting all sorts of rivalries. And when the Phœnicians and Egyptians and Greeks found themselves with money in hand and all sorts of precious things to sell, they began to look about for new markets in which to sell them. The coasts of the Mediterranean were dotted with little markets, all, perhaps, overstocked. The natives of Tarshish and other places had become sufficiently civilised to charge higher prices for their minerals. And the merchants realised that the old days of high profits were gone for ever, unless they went farther afield to people more ignorant of the values of things.

Chapter VII

"

THE most remarkable of all the old voyages was undertaken at the prompting of King Neco of Egypt, who reigned in the seventh century before Christ. Neco was the King who killed Josiah, King of Judah, at the Battle of Megiddo, during an invasion of Palestine. He was an ambitious man. He tried to link the Mediterranean with the Red Sea by running a canal from the Nile to the Gulf of Suez. When he found that he could not do this (I suppose the engineers weren't equal to it, or the cost was too great), he thought that he might find a passage down the east coast, round the south of Africa, up the west coast to Gibraltar, and back to Egypt along the Mediterranean. We do not know how much he knew, but you need not think that a very practical King, who had had all the nonsense knocked out of him in war, would send out a costly expedition wholly 'on spec.' He must have known that the east coast of Africa runs very far to the south, and that, on the whole, it trends slightly to the west. He may have heard from the reports of savages that in time it bends away to the west altogether.

Savages can often draw astonishingly accurate maps of the countries known to them. There was probably a continual flow of slaves from the heart of Africa into Egypt and Phœnicia, and it is only reasonable to suppose that some of these slaves either knew, or had heard, of the shape of Africa far to the south, and had told what they knew to their masters. As for the west coast, the Phœnicians had sailed into the Atlantic many times. They knew that the western African coast trended away to the south and east. They were justified, therefore, in supposing that the two coasts inclining towards each other might run into each other before very long. So Neco hired a picked company of Phœnician sailors to make the attempt to get round Africa from the east.

" The expedition sailed from a port on the Red Sea. It probably consisted of many ships well equipped both for war or trade. The name of the leader has not been preserved. He hugged the shore all the way, partly because he didn't want to get lost, but also because he was expected to report on the nature of the unknown land, its commodities, and the possibilities of trade there. After about three years he got right round, through the Straits of Gibraltar, and back to Egypt, where he handed in a tale which very few people believed. He said that ' in getting round Africa they had the sun on the right hand '—that is, of course, the north. The journey was very slow. The men had probably been ordered to proceed slowly, so as to examine the country thoroughly. They started without provisions enough to bring them home ; so every year the men landed at some favourable spot, hauled up and secured their ships, built themselves

a stronghold, cleared the ground, sowed it, and stayed till they had reaped the crop. In this way they were able to test the fertility of the land, and to explore it to some distance to find out what it was like. I suppose they would have to wait about three months for each harvest, or perhaps a little less, if the land were very fertile."

"Please, sir," said Mac, "didn't the natives go for them?"

"I don't know," said Mr. Hampden. "Perhaps not. You see, even cannibals are often glad to trade. And I dare say the Phœnicians were cleverer with savages than white men armed with guns. A savage to a white man is a new sort of wild bird for him to shoot at. The Phœnicians knew savages better than that. Besides, the Phœnicians were probably extremely careful not to land in any place where the natives didn't want them. They were looking for trading places, not for possessions. They didn't want to fight. They knew that if they began to fight they would very likely get killed themselves, while they would make it impossible for any of their own race to land there after them. And there is a very good old English sailor who had a wide experience of savages of all kinds. He said that he didn't believe that any race in the world would kill a man who made friendly signals. I expect the Phœnicians went along the African coast just as you go along the river. I expect that whenever they came to a place where they wanted to land, they sent to ask leave of the chiefs before they landed. 'Please, Mr. Wyse, may I land on your field and look for gold?' 'Yes, if you don't disturb my

pheasants.' 'Please, Mr. Hampden, may I dive in your lake and look for pearls?' 'Yes, if you don't shoot my herons.' You see? There's always a polite way of going exploring, as well as the Mac and Robin way."

"Please, sir," said Robin, grinning at the thrust, "did they really get round Africa, or is it only a yarn?"

"I should think they really got round," he answered, "because they couldn't have imagined the sun being on their right hand, to the north of them. That's the last sort of proof a man would invent. They actually saw it, that's certain. And that, at any rate, is a proof that they went south of the line. And if they went so far, why shouldn't they have gone the whole way, coasting as they did? And I count it another proof that they really went that nobody went after them. They came back with news that the route was there, but that it was of little use, and very perilous and costly. And having given out that report, it blocked the way to future explorers."

"And how was it, sir," said Robin, "that it really got discovered?"

"It was done bit by bit," said Mr. Hampden. "The next real attempt to get round was made from Carthage, from the other side of Africa, about a century after Neco. The Carthaginians were great merchants, like the Tyrians. They prospered; they became very rich and strong. They were, of course, originally pure Phœnicians; but as time went on many of them intermarried with Africans. In time a great many of the citizens were half-breeds, or, as they called them, 'Liby-Phœnicians.'

The pure Carthaginians did not like these half-breeds. They were jealous and distrustful of them, and grudged them a fair share in the government of the city. About the year 520 B.C. it was decreed in Carthage that a great number of the half-breeds should leave the city, and found cities for themselves on the Atlantic coast of Africa. Sixty ships, of fifty oars each, were made ready, and thirty thousand men and women embarked as colonists. The fleet was large, but with transports, victual-ships, and supply-ships added to it, there must have been an immense armada, covering many miles of sea.

"The fleet passed Gibraltar, and turned south-west down the African coast. Two days' sail down they founded their first city. A little farther on, on a wooded cape, which is now called Cape Cantin, they built a temple to Dagon, and explored inland for a few miles to a reedy lake, where elephants and other wild beasts were feeding. Then they put to sea again, and kept on down the shore, founding cities at intervals, and hearing strange tales of the interior from the nomad natives with whom they made friends, and from whom they got interpreters for use farther to the south. They sailed up the Senegal River into a lake, where they were pelted with stones by some wild men dressed in skins. In another river they saw many crocodiles and hippopotami. Then they sailed north again to a little island called Cerné, where they had made the most important of their settlements.

"After a rest at Cerné, they made another journey to the south for twelve days, always hugging the land. The natives in these parts were wild Ethiopians, who

spoke a tongue which the interpreters could not understand. They paused at Cape Verde, to examine the timber of the trees with an eye to its value. They found some of it to be sweet-smelling. Then they sailed on again, still farther to the south, passing a low land which seemed to be full of fire. They landed on this land, and found 'wood ashes,' and then encamped there. In the night they were startled by the noise of drums, flutes, and cymbals. Men were shouting somewhere, and fire was breaking out again. The Carthaginians were badly scared, and got to sea again in a hurry, urged on by 'the prophet,' who had apparently come with them. They sailed on for several days past mountains and streams of fire, till they reached an island, in which there was a lagoon, with an island in it, just like this lake. But on the island were a lot of large apes, which the interpreters called gorillas. The sailors mistook them for hairy men, and tried to catch them. They beat away the males after a fight, and caught three females alive. They wished to bring these to the ships, but they bit and scratched so badly that the men had to kill them. They skinned them, and took their skins as a trophy. After this, having now run short of provisions, they set sail back to Carthage, where they arrived safely. They hung up the hairy skins of the gorillas in the temple of Juno in Carthage, where they remained till the city was destroyed."

"Please, sir," said the boys, "what were the mountains and streams of fire which they saw?"

"Well," said Mr. Hampden, "it is said that the natives of those parts burn off the reeds and dried grass from the

ground near their villages every autumn. The jungle is extremely dry, and burns with a splendour we can hardly imagine. But I dare say you've seen them burning leaves in huge heaps on the sides of Brown Willy yonder, haven't you?"

"Yes," the boys answered, "they had often seen it; and heaps so big that the hill seemed to be on fire."

"Well," said Mr. Hampden, "I expect that what the Carthaginians saw was just that. They'd never seen anything like it before at home, and they were in an unknown part of the world, where anything dreadful might happen at any minute; so it frightened them, as I expect it would have frightened you—just a few negroes burning off the jungle, so that the snakes and lions shouldn't come too near their villages, or in order to improve the ground for the next season's crops. Of course, it might not have been that. The fire may have been an invention of the Carthaginians to frighten people and keep them away. The Carthaginians may have had reasons for keeping the coast to themselves. We do not know whether the cities founded by them came to much. Probably they were never very prosperous. But Cerné—the little island half a mile across—flourished as a trading-station for at least a century and a half. It is now doubtful where Cerné was, but some think it was the island Herne at the mouth of the Rio Douro. You can see it on the map when we go in.

"It is said that another expedition sailed from Carthage to explore to the north, along the western European coast, while Hanno was exploring to the south. It is very doubtful if the expedition ever sailed.

If it did sail, an account of it will just show you how the Carthaginians took pains to discourage trade rivals. Himilco, the leader of this expedition, is said to have taken four months to get from Carthage to some unknown cape with islands about it. This seems to have been Cape Ushant, in Brittany. From this part the expedition seems to have been driven out into the Atlantic. Sometimes his ships were surrounded with fogs, sometimes clogged with seaweed, and always becalmed. The sea clogged with seaweed can only be the Sargasso Sea. You will note how the last touch, which implied that the sailors going to these seas had to row continually, would discourage sailors who had to row whenever the wind failed. Lastly, the sea was full of horrible creatures. These two voyages were the two greatest ancient explorations into the Atlantic. We may judge from them that the Carthaginians, besides being very energetic, were very brave and daring sailors.

" Their method of trading with savage people was curious. On the West Coast of Africa, in the wilder parts, where the savages were very shy, they never saw the people with whom they bargained. They landed their goods on the sea-shore, and spread them out on the beach, so that they could be seen. Their goods were probably the sort of goods savages are fond of now—cheap weapons, bright-coloured cloth, gay beads, ornaments, wine, salt, oil, and glass. When they had spread these things upon the beach, the Carthaginians went back to their ships and made a smoke, to tell the savages of their presence. In the night the savages came to the shore, examined the goods, and laid beside each heap as

much gold, ivory, or spices as they thought the goods were worth. The next morning the traders went again to the beach to see how much the natives had bid. If they were satisfied with the amount of the gold offered, they took it, and left the goods to the savages. If they were not satisfied, they left both heaps untouched, as a sign that the savages should add to their bid. If the natives thought well of it, they added to it, bit by bit, night after night, till they had reached their limit, or till the Carthaginians were satisfied. It is said that both sides were extremely honest in their dealings.

"Please, sir," said Robin, "what were the ancient Britons doing then? Weren't they exploring?"

"No," said Mr. Hampden. "The people living in Kent may have had a little trade with the north-west coast of France, and for many years, both before and after Himilco's time, people of Phœnician stock may have come to Cornwall for tin; but the Britons of these days were a low and probably very scanty population, split into tribes. They weren't sea-going people, as far as we know."

"When do we begin to know about them?" Mac asked, in some despair. He had a notion that Britons had always been the best and most daring sailors of the world. Mr. Hampden was telling him of seamen who did wonderful things hundreds of years before even the Romans came. It was hurting to his national pride.

"We begin to know about Britain," said Mr. Hampden, "from a Greek who must have lived about 330 B.C. He was a native of the Greek colony of Massilia, the modern Marseilles. His name was Pytheas. His own

account of his travels no longer exists, but we know fairly well what he did from the writings of those who criticised and disbelieved him. Apparently he sailed into the Atlantic from the Straits of Gibraltar, and then, after a stop at Gades, coasted north, rounded Cape Finisterre, along the north of Spain, into what is now the Bay of Biscay. He then crept along the French coast till he reached Cape Ushant. What he did next is not so certain, but he probably learned at some of the islands near Cape Ushant (where, if you will remember, Himilco had obtained his tin) of the tin-producing country in the north-west. His next step was to visit this country. He examined the mining districts in Cornwall. He is reported to have said that the inhabitants of those parts were more civilised than the rest of the British. They were carrying on a pretty brisk trade, as they had done, it may be, for six centuries. They smelted the metal on the mainland, and carried it off in carts to an island, which was joined to the mainland by an isthmus, left quite dry at low water. Some people think that this island was the Isle of Wight, but there can be very little doubt that it was St. Michael's Mount, opposite Market Jew, in South Cornwall.

"Pytheas seems to have stayed a fairly long time in Britain. Some think he travelled right across the island from the south to the north. He found it very rainy (probably far more rainy than it is now, when so much of the forest has been cleared), and rather cold. The people drank a sort of wine, or mead, made of 'corn and honey.' They also threshed their corn in barns, on account of the rain. In the north he saw the

extraordinary tide-rips in the Pentland Firth, and heard of an island called Thule, lying in the sea, in the neighbourhood of the frozen ocean, to the north of Britain. This Thule may have been Iceland, but it was much more probably one of the Shetland Islands. He did not visit Thule. After reaching the north of Britain, he seems to have gone to a part of what is now Friesland, where amber is cast up by the sea. After this he returned to Marseilles, where he made some curious calculations for the determination of the latitude. As far as I know, he was the last European explorer to reach Britain before Julius Cæsar's spies, three centuries later."

" Please, sir," said Mac, " how could the Phœnicians have traded with Cornwall, if so little was known about the way there? If a lot of ships had been going there all the time, surely the way there would have been well known to hundreds of people, and nobody would have thought it odd that Pytheas should have gone to such a place."

" That's a very good point," said Mr. Hampden; " but I think that what the Phœnicians did was cheaper and less risky than going all the way by sea. They learned that there was a way by sea, but that it was only safe in the summer, and not very safe even then. I dare say you know how dangerous Cape Finisterre and the Bay of Biscay are to ships. To little ships like those of the Phœnicians they must have been deadly. No; what the Phœnicians probably did was this: They probably seized or leased a strong position near the smelting-works, and fortified it, by running a trench or

two, and sticking up a palisade on the wall. They took care to choose a position which would command and give safe access to a safe anchorage. Of course, in choosing their camp, they took great care to choose a place with a good water-supply. When they had established themselves in their camp—in this instance St. Michael's Mount—they set to work to trade for the tin with whatever goods the natives had need of. Whenever they had secured a load of smelted tin they despatched it in coast-boats along the south coast to some Kentish or Sussex port, from which the shipmen could convey it to Gaul. At the port in Gaul, wherever it was—probably somewhere in Brittany—other Phœnician agents took it from the sailors, packed it on horseback, and saw it off, under guard, by road to some port at the mouth of the River Rhone. The tin was cast into lumps called 'astragali.' One such lump was found many years ago at the mouth of Falmouth Harbour. It is shaped something like a clumsy letter 'H,' with the central cross-bar extremely broad. It is nearly three feet long, and about a foot across, and weighs nearly one hundred and thirty pounds. It is supposed that its peculiar shape made it easy to handle and to pack on horseback."

"And how long did the Phœnicians stay in Britain at a time?" Mac asked.

"I don't know," said Mr. Hampden—"probably a good long time. They were doing almost exactly what Europeans did in the various East India Companies during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries. Young fellows went out to the East then to what were called 'factories,' or little settlements of mer-

chants, whose business it was to accumulate freights for the yearly fleets which came to transport them to Europe. They stayed there, learned the language and the ways of the natives, rose from some low position to a position of trust if they were clever, sent home reports from time to time, and got leave to come home sometimes, I suppose, at stated intervals, not too close together."

"Please, sir," said Mac, "if there were these places in Cornwall, aren't there any traces of them—buildings or things—like there are Roman camps?"

"They were very much earlier than the Romans," said Mr. Hampden—"anything from eleven to two or three hundred years before them, so that there is a much smaller chance of their remains surviving. And, then, they weren't conquerors settled here, holding the country by force, as the Romans were. The Romans had to build great camps and walled towns. They were here in force, many thousands of them, practically all over the country. The Phœnicians were only trading in one little bit of the country. There were probably very few of them, and those few were merchants, living simply and cheaply in a few bungalows, which may have been mere wooden sheds like cricket pavilions. They wouldn't have left much trace. No authentic trace of the Phœnicians has been discovered, I believe, except that one queer block of tin from Falmouth. But, then, the goods which they exchanged for the tin may have been very perishable, like stuffs, wine, oil, dates, or glass beads."

"But is it known where the old tin-works were?" said Mac.

"The remains of a very ancient melting and smelting furnace were found on the mainland, nearly opposite to the Mount, about sixty years ago," said Mr. Hampden. "They were laid bare from under the sand by the diversion of a watercourse. They were buried from three to six yards deep. But stream tin-works are found in several parts of Cornwall, generally far below the present surface of the ground. It is said that things get covered in some situations to the depth of a foot in a century by the decay of vegetation and the settling of drift. So you will see that proof of the Phœnicians having been here may be rather hard to find. I should have said that, according to one account, the Carthaginians carried on a sea-trade for tin with Cornwall, or the Scilly Islands, from Gades, the modern Cadiz."

"I read in a book," said Robin, "that some of the names in Cornwall are Phœnician."

"Yes," Mr. Hampden answered; "that is sometimes said. But I believe that the best authorities deny it."

"It would be rather jolly, sir," said Mac, "if we could come across a Phœnician settlement—I mean a real settlement—in some unknown part of England. There might be one, mightn't there, sir? in some wild part of Cornwall, in the moors. Or—I know what—down underground, in one of the mines."

Mr. Hampden shook his head.

"No Phœnicians," he said—"no such luck. But how about Britons? Are Britons any good to you?"

"Yes," the boys exclaimed. "Are there Britons still?" They had a moment's wild hope that, by staying up late, they might conceivably, somewhere, see a few

woaded creatures, slinking from dens on the hills to rob a hen-roost, and slinking back, silent as the grave, furtive, going in Indian file, dodging from tree to tree out of the moonlight, leaving no footmarks, stealthier than animals, dreading the sun. Surely there might be some still.

"No," said Mr. Hampden ; "but we'll have a look at one of their old towns, if you like. And now you must cut, for I've got work to do. Pull in."

Chapter VIII

FEW days afterwards Mr. Hampden asked Mrs. Shenstone if the boys might come camping with him on the slopes of Brown Willy, the old encampment, eight miles away. She was very pleased to give the boys permission. " Only, please, Mr. Hampden, I'm so afraid of their shooting each other's eyes out with those horrid catapults." Mr. Hampden assured her that there should be no shooting with catapults. The boys promised to come home with their eyes entire. A day was fixed. The boys talked of nothing else. The night before the great adventure they borrowed the cook's alarm clock when they went to bed, lest they should oversleep, and so be late in starting. They lay awake till nearly midnight, talking of the fun they were going to have, and of the splendid early morning bathe with which they would open the day.

At five the next morning the alarm clock woke the boys. They turned out unwillingly.

" How about a bathe ?" said Mac.

" I vote we don't bathe," said Robin. " It's not supposed to be good for you so early as this."

" Funk !" said Mac.

" I'll bathe if you like," said Robin.

But the river looked very cold down there in the valley out of the sun. Mac changed the conversation.

" I vote," he said—" I vote we don't have breakfast in the larder. I vote we take our things out to that place on Pinkan Hill where there's said to be a camp. And we'll pretend we're the Romans, going to march on Brown Willy. And we'll unpack our baggage there, and make a fire, and cook ourselves some bacon."

Robin wasn't very sure about Mac's cooking of bacon.

" I don't think we'll have any bacon," he said. " The Romans only ate corn, 'cos I asked Mr. Hampden."

" Well, we'll easy nick some corn out of the feed-box," said Mac. " And I know what we'll do : we'll boil the corn and smash it up. And we'll take that little sort of magnifier with a handle."

" What for ?" asked Robin.

" Signalling," said Mac. " The Romans always signalled whenever the enemy was coming. And that's what we'll do. And you'll have a lid of a tin or something, and I'll go up first and light a fire, and you stand at the bottom, or somewhere, and I'll flash messages to you ; and we'll pretend we're sentries keeping guard."

" What sort of messages ?" Robin asked. " And how do you flash a message ?"

" Oh," said Mac, " easily. One flash means ' All right '; two flashes, ' Enemy in sight '; three flashes, ' A lot of enemy '; four flashes, ' Prepare to receive cavalry.' You just hold your flasher up to the sun and let it flash. The soldiers in the army do it. You can see it for

miles, especially in a country where there's a lot of sun."

"All right," said Robin, not quite convinced. "But I think I read in the *Boy's Own*, or somewhere, that they've got some dodge for an alphabet by making long and short flashes."

The sight of the pleasant country food in the larder—the squares of honey, the bowls of cream, the butter pats, and the great ham, frilled with white paper—made them change their plans. Pinkan Hill seemed far off. They thought it better to breakfast where they were than to go through that elaborate "grace before meat" of being a Roman and climbing a great hill. And what boy will choose corn when he can have home-made loaf and honey? The Roman plan was given up without shame. The boys spread themselves a table in the scullery and breakfasted. Afterwards they provisioned themselves for the campaign.

They selected a hunk of ham, two small loaves of brown bread, four eggs, and a piece of butter. They cut a hole in one of the loaves, and rammed the butter into it. They boiled the eggs on the spirit-lamp before packing them. They knew a lot about the ways of eggs. Of money they had one and sevenpence halfpenny between them. It was enough to face the world with. Each took a handful of raisins from the grocer's big coarse blue paper in the kitchen cupboard. They packed the spoil tightly into Robin's knapsack.

"Corn's the next thing," said Robin. "But I vote we don't boil it. Let's grind it up, like the Romans, and eat it made into meal."

" Yes," said Mac, " we'll find a stone or something, and grind it up."

They slid the bolt of the scullery door, and crept across the courtyard to the stable. The door was locked, for it was still much too early for the men to be about. The swallows were busy, darting to and fro in quick, airy swoopings, each dart a miracle of intellect. As they darted they uttered little faint cries, so faint and fine that they sounded like the clicking of their feathers. Within the stable one of the horses scraped with his forefoot. Bob, the carthorse, shook his head, rattling the headstall. The smell of the stable was pungent in the fresh of the day. The stable roof, mossy in a patch or two, was sharp in the sun against the cool dazzle of the blue of the morning.

" Locked !" said Mac. " Where does Jarge put the key now ?" With the instinct of a boy he looked under the great stone which was used during the day-time to hold the stable door open. " Here it is," he said. He opened the door. Taffy, the cat, jumped from his perch on the feed-box, yawned, extending clawing forelegs, and sauntered out into the light. He waited for an instant at the threshold, during which he surveyed the world, and had a few longings to be among the swallows. A knowing look in his eye told of what passed in his mind. He made a half-step, stopped, and, sitting up, composed the fur on his chest with his little red tongue. Something came into his head. He looked rapidly to his right, and patted off at a trot, under the gate, and away.

" I wonder what he saw," said Robin.

" I wonder where he goes," said Mac.

" I fancy he's got a nest somewhere in the spinney on the other side of the river."

" I wonder what a cat's day is like," said Mac. " It would be rather interesting, some day, to follow Taffy about and see what he does."

" ' I wonder what a cat's day is like.' "

" I expect he gets a good deal of fun out of things," said Robin. " It must be fun to catch a bird. He's a little oner at catching sparrows. When they're half-fledged he gets them every day."

" Yes," said Mac. " Fancy creeping up, as he does, behind a clod or something, and then going ' Pounce !'

and feeling the sparrow in your claws. It must be tremendously exciting."

"And I expect mousing's exciting, too."

"He's off to the mill," said Mac, peering down the hill. "He'll cut across the bridge to the spinney. He gets young rabbits there, and all sorts of things. Cats are just like lions really."

"It must be rather nice," said Robin, "to sleep in the stable, and be able to see in the dark. The loft must be a grand place. It's full of mice, and the sparrows come in too. There are lots of old nests there. Mustn't it be fine to have pads on your feet, so that you can go without making a noise?"

They leaned on the gate, staring after the cat, now out of sight.

"What I would like," said Mac, "if I were a cat, would be the way they see and hear. They see and hear and smell things so. I'd like to be able to tell who'd gone across the road by just sniffing—whether it was a mouse, or a snake, or a man. And to know whether a mouse-hole had a mouse in it. They must know of a whole lot that goes on near the ground which we never notice. I'd like to know all about that. It must be jolly interesting."

"What I'd like," said Robin, "wouldn't be that so much as being able to track people. I expect that muddy road" (he meant the track of sun-caked red clay which led past the house to the mill) "would be like a book to a native. He could tell you what had happened on it. I say, suppose we don't start just for a bit, but try tracking Taffy."

They looked on the cobble-stones of the yard for the marks of the little feet. There were none there about which they could be sure.

"I suppose," said Mac, "that that's why cats are so afraid of getting their feet wet: they are afraid of leaving tracks, in case their enemies should come across them and follow them up."

"No; I don't think it's that," said Robin. "You know old Bill, the huntsman? I asked him about that once. He said that any kind of damp is good for scent. He said that animals don't like getting their feet wet because they know that it makes their scent strong. Animals hunt by smell, not by sight."

They swung themselves over the gate to examine the hard earth beyond. There was no trace of the passage of the cat. His little soft pads had left no mark which the boys could recognise. He had gone padding down the track, with little momentary halts, one paw lifted, to make sure of a scent or a noise. Leaping up on to the parapet, he had crept across the bridge. Then, diving into the grass, he had padded swiftly to the shelter of the hedge. A leap took him into the spinney. Then, very softly, like a big caterpillar, he had crawled up-wind to a place well known to him. Here, in the shelter of a tussock of grass, he waited for the first young rabbit to come within spring. Now he was in his lair in the dry, grassless earth, covered with withered droppings, below a yew. He had trodden himself a little hollow there. It was on the outer edge of the bare patch, covered by the tree. A low-hanging yew branch kept the lair dry. A grassy patch, clear of saplings, lay beyond. He had a

good look-out there. No one could take him by surprise. From early morning until late afternoon the sun beat upon him there, roasting his little sides. But at meal-times, which he knew to the minute, he would trot back to the house for whatever was going. His little head would pop up over the wall just as the maid came out to call him. He would scamper over the lawn to his plate. He had been for four years and five months in the house. Mac was thinking how queer it was that no one knew how he passed his day. The little cat who shared their home was as great a mystery as the just-seen water-rat, who disappeared in a trail of floating mud under the water.

"Not much use looking for him here," said Robin, stooping to look at the mud. "We'll have to follow him some day."

"It would be rather fun," said Mac, "for a cat who got into Mr. Hampden's place. A really wild cat would have a fine time there. I wonder cats don't do it more. I'd go wild if I were a cat."

"They're such lazy beasts, cats. They like the fire," said Robin. "And they get very fond of people and places."

"They say," said Mac, "that they can always find their way back to places which they're fond of. I vote we try with Taffy some day. Take him to Brown Willy, and turn him out on the hill, and see how soon he'd get back."

"It'd be rather cruel," said Robin. "He might not get back. And then a dog might get him. Or a keeper might shoot him. And they aren't used to going long

distances. I've read of them coming back to places with their feet all bleeding, and half-starved. They're very nervous things, cats are. They get too frightened to eat when they're left behind like that."

"I wonder how they find their way, though," said Mac.

"Instinct," said Robin.

"I don't know about instinct," said Mac. He had been peeping into one of the books in Mr. Hampden's room. He felt that he had something new to say. "I believe that 'instinct is the name we give to any kind of brain-work which we don't understand.' I've been reading about instinct," he went on. "I was reading in an awfully interesting book, which says that cats can tell whereabouts they are by the sun. When they're turned out of a basket into some strange place they always look up at the sun, so as to get the direction of the place they came from."

"Yes," said Robin, thinking this out. "But what good can looking at the sun do? They may have been shut up in a box under the seat inside a railway-carriage for hours. Or they may have travelled at night. Looking at the sun wouldn't help them. That would only give them the points of the compass where they are. It wouldn't tell them where they came from."

"It would in a way," said Mac, feeling very uncertain about it. Those who trust to books must take care to go to the roots, not cropping a flower here and there. "And then they have a 'sense of direction.' They sort of feel whereabouts places are, even when they're being carried away from them in the dark. I believe you would have a sort of feel of whereabouts this place would

be if you were carried off one night by robbers and hidden in a cave."

"Yes, I dare say I should," said Robin. "I wonder if there are any robbers about here."

"'A highwayman called Bendigo.'"

"There used to be," said Mac. "There were robbers at the Trumpet Inn. They were under a highwayman called Bendigo Mitchell, who had a horse called Skater. He used to rob everybody round here, and bury all the gold and the watches and things under an oak-tree.

The tree's said to be marked with a cross, if one could only find it. And he had secret rooms in the inn, and sliding panels. And he pushed men down through trap-doors into the underground river after he'd robbed them. And then they would wander in the caves. There's said to be caves for miles under the ground there. And

"'Send £500, or we shall sell your son to the Turks.'"

people up on the top would hear them crying. And in one of the caves there's a secret entrance, and Bendigo Mitchell used to go in there with his gang to consult; and they'd have masks and watchwords, and talk in a language they'd made up for themselves, like the gipsies. And sometimes they'd go out at night and carry people

"'He was shot on the London road.'"

off, and then send a letter, written in red ink to look like blood: ‘Send £500, or we shall sell your son to the Turks.’ And then the people would send £500, and the robbers would let the son go."

"I hope there are none of the gang about now," said Robin, rather anxiously.

"I don't think there are," said Mac. "I'm almost sure there aren't. There might, perhaps, be one or two in the caves. But there are detectives now. It wouldn't be any good their being robbers now. They'd send down detectives from Scotland Yard, and the detectives would come down and go about listening. They'd very soon catch them. They'd listen at doors, and watch people to see if they gave any countersign. The robbers have all sorts of countersigns, like touching the left eyebrow, or biting the lip, or tapping with the foot. Each countersign means something, like ‘That merchant has a bagful of gold upstairs,’ or ‘Saddle the horses,’ or ‘Yon stranger suspects us. See to your pistols.’"

"What became of Bendigo Mitchell?" Robin asked.

"He was shot on the London road," said Mac, "trying to stop the King's mails. Anybody can be shot for trying to rob the King's mails. And his horse Skater was bought by one of the men in the coach."

"It would be rather nice to invent some countersign," said Robin, secretly glad that Bendigo was out of the way, "and perhaps have another person in the gang. I dare say Jarge would be glad to join, and we could go about and consult."

"And we might have a secret language, too," said Mac. "Or, I know what. There are nearly always gipsies

camped on Crookidean Common. How would it be if we went over to Crookidean, and got the gipsies to teach us some of their language ?"

" What sort of language is it ?" Robin asked. French he knew, and Latin he knew, but what was " gipsy " ? If it were anything like the others, to be studied like the others, he " desired no better acquaintance."

" A very mysterious language," said Mac. " Oh, the gipsies are wonderful people. They're supposed to be Hindus, or perhaps Indians of some sort, who've been wandering for hundreds of years in their caravans. And they go about selling horses, and making baskets and things. And they talk this strange language still. And some people think they're the ancient Romans ; they call themselves all sorts of Roman names."

" I don't think we'd better go to see the gipsies," said Robin, " for I've heard they sometimes steal boys and girls, and stain their faces with walnut-juice, and carry them away and sell them. Or perhaps teach them to steal."

" That was long ago when they did that," said Mac.

" Well, I know the Crookidean lot are a pretty bad lot," said Robin, " 'cos Jarge's mother says they stole her White Leghorns. And I've seen one of them drunk—that day we were driving back from the flower show."

Mac put the gipsies out of his mind. " Well, we won't go to the gipsies, then," he said. " But we might invent a language for ourselves. And where should we consult ?"

" There's a very good place in the disused coal-cellar."

said Robin. "We might easily loosen one or two of the bricks. You know where Taffy goes in? Suppose we pulled out a few bricks there. There's the lid of a soap-box in the tool-shed. Suppose we pulled out a few bricks from the hole where Taffy goes in; then, when we'd made a hole, we could hide it up by the lid of the soap-box. We could easily do that. No one would notice. Or how would it be if we tried to make a sliding panel?"

"That would be rather good," said Mac, "if we could manage it. And then inside the coal-cellar we could have our bull's-eye lantern."

"Yes, yes!" said Robin. "And everyone coming to the door would have to give a signal, and then give the countersign before we should let him in."

"I don't know about telling Jarge," said Mac doubtfully. "Should we teach Jarge the language? I think it would be safest only to teach him the countersigns. You see, Jarge is rather a stupe. He's sure not to be able to learn a language. 'Wurn't never much good at book-learnin'. 'Ed like a dumplin', my mother says.'"

Chapter IX

HE boys had stopped at the court yard gate. Robin was reminded suddenly of what they had been discussing before robbers were mentioned.

"I say," he said; "about my knowing whereabouts this place would be, supposing I were carried away by robbers. How would it be if we were to try that some night? We could get Mr. Hampden to blindfold us, and drive us out to some place where we've never been before. It wouldn't have to be far. Then he could turn us round two or three times, and leave us to ourselves. Then we should see which way we should turn."

"I somehow think we should generally be right," said Mac. "But it would be fun to try. I vote we ask Mr. Hampden."

"And now we'd better be getting our corn," said Robin.

He hove open the feed-box with both hands. Inside was the measure, worn bright with the continual friction of the grain. Robin dipped it in, thinking how much the noise of the slipping corn resembled the slipping of shingle after the bursting of a wave.

" How much corn did the Romans have ?" he asked.

" A goodish lot," said Mac. " They got a great bag full every month. But they were always running short." He had read a little Cæsar. There were notes about the allowance of corn at the end of the volume.

" It's jolly filling stuff, corn," said Robin. " Better not take too much of it."

They filled a cocoa-tin, and packed the tin with the rest of their food. After this they moved across to the boot-shed on the other side of the yard.

" Did it ever strike you," said Mac, " that this place would make a jolly good fort ? If you were to barricade the gate there, this yard would be just like the inside of a fort. There's the house on two sides, and the stable and coach-house on that side, and the gate and all these sheds on the fourth side."

" Yes," said Robin. " And so are some of the other houses about here, especially the old ones. I wonder if they were ever meant for forts."

" I expect," said Mac. " I shouldn't wonder if they were—just small forts. I expect people had to live in a kind of fort near here when all those robbers were going about. They'd have had to."

" The Welsh used to come as far as here," said Robin. " They used to ride over on their ponies, to drive away the cows."

Mac nodded. He knew all about " Taffy's raid."

" I suppose," he said, " when there was a raid, the people got up in the loft and shot through the slits in the wall. I say, life must have been jolly exciting in those days. I wonder if this place ever stood a siege."

" Mr. Hampden says he expects that this place—I mean all this hill—was often besieged in the ancient Britons' time. It was one of their cattle-pens, he says. where they kept their cattle from the wolves."

" Wolves must have been jolly exciting. Wolves are bigger than collies. I wonder what it was like when there were wolves in England. I wouldn't have cared to be out late when there were wolves about."

" Perhaps," said Robin—" perhaps the house was built fort-shape to keep out the wolves." Both boys had very vague notions of time.

" I wonder if we should find any wolves' teeth if we were to go digging in the wood," said Mac.

The boys began to spread out their stores upon the boot-shed floor.

" Now begin at the beginning," said Mac. He began to tick off the articles upon a list. " Waterproofs, sweaters. I say, must we carry sweaters ? We shall roast long before we get there."

" It's for the night," said the prudent Robin. " It gets jolly cold about three in the morning. We shall be glad of sweaters. Mr. Hampden told us to be sure to bring them."

" Well, sweaters, then," said Mac, with a sigh. " Eight miles with all this load on our backs."

" We've got eight or nine hours to do it in," said Robin " We shall be all right if we get along before the sun's hot."

" Towel," said Mac, continuing his count. " One between us is enough."

" Better take two," said Robin. " We may get a dip

on the way. There's a pretty good diving-place where they've stanked up the stream. And there's a spring-board."

"Two towels," said Mac, "soap, tooth-brushes, pumice, scrubber, tooth-paste, sponge. They'll all go in one sponge-bag. Shove 'em in, Robin, while I go on. Next thing's boots. We've got them on. Dubbing for the boots. No need to take dubbing; it's only an extra weight. Scratch off dubbing. Prog and corn. Got them both. Kettle and matches. There's the little kettle. A kettle's an awful thing to pack; it's so full of ends. I vote we don't take a kettle; we can do without cocoa."

"Better take it," said Robin. "I'll carry it. Mr. Hampden 'll want cocoa. And, besides, we must have a kettle to boil the water. Water's full of the germs of things until it's boiled. You can get typhoid and all sorts of things from drinking unboiled water."

"How d'*you* know?" said Mac.

"'Cos I know," Robin answered. "I know that that's why so many soldiers get fever when there's a war. They get thirsty, carrying all those things in the sun, and then they drink any water they come across, and then that gives them the germs. So they get fever. I heard Dr. Parkin say that typhoid kills a lot more soldiers that way than shrapnel shells."

"What are shrapnel shells?"

"Shells full of little shells, which scatter about and burst all over the place."

"How d'you know?"

"'Cos I know. It's in a book at Mr. Hampden's.

And Dr. Parkin said that the reason the Japanese were so good against Russia was because they sent the doctors ahead of the army, with all the scouts, to mark the wells and streams and things, to say if they were fit to drink. They used to test them all for germs, and then mark them. And then all the soldiers were taught that they would have to be very careful not to drink unmarked water, no matter how thirsty they were, because they were serving Japan, and if they went and gave themselves typhoid they wouldn't be able to serve Japan. So that made all the soldiers jolly careful. And before every battle every soldier had to bathe and put on disinfected clothes, so that if he was shot the bits of clothes which were driven into the wound wouldn't poison him. So we'll take the kettle and the pocket-filter, too, 'cos typhoid's a jolly dangerous thing."

"'Little shells which burst all over the place.'"

"Well, you can carry them," said Mac ungraciously, "since you're so keen on them. Now, what's the next thing? Food. We've got our food. Salt? Run and get a chunk of salt, Robin. Salt is very important. We might want to be hunters, and salt things. How do you salt things? Just mix the salt with water, and let the things soak?"

"Or you rub it in," said Robin. "I'll get some salt."

He fetched it. Mac continued to read.

"Knives. We always carry knives. Saucepan. Another endy thing, almost as bad as the kettle. It won't pack, anyhow. Well, here's the saucepan. We don't want much else. Blankets." He flung down the two brown travelling-rugs which were to serve as blankets. "Now," he said—"now to pack."

He divided the articles into two unequal heaps. They set to work upon them to roll them into tight bundles, protected outwardly by the waterproofs. When packed as neatly as the boys could pack them the bundles still looked clumsy. Mac tossed a penny to decide which of them should have the first spell of the heavier bundle of the two. The toss was won by Robin. He helped to strap the load to his brother's shoulders.

"The great thing," he said, "is to have your pack tight, so that it won't waggle about. And have it high enough up. That's another good thing."

Mac strapped on Robin's bundle. They took their sticks and turned out of the courtyard into the track.

"No halts till we've done two miles," said Mac, "and then only five minutes allowed. It'll be a real halt, like the soldiers. We can lie down and change loads. And then on again. And when we get to the milestone up at the top we'll set the time, and try to keep the soldier's pace. They march about three miles an hour, Mr. Hampden says. And no one's allowed to drink on the march."

"I dare say we'll get some ginger-beer as we go through Claton," said Robin. The mention of drink reminded

him that he had not packed the little pocket-cup from which they had intended to drink while in camp. He hurried back to get it. "Now," he said, as he caught step with his brother at the top of the rise—"now take the time. This is the milestone. This is where we begin."

It was twenty minutes to six. The sun was already

"'This is the milestone. This is where we begin.'"

blinking out disc-dazzles of falling flame. It was going to be a hot day. The course of the river was dim still, under the white motionless fine-weather mist. There was a haze on the horizon. Looking over the roadside gate, from which the boys so often looked at the view in the clearness of the few hours before rain, they noticed that Brown Willy was nothing but a dimness. The hills

were all dim. They were no particular colour. Such colour as they had was a darkness, seemingly a mixture of the blue of mist with the green of the fir, but all made very indistinct by a blur or bloom of heat, which took all life out of the landscape. The boys did not stop long to look at the view. They were conscious of their packs. They were eager to be on their way.

"I wonder," said Mac, "if the Romans came this way when they invaded England."

"Mr. Hampden says that this road on the top of the hill is probably an ancient track. He said it is part of a portway, a kind of road built up above the rest of the country in the days when there were a lot of bogs and things." Robin was rather vague about portways. He hadn't been paying much attention when Mr. Hampden spoke. He had been marking down a flying covey as they glided over a hedge into some corn. "So I suppose," he went on—"I mean, I expect the Romans did come this way. I wonder where they fought the Britons."

"They fought at Brown Willy," said Mac, "'cos that's where the Britons lived."

"I don't suppose the Britons were such asses as to wait for them," said Robin. "I expect they came out, and gave the Romans a fight on the way."

"I'd like to see the Romans going along the road here. I vote we get Mr. Hampden to tell us about the Romans. I say, it must be jolly to know as much Latin as he does. He can read Latin just like English. I wonder what the Romans looked like when they were fighting. I expect those chariots with scythes on the wheels must have jolly well given them billio! Wouldn't it be fine to

have a bow and arrow, and to be creeping up on the Romans, dressed up as a wild boar, like the Red Indians, and then to whang at Julius Cæsar. I say, supposing I was a British chief, and I got Julius Cæsar from behind a tree as he was riding by!"

"It'd be pretty mean to pot him from behind a tree."

"'Creeping up on the Romans, dressed up as a wild boar.'"

"No, it wouldn't, 'cos it'd be for the country."

"Yes," said Robin. "But it'd give the country a beastly bad name. It'd be much better to stand up to Cæsar in fair fight. I wouldn't like the Romans to go about saying that we were afraid to stand up to Cæsar, and had to pot him from behind a tree. And the Rector says that Cæsar was worth all the ancient Britons rolled

together. And, besides, he wore armour, so you couldn't have potted him."

"Yes, I could, 'cos I'd have used a crossbow; and crossbows 'd go through armour."

"'Goin' to do a bit of campin', like?' he asked."

"Then you couldn't be an ancient Briton, 'cos crossbows weren't invented."

The boys were hot. For a while they walked on in silence. Eight o'clock found them more than halfway to Brown Willy. The haze of the early morning cleared

off gradually as the sun gathered strength. The valley took shape. Woods became distinct. It was as though soldiers had stepped out of the ranks. Summer spread a film of gold in the air. The leaves on the trees, even on those near at hand, had a bluish glimmer. Corn was white to the harvest on both sides of the road. Men with arms of bronze were reaping. A farmer riding on a grey cob halted at the roadside to watch them. There were sprays of yellowed honeysuckle in the hedge. Dust was grey upon the bramble-leaves. The farmer stared at the two boys as they came near. He thrust out a stirrup-iron, and cleared his throat at the cob for cropping with bared teeth at the hedge. "Wayyer!" he growled. The cob champed upon the iron, stamping. He shifted the bit in his mouth with a chink of iron. The saddle creaked. The heat made a smell of leather. The cob's coat glistened with scurfy particles of salt. The farmer's face knitted. He was puzzled by the look of the boys.

"You'll be hot under them packs," he said.

The boys grinned. They were out of their ordinary bounds. They did not know this farmer. They wished him good-morning.

"Goin' to do a bit of campin', like?" he asked.

"Yes," they said.

"Fine day for it," he said.

After they had passed on, he was tempted to ride after them, to offer to carry their packs as far as the next milestone. But he had to see to the reaping in the bottom meadow. He couldn't go carrying boys' packs. He kicked up the cob and turned into the field.

Chapter X

ROWN WILLY now began to heave himself up from the valley. He grew bigger. His rolling flanks took on a majesty. His outskirts, which could not be seen from the far-away home of the boys, thrust out big mounds. The boys were climbing. The weight of the packs began to tell. They seemed to bow the body down. The road was no longer the highroad. It was a track so little used that it was all grassed over, though rutted by cart-wheels and trodden by beasts. The boys climbed on, panting. Each was trying hard to keep on till the other should cry for a halt. Neither wished to give in before the other. Both were hot, both were very thirsty. They were climbing a rise so steep that they could see no trace of the head and body of Brown Willy. They saw only a rounded heave of hill, which rose up straight before them, shutting out the rest of the world. It was like a bubble of earth, it was so round. The sky cut it to a sharp curved edge. In the intense light it showed up so clear that the boys saw it all—all the life of it. It had stretches of sunburned turf, sweet and springy, nibbled very close by

the sheep. The fern grew high. There was a wilderness of fern. The uncurled fronds trembled against the sky as the wind passed over. The stalks of it gleamed. The scent of it came warm and close. Here and there among it a frond showed bright yellow. Sheep, thrusting through it with craning heads, made tracks of wavings in the fronds. One saw the shaking of the fern as the creature passed. One heard from the hill the "baa-a" of the sheep. They cried "baa-a" up and down in the drowse of the summer. It was a dim noise, like the voice of the heat. It was a pleasant noise, very much a part of the day, like the trembling of the heat haze. The foxgloves rose up out of the fern. Some of them were four feet high. The gorse was touched with gold here and there. On the withered thorns which dotted the hillside the yellow-hammers droned their ditty about a little bit of bread and no cheese.

Rabbits moved here and there. The hill was littered with earth thrown up by the rabbits. The rabbits moved about in leisurely humping lollops. Now and then, moved by sudden impulse, one of them would tear at the turf with the forepaws, as though about to make a burrow. Then, wearying suddenly, he would go on nibbling at the grass, with many pauses to listen. Little wind was stirring. There was enough to make tremble the fern and the harebells. The kestrel, curving out suddenly from the other side of the hill, felt his breast-feathers scarcely ruffled. He poised, looking down. He was the wind-hover. He saw the minuteness of the life in the grass. He saw the lizard; he knew the gleam of the eye from the gleam on a stalk of grass. He saw the mouse

flit to covert. He marked the scattering of the rabbits. A beat of his wings took him forward in the air for a yard, so that he might watch a sunning blindworm. Something invisible passed from the keenness in the air to the torpid thing glistening on hot earth. There was a swift stretching, and the blindworm was gone. The wings batted the air for a few strokes. The hawk breasted forward. Then, with a slow, curving, beautiful swoop, that was like a sigh in its resignation, he passed away. He took in the side of the hill as he swept by, then rose and poised, finding nothing, and so drove away out of sight.

The boys gave it up at last. After struggling against the heat for a long time, they came to a hill spring known to the country people as the Wenn. A cold jet of water spurted from a hole in a rock into a rough stone trough which had once been the coffin of a Roman soldier. One or two letters, carved in the Roman time, sixteen centuries ago, were still legible on the side. An A and a CO appeared. They were fine, clearly cut letters. The only archæologist who had seen the relic had concluded that the CO stood for " cohort." Nobody knew how it had come there. The name of the soldier and every record of his service had long since been weathered off. The place was " just the Wenn." Why it was called the Wenn nobody knew. The name must have had a meaning once to somebody, like every other name. It was a spring of excellent water. Two or three families in the cottages near by drank of it daily. The few teams employed from time to time in carting gravel there found it a great refreshment. It is an abundant

spring. It has never been known to fail even in the driest summer. It gushes out in a cold and steady jet at the rate of about two buckets in a minute. It brims the coffin, and slides over the sides and foot of it. It splashes into a runnel by the side of the road, and trickles away towards the sea, making many pebbles glitter on its journey. Thinking over the name of Wenn, some conclude that it was once a holy well, consecrated, perhaps, by St. Weonard, or by some Gwenn, or Gwyneth, from over the Mark. The coffin must have been there for many years.

It is strange that so much that was once splendid has gone to make the Wenn a pleasant drinking-place. The Cæsars sent troops to Britain to secure their hold on Gaul. One of the troops (not even his rank is known, but the fact of the coffin suggests an important, and perhaps Christian, officer) died somewhere, somehow, and was buried somewhere, some time, probably in a time of peace. Afterwards somebody somehow found the coffin, and somebody some time thought that it would make a "trow." One result of a proud instant in Cæsar's brain, when Rome was all-powerful, is that the teams of the gravel-carts get water without going round the Baiche to Stiller's Pond.

The boys flung themselves down on a soft, sweetly-smelling patch of turf above the Wenn. They cast off their packs. Mac was for drinking there and then to the limit of his belt. Robin stopped him.

"Wait a bit," he said. "I've got a lot of rules in my pocket, which Dr. Parkin told me to read out loud as soon as we began to get done. They're the rules the

" Robin read the rules from a bit of paper."

Japanese soldiers had. And I'd have read them before, only I was cross, fagging up the last mile."

He read from a piece of paper, which he took from his breast-pocket :

" 1. Do not drink during the march. Try to wait till the march is over. If you drink during the march, you will only make yourself more thirsty. A soldier must try to endure thirst.

" 2. Do not drink when you are hot and tired from marching. Wait till you are cool and rested. To drink a great deal suddenly, when hot and tired, is sometimes fatal.

" 3. Do not drink greedily. Begin by rinsing the mouth, and then slowly sip the water.

" 4. When halted by water, moisten your face and hands with a wetted, wrung-out cloth. This will refresh you.

" 5. Do not talk when marching uphill. Save your strength and breath.

" 6. When halted, take care that you do not lie down on damp ground. Always try to cover the ground on which you lie with some such stuff as hay or straw.

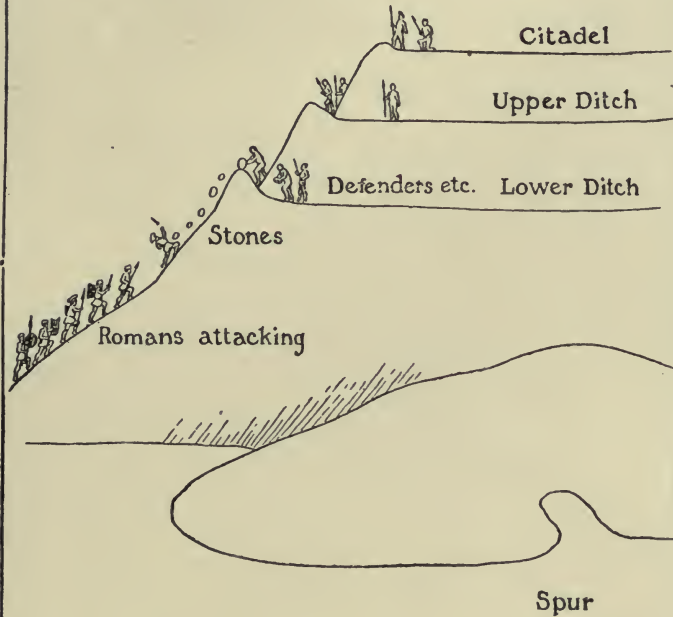
" 7. When you halt, take off your boots and socks, and examine your feet carefully for any red patches. It is a very good plan to change the right-foot sock to the left foot, and *vice versa*. This is refreshing to the feet. Take care that your socks are not wrinkled. A wrinkle in the wool will quickly give you a blister.

" 8. Do not bathe your feet till marching is done for the day.

" 9. When marching, try not to change the pace, even for a minute."

Mac was not much impressed by the second article, but Robin persuaded him to wait. He sacrificed his handkerchief to make a wetted, wrung-out cloth. They mopped their faces with it, and felt fresher. They took off their coats, boots, and socks. Lying down flat on the grass, relieved of these things, they watched the sky from below the tilted brims of their hats. After a few minutes they felt at peace with the world. When they "fell in for the march," they were ready to go on to Drowcester.

They skirted farther round the outlying spur till they came in sight of Brown Willy's self, only half a mile from them. Standing close up to him like that was a new experience. They had not been so near to him since one memorable day when they were children. They were used to the distant sight of him. They saw him nearly every day of their lives from one point or another of the country near their home. But to stand right under him was a new and rather daunting thing. Mac or Robin alone would have been a little bit frightened by him. Being together, they were not frightened, but they were startled. Brown Willy, like many other hills, rises up out of the ground like a living thing. Folds of the earth upon him look like the wrinklings of muscle. He has a bulk like a beast. There is a menace in him. His aspect is grim. He is a very bare hill. His outliers are beautiful, with a fleece of fern out of which the foxgloves tower. The hill himself is bare turf. The grass is soft underfoot, very slippery when hot, and always nibbled very short by sheep and rabbits. But the skin of turf fails in places. Rabbits have burrowed it up. Indeed,


BROWN WILLY
PROFILE OF THE HILL
SHOWING SPUR IN OUTLINE BELOW
Citadel
Upper Ditch
Defenders etc.
Lower Ditch
Stones
Romans attacking
Spur

the hill is one great rabbit-warren. Rock crops out—a very old reddish-brown volcanic rock. Wherever the rock crops out it breaks into gravel, which the burrowing rabbits scatter. Brown Willy will some day end in gravel upon the " drives " of many thousands of cheap city villas. At present he is the noblest thing in the landscape. His appearance varies very much according to the point of view. He looks like a lion at bay, like the wall of a city, like a bull with his head down, charging. But from right underneath his head, where the boys stood, he looks so big and wild that you think him human. It is like a wild giant-head. When seen from that point in an easterly wind, the clouds passing over his skull make the watcher think that the head is nodding.

There were no clouds on this perfect August morning. The head rose up grim and grand. He was so vast that the boys looked up and then looked at each other, as though to say, " I say !" What made him so wonderful were the vast walls which surrounded him. Men had been busy about Brown Willy, making him a castle. They had dug all round him, heaping up great walls. There were two ranks of ramparts, one above the other. Above them was the citadel, within which two Roman legions could have camped. The wall of the citadel followed the line of the summit, but the hands of men had planed it even. It made a sharp straight line against the sky. The boys marvelled at the sharpness with which the wall of the citadel sloped from this line. It gave the skull of the hill the fineness which a straight line gives to the human brow. The boys were unable to speak their feelings. They felt that they were in the

presence of a great achievement. They pushed on, staring at the walls. They had often heard of "Brown Willy's Wedding-Rings." They now saw them. The track on which they walked ended at a gravel-pit, about which trees and brambles made a covert. Beyond the covert was a fence of wires nailed to posts. The posts were decayed, the wire rusty. People and beasts had made the wires sag. Tufts of wool shook below the lower wires, marking the passage of sheep. When the boys had stepped across this fence, leaving the copse behind them, they found themselves on a flat strip of turf beside a shallow pan of water, out of which many tufts of rushes thrust. The pan was about ten yards by fifteen.

"I suppose," said Mac, "that that's where they got their water."

"I shouldn't think so," said Robin, "'cos it's such a drag from the top all the way down here for a drink."

Looking up at Brown Willy, the boys saw many tufts of rushes here and there upon his flank. The hillside had many little springs upon it. Water flashed from one of them; all trickled.

"Plenty of water there," said Mac. "But I suppose they wanted a lot of water. There must have been a lot of them to make those walls."

They stopped talking, so that they might have breath for the climb. They began the ascent. Presently they halted on a flat bit, panting.

"Fifty paces, and then a stop," said Mac.

He was carrying the heavier load. Robin fanned himself. From where they stood they had no view of the

walls. A round of hill was in front of them. It was so steep that they would have to dig their fingers into the ground and scramble up, half hauling.

"Not much fun being a Roman here," said Robin.

"No," said Mac. "I wonder how they ever got up, wearing armour."

"I expect the Britons kept plugging them all the time from slings," said Robin.

"They wouldn't be able to see, though," said Mac. "This swell of the hill would be a bit of a shelter."

"No, it wouldn't," said Robin, "'cos up on the walls the Britons would have a clear view, and they'd be able to simply plug them. And another thing they did was roll down big rocks; and the rocks would roll down simply like billio, down a hill like this."

"I dare say the Romans found some easier way up, though," said Mac.

"When we've got up, I vote we go all round and find out whereabouts the easiest place is," said Robin. "But I expect the Britons would have put a lot of trenches in the easiest place. I expect they dug pits, with spikes in them, for people to fall into, and then, when they fell in, they lived for quite a long time."

"How d'you know?"

"Oh, I know, 'cos it's in a book. You can live a long time with a spike inside you."

They turned to storm the hill. Presently they were at the foot of the first great wall. It towered up above them for fifty feet. It was so steep that the boys thought it unscaleable. It was all turfed over now, but for long, no doubt, its steepness had made it hard for the tough,

short hill-grass to take hold. There had been minute fallings and denudations from the surface. Particles of earth, fallen from the wall, made a perceptible little scree at the foot. The surface was bound together by the roots of the turf, but it had the broken look of all steep surfaces. It was wrinkled and broken all over. Little particles of earth had gathered in ledges where a piece of stone or some other inequality had stopped them in their fall. The ledges had gathered earth till in time they were of the size of a handful. The wall was made of a multitude of those tiny ledges. Each ledge was topped by a bare patch, kept from the rain by the ledge above. It did not occur to the boys, but many people, seeing those walls, so impressive and so bare under the scantness of the grass, thought how savage they must have looked when they were new, before the grass had taken hold. The earth of Brown Willy is a light, friable clay, very sparsely spread over the rock. In colour it is very like the colours of an earthworm. It varies from the earthy maroon to the dead flesh. When the walls were all of those colours, as they were when the makers left them, before the grass grew, they must have looked most savage. A mine looks savage. A pit mound, grey with shale, dotted with coal, forlorn with slithered slabs among which the coltsfoot starve, is a savage sight. But the walls on Brown Willy were once like pit mounds half a mile long. They must have looked grim. Britain was a rainy country then. Had we been able to stand, as our-forefathers stood, on the top of one of those walls, looking out over the forest below, we should have shuddered. It was all forest then, cheerless in the soak,

with cloud dragging in the upper branches. Rain drove over it in torrents, soddening the leaves, making quags from the drip. Standing upon the walls, one would have seen only that forest stretching out into the rain, and far away the lash of the river rolling snags in spate to

"The savage aloft there, leaning on his spear."

rot in the marsh of the valley. One could hardly see such savagery without a horror of heart.

But perhaps the savage aloft there, leaning on his spear, got a joy of it. There was all that land to conquer. Yonder, above the trees, not to be seen by us, were the

camp fires of the enemy. Down in the wood the wolves were howling. Deer harboured in the grass-lands. In the spring, after the ice had gone out to the sea, the salmon ran, blocking the channel. At his back, in the ditches within the walls, the little shaggy cattle milled and jostled, thrusting at each other, lowing to be driven to water. Within the citadel were the folk of the tribe, in their huts. The smell of the fires came to him in whiffs through the smell of the cattle. He heard the noises of the camp—the squealing of the stallions, cries, calls, voices now far, now near, the beating of skins newly dried, the pounding in the querns, the rattling crack of stones against trees where the boys practised with the sling. It was all significant. It was all home to him. And at night, after they had told stories in the huts, among the smoke from the open hearths, the camp settled to rest, and fell silent. All slept there except the sentries walking on the walls, gazing out over the valley. At times a bull, seeing a sentry above him, would advance to challenge, bellowing, scraping with his hoof. A stallion, in a fit of nerves, would kick and whinny, till the owner, creeping out to see if all were well, had talked to him. Presently out of the east came the dawn, touching the distant waters. Then the young men, having stripped themselves, painted themselves with blue, and trotted out upon the war-path.

Chapter XI

SAY," said Mac, " nobody could have charged up there. They're so steep I doubt if we'll be able to climb them."

" Perhaps the Romans had scaling-ladders," said Robin. " I've seen a picture of scaling-ladders. There's one in my Cæsar. The soldiers make great broad ladders, and then they run up with them."

" They couldn't have run up here with them," Mac put in.

" Oh yes. They were trained to do all kinds of things. And then they shoved up the ladder against wherever it was. And then the great thing was to get on to the ladder all at once, 'cos that made it heavy, and then the people on top couldn't shove it over backwards."

" I say," said Mac, " it must have been awful to have been on the ladder when it was shoved over backwards."

" Specially if you were up near the top," said Robin feelingly ; " specially if the Romans wore spiked helmets like the Germans." They rested for a while, looking along the great wall for a place where the scaling would be easy.

"There ought to be a gate somewhere," said Mac. "There must be a gate. There must have been a lot of people here. Old Bill says that you allow 'a man a yard' for defending a trench. There must have been thousands in here to defend all this. I wonder where they got in."

"I expect there is a gate somewhere," said Robin. "I expect the gate would be round on the side where they didn't expect an enemy. I wonder where their enemies lived."

"I dunno," said Mac.

"I expect they lived over there, somewhere on those hills," Robin said, pointing to the west. "They're the nearest hills. And if they didn't, they can't have had a camp, for there's no other hill near enough. But they might have come up the river in boats from somewhere. It would be rather fine to come up in boats. I say, wouldn't it be fine to come up at night, in the dark, and creep along close to the banks? And then to land and go through the woods there, and then to lie in wait, hidden in the jungle, while you send out a couple of spies to find out what time the people go to sleep, and where the easiest place is. It must be exciting to be a spy like that, creeping along."

"Jolly difficult," said Mac, "'cos the men up there on the banks must have had a tremendous view."

"Well," said Robin, "I expect the spies did their spying before it was properly light; or I know what they would have done: they'd have caught one of the people here. I expect they could easily have done that. And then they'd have said: 'Now guide us up the

easiest way, or we'll torture you.' And then they'd have learned all about it, and crept up, and crept up. And the prisoner would go in front."

"If I were the prisoner," said Mac, "I'd call out to the people inside. I'd call out: 'Look out! the enemy are coming.'"

"Oh, but, you see," said Robin, "they'd expect you'd do that, so they'd probably gag you, so that you couldn't speak. They'd stuff something into your mouth; and then, if you made any noise, they'd give you simply toko."

They skirted along below the walls, looking for an easy place. All the wall on the side on which they stood was steep and high. It made an unbroken line. There was no gate through it. It ran along the side of the hill, curving as the hill curved, with neither gate nor gap. Once, long ago, that side had been the danger side. It gave the longest front upon the gentlest slope of all the hill. But after five minutes of walking the boys came upon a strange thing. All the hill was strange. It was all a record in a forgotten language. But this thing which the boys found puzzled them more than all the rest. In a part of the wall which fronted to the north they came upon a path leading upwards. It slanted up the wall at an angle of about thirty-five degrees. It seemed to have been made when the wall was made. No path led down the hill from its lower end. It was a path up the wall, nothing more. As it had a flattened surface, exposed to the sun and rain, the grass upon it was fresher and stronger than the low, rather mossy grass which clung to the side of the wall. Like so much of the grass

on ancient trackways, it gave a different spring to the foot. It was of a paler colour than the grass about it. It grew more thickly. One marked that it did not give out that smell of life made fragrant which the grass of the hills gives to hill air. When the boys first saw the track, they wondered if it could have been made by the rabbits. There were many rabbits' paths about that hill. Many of them led over the wall into the ditch. The hill-grass was dented with them, as though snakes had passed there. Two or three hundreds of generations of rabbits had scuttled along those meuses since the Romans made the camp a solitude. The roads of the shy ones of the world were as plain as the roads on a map. But this track up the wall was not a meuse. Though it was hardly more than eight inches across, it was plainly the work of men. It was a tool-made track, patted flat, apparently by the spade, to a flat surface, with sharp, neat edges, not yet ruined by generations of rain and decay. The part of the wall up which it sloped was nearly as steep as a railway-cutting.

"Here's a way up," said Robin. They climbed up At the top they found that the wall was broader than in most parts. The boys wondered why it had been made so broad there. Then, plunging down, helter-skelter, on the farther side, they rushed into the ditch, startling many rabbits from their feed.

The ditch was so deep that it gave the boys the feeling that they were in a trap. The fear of a trap was seared into the mind of earth-dwellers long before any of them became man. The spider, the flesh-eating plant, the constrictor, and all the countless hungry, subtle creatures

which lurk and snare, put a terror in the mind so cruelly that we are not yet free of it. Something of this terror made the boys uneasy as they wandered along at the bottom of the ditch. They were too awed to speak. They felt that they were in a great grim mouth, and that the jaws would suddenly snap-to. It was dark in the ditch. The walls, rising up on both sides, shut out the light. A great lump of hill still kept the sun from that part of the ditch where the boys walked. It was gloomy and desolate there. In many places the ditch had been cut through rock. The sides of the ditch were often rough rock, like the bones of the hill scratched bare. The bottom of the ditch was lined with stones, which looked as though they had been burnt. They were like pumice-stones. Everywhere there were traces of rabbits. Rabbits had made little land-slides. In one place they had caused a big fall. A part of the inner wall had collapsed, making the way to the upper ditch more easy. No grass grew in the tumbled earth of the fall. It had been eaten and trampled bare by the rabbits. It was littered with earth thrown up by the burrowing. Spiders had spun their webs across the mouths of some of the burrows. In others, by reaching suddenly down, one could sometimes touch a young rabbit not yet wise in the ways of the world. The boys clambered up this fallen earth. They were glad to get up into the sunlight.

"I vote we stay here a bit," said Robin, "and poke about in the earth. We might find all sorts of things in the earth here."

He spoke confidently, but he was not at his ease.

Neither he nor Mac liked the gloom of the place. There was something sinister in the emptiness and darkness of that gash in the hill: it was so empty; it was so dead. Walking below those walls, past scars of rock, among all that ruin of a life long forgotten, was like walking in a mouth full of broken teeth. Both boys felt very strongly that the hill had a life of its own. They felt that something was going to happen. They felt that they were in a trap. They felt that just past the curve, where the ditch swept round to the west, something inhuman waited —a madman or a wolf—they could not tell what. It was so silent there. There was little wind anywhere on that faultless day. But below the line of the rampart not even the air stirred. They could stand on the rampart-top in the murmur of the wind, feeling it, hearing it, smelling the fragrance of the hill, sunny grass, and honey. They could see the summer over all the marvellous England, spread out like a map below them. Sheep baaed as they thrust in and out of the fern on the hill. Bees droned past, bees grumbled over the frugal flowers, bees circled angry about their heads, twice, thrice, and away into the air. All the place was alive as only the summer is alive. The air was droning with life as a sleeping top drones. Yet if the boys stepped from the rampart-top into the ditch, they stepped into a world with neither look nor sound of life, a dead world, cold and uncanny.

The boys looked at each other as they stood on the earth which had fallen. Their hearts beat quick with fear lest something or someone should be in the ditch above them. The knowledge that they could not see what was there made them both cowards. The pricking

to make sure that nothing evil was above drove them with beating hearts up the slope to the top of the second rampart, where they stood in the summer again, relieved of their fears. It was not so terrible, after all, up there in the sun, feeling the wind on their cheeks. They looked down, seeing, but not observing, that the wall on which they stood was pitched so as to command the wall below. Any troops trying to rush the lower wall would have been exposed to bow and sling shot from the top of both walls. The pitch of the upper wall made the place royal. The boys, standing there, felt that they commanded all that they saw. An eyrie makes even a sparrow feel that he is an eagle. They exulted in the prospect. They trotted off together along the flat rampart-top. It was broad enough for them to go abreast. They went to the east side of the hill, so as to look at the landscape that the hills had always hidden from them. It seemed to stretch away into the sky. Standing up there, so high above the patchwork of the valley, gleaming where the river ran, like a slug's track glistening, the boys felt like birds. They were on the rim of a steep wall. To look sharply down was like looking down a precipice. It made them catch their breath. They felt that one step would topple them down and down, like bodies falling from an Alp. They would fall past the forests, past the swathes of mist, past the villages clinging to the crags. As they fell they would hear the sheep bells and the church bells, they would see a glint of snow, a glimpse, a gleam. And down and down to the grass at the bottom, to the sudden miraculous change, and the looking up with a new sense. With the picture of the falling came

the delight of being aloft. They felt that they had only to leap into the air, spreading their arms, to find themselves flying. Surely flight is a matter of faith. If one leapt into the air, head back, arms out, straining to the blue, upward, upward, the air would sustain. One would cleave the hill-wind, up, up, to sing with the lark. One would pause with the hawk on air, above the hawk, watching the brown back, the wind-ruffled head bent, the wings trembling to the fire-flash in the brain. One would swoop down, plunging like a diver, eyes shut, mouth smiling, to the alert arrest of the upward sweep. Then on, over the hill-tops, over the crags, over the snows. Nothing better persuades that flight is possible than to have for a time the prospect of what the bird sees.

After looking at the landscape, picking out the spires, the boys turned. They were standing at the north-east corner of the camp. From where they stood they had a view of most of the east and north sides of the oblong bulk of the hill. The east side was the steepest side. Parts of it were craggy. Halfway down the side, as the boys could see, was the camp's main gateway, protected cunningly by overlapping folds of wall and inner and outer curtains. But the wonder of the camp was the citadel behind the boys. Labour had gone to make the walls and ditches, but the citadel had been finished with great art.

It was as though the tribe of forgotten men had set themselves to polish that citadel. It sloped up from the inner ditch to a height sufficient to give it the command of both ditches. The slope had been patted flat, and modelled by incredible labour to a smoothness of surface

such as children give to their sand-castles. Even now, when the grass and moss had grown all over the smoothed side, it had a sharpness of pitch which gave the effect of something planed even. The size of the camp impressed the mind with a sense of the abundance of the savagery which made such works possible and necessary. The appearance of the citadel showed that the savagery had had its fineness. The men who built it had wrought faithfully. They had built with such virtue that their work was fit for its original purpose after the beatings of twenty centuries. If from all their scattered graves, in barrows in the valley, in the mud of the river-bed, in the woods, under the roots, in the dust of twenty centuries, the tribe could arise, with their shaggy herds, their horses, their arms, to march to Brown Willy to-day, they would find it a fine camp still. There are only two better in all Britain, and one of those is Roman. The King who fortified Brown Willy would have been the King in any society.

The purity of the hill air had so freshened the boys that they no longer felt tired. They ran down the slope into the inner ditch. Once more they felt the sudden cutting away from life which they had felt in entering the ditch below. The glory of the world went from them as they passed below the crown of the rampart. A chill came over them. The deep trench, half in shadow, struck cold. The passing into gloom made the place seem silent, though the wind made a little rushing noise about the rampart-top. Again the boys had that feeling of awe. It was uncanny in that great ditch. Enemies might rush down from the citadel. Enemies might

charge up from below. The hugeness of the emptiness was frightful. One could see so little. So much of it might hide an enemy. After a very few steps in the gloom of the ditch the boys climbed back to their rampart-top.

"I vote we go on and see the gates," said Robin.

"I vote we get right up to the top," said Mac. Just as he spoke, something soft but heavy came with a spattering thud between his shoulders. Crumbs of earth scattered about. Some of them hit Robin's cheek. The boys spun round, much startled. "What was that?" said Robin.

"Chuck it!" cried Mac, turning, and looking about. No one was there. The place was utterly still but for the murmur of the wind.

"It was a great clod," said Robin, stooping. "Who could have thrown it?" They stared all round them.

"It came from behind," said Mac. "It seemed to come from below." There was no one below, no one behind—nothing but the still ditches, in which not even a rabbit stirred.

"Well, it must have come from up above," said Robin. "Go on down. We'll see who it is."

They scrambled down into the ditch, sending the gravel in little avalanches. As they climbed up the slope of the citadel, a figure in a black mask rose up from the ground above them and pelted them, right and left, one each—two beautiful shots—with newly cut turfs.

"It's Mr. Hampden," said Robin, half doubting. An instant of time, during which he got a turf in the chest, convinced him. "Plug him, Mac," he cried. "Edge round, Mac, to the left, and then we'll get him between

"A figure in a black mask rose up and pelted them."

two fires." His knife came out on the instant, as he jumped away from his brother. Kneeling down, he sliced off handfuls of the turf for shot. The enemy pelted him soundly. A shell of turf, bursting on his neck, filled his shirt with earth. He ducked his head, scraping at his neck with his left hand. Then, hastily filling the left flap of his coat with "shot," he staggered up, shouting, firing as he went. The enemy knew enough of war to turn to the more dangerous party. Robin came under a very able double-handed fire. No one but Mr. Hampden could shy with the left hand like that. He was as good with his left as with his right. Two hard shots, one after the other in the same place, knocked Robin's store out of his coat. A charge of the enemy sent him rolling down the slope to the bottom. Mac went into the ditch in the same way within twenty seconds. Mr. Hampden climbed back to the rampart-top and raised his mask.

"Victory!" he said.

"Not victory at all," said Robin. "Victory, indeed! Come along, Mac." A good big turf cut him short. He called to Mac that they should separate, and attack from different points. He ran past the angle of the camp to the northern side, and scrambled up under a heavy fire, yelling his war-cry. He got a glimpse of the inside of the citadel through the spatter of a bursting shell. He put in a heavy shot at close range, and then a push in the chest sent him spinning down the slope again, rolling over and over. He had read somewhere that, when mountaineers miss their footing on the peaks, they spread out their arms and legs as widely as they can, so as to offer the greatest possible resistance. Robin

remembered this as he began to roll, and tried to do it, but it had no effect. The slope was too steep and the sunburnt turf too slippery. He went to the bottom. As he picked himself up, he heard Mac's voice calling to him to come on and simply plug him. Other sounds told him that Mac was down. Now was the time. He ran a little farther along the northern side, and then began to scale the wall diagonally, so that each step took him farther away from the angle held by the defender. Mr. Hampden sent a few shells after him, but he was out of range. Mac, thirty yards away, was getting "toko." Robin climbed to the rampart-top and looked for the enemy. The enemy had left the citadel, to engage Mac more closely on the slope of the wall. His head was just visible above the rim of the fort. A hand rose at intervals to fling a turf at Mac, from whom a squeal burst as each shot went home upon him. Other turfs, flying in the air, showed

> "The distant and random gun
> That Mac was sullenly firing."

Mac was under too hot a fire to make good practice. Robin stayed for a few seconds to slice turfs. When he had filled his store, he doubled across the angle of the fort, calling "Victory!" He opened on Mr. Hampden from just above, with good results. Mac, seeing this "seasonable relief," charged. He gained the top of the rampart just as Mr. Hampden closed upon Robin. Robin dodged.

The boys cried, "Victory, victory!" They danced, leaping, pack and all.

"Now, pax, pax!" said Mr. Hampden, wearying of the battle. "It's too hot for this. Pax, pax, pax!"

The dancing stopped; the boys came up to shake hands. "When did you come, sir?" they asked.

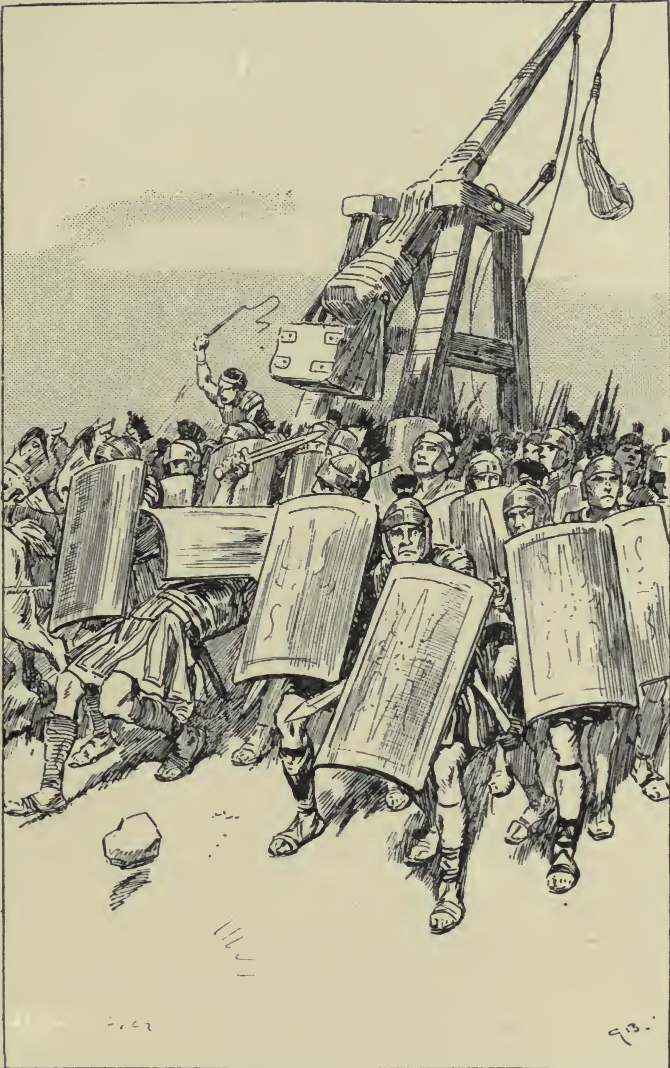
"I've just come," he said. "I bicycled over. I came up on the other side, though, on the south. I expected to find you up before me. But, as you hadn't come, I looked for you through my spies. And by-and-by I saw two crawling little figures panting up, hardly able to crawl. So then I thought, 'Aha!' And I got a nice store of turfs ready, to teach you Romans not to come invading Britain. I thought you'd come straight to the top on the line you were following. Your coming over to this angle made the attack late."

"We didn't see you, sir."

"You couldn't," said Mr. Hampden; "you were down below. You can't see much of what's at the top from low down on a hill as steep as this. I couldn't always see you. But the wind was coming from you. I sometimes heard you. And when I peeped at you, I did it carefully. I suppose when you peep at somebody, you stand on the sky-line and wag your arms like a semaphore. That's not the way. You have to lie down, and shove your head up so slowly that people will think it's only a stone. And then, when you've looked, you glide your head back just as slowly as you put it out. Now put your packs down. What do you think of this for a home?"

The boys, putting down their packs, very glad to be rid of them, stretched themselves on the turf. They looked across the citadel. The first thought which came to them was, "I can't see anything else. It's like being in a great airship."

They were looking across an expanse of turf, which measured about five hundred yards by seven hundred. The expanse looked like the crater of an extinct volcano or the bed of a drained lake. It lay some four feet below the top of the rampart. It was like a great shallow cup or dish, with a raised rim. The surface was flat, or flattish, where the boys lay ; but it was less flat elsewhere. There were irregular patches, knops, tumps, and mounds. Far down on the east side, near the gate, the ramparts seemed to rise higher. A piece of wall thrust out like a finger far into the camp. Beyond were the ruins of what had been a thorn fence, perhaps, two centuries before. Where the fence had grown the earth was slightly raised. In the line of raised earth seven stunted ancient thorn-trees grew. They had grown erect to the level of the ramparts, and had then grown horizontally, inclining eastwards, under the blast of the westerly gales which blew Brown Willy's head off. Beyond this there was a view of the southern end, sharp against the sky. To the west were relics of what had once been a fir-plantation. About twenty fir saplings seemed likely to live. They grew in a dark clump together. Among them, and in the ground near them, were a few stumps of trees, now worn to ram-pikes. The grass had almost perished about the clump of trees. It was like very closely cropped dun hair. Three of the ram-pikes were fire-blackened. There was a big burnt patch on the ground below them. They had built a big fire there at the time of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. The rain and the change of the seasons had not yet removed the marks of it. Elsewhere there were lesser black marks, showing where parties



"'They brought up the catapults to cover the attack.'"

had picnicked, but there were not many of these. The roads to Brown Willy were bad. It was seven miles from any place bigger than a hamlet. Those who picnicked on Brown Willy had to make a stiff climb, carrying their water with them.

" Isn't it a wonderful place, sir ?" said Robin, now thoroughly rested.

" Yes, it's a fine camp," said Mr. Hampden.

" It must have taken a long time to make, sir."

" Not long," he said. " They would soon have made these ditches. But I dare say it was done gradually. There may have been only one ditch just at first, and that one not a deep one. When the tribe was small, I expect that this was only a cattle-pen. But when the tribe grew to be a big one, or when a big tribe took this place, it had to be strengthened."

" But wouldn't it have taken months to dig out all those ditches and build those walls ?"

" I don't think so," said Mr. Hampden. " I dare say there were three or four thousand people working on them all day long. This earth is light stuff, very easily worked. The rock beneath is easy to work, even if your pick is only a red stag's horn. A man would have been able to dig, say, a couple of tons of earth in a day. Well, with a couple of thousand men all doing that with their swords and stag's horn picks, and another couple of thousand dragging away the earth in their cloaks or in baskets, to toss it on to the walls, they would very soon have made a great difference. Men can put up immense earthworks and sink very long trenches in a few days. This was probably soon made, and then slowly im-

proved." He stood up and climbed to the rampart-top. "A wonderful view from here," he said. "I expect the Britons didn't see quite so much as we see. The land was mostly forest then, and forest-lands are always wet; and with the big rainfall they had a great deal of mist and fog. Walking about was difficult. The roads were only tracks. Off the roads it was all either forest, swamp, or a mixture of both. It was only on hills like this that man could stretch his legs or kill his enemy in comfort." He kicked at the rampart-top with one foot. "I expect, if you were to dig," he said, "you would find the ends of stakes all round this wall. There was probably a palisade of stakes round all the walls—good stout stakes eight or nine feet high, with sharp ends hardened in the fire—something to keep the wolves out."

"Please, sir," said Mac, "when the Romans came here, do you expect they stormed this camp?"

"We can't tell what they did," he answered. "We know very little of what the Romans did here. But they came to this part of the world, and conquered it somehow. We know that they didn't find it easy. What would you have done if you'd been a Roman General, and had suddenly come on a place like this?"

"I don't know, sir. What would you, sir?"

"It doesn't look much like a place to be easily stormed, does it?"

"No, sir."

"Please, sir," said Robin, "it might be easier to storm in some other part. Let's go right round it and see."

When they started to go round the hill, the boys set

off to the west; but Mr. Hampden called them back. He told them to "go round right-handed, the way you coil a rope." As they did not understand what he meant, he explained that to coil a rope right-handedly is to coil the rope from right to left, and that to go round a circle "right-handedly" is to go from east to west, through the south, following the apparent daily motion of the sun round the earth. "Sailors are superstitious about it," he said, "because ropes are so made that if you coil them left-handedly they are very apt to get kinky when they are suddenly let go in a squall or other accident; and if they have kinks in them when they are running out through a sheave, they jamb, and when that happens the ship may be lost. So sailors have come to look upon left-handed coils as unlucky. Some of them will not even walk round the deck left-handedly. And perhaps the custom of passing the wine-bottle round a table 'the way of the sun,' from right to left, is a result of their superstition." Stopping them for a moment, he showed the boys how unhandily a piece of cord unwound from a left-handed coil. The boys practised coiling. Then they stepped out together to make the tour of the camp.

"I don't think the Romans could have stormed this side," said Mac, looking down the craggy eastern side near the gates. "They couldn't have come up there, could they, sir?"

"I should think they'd have found it difficult."

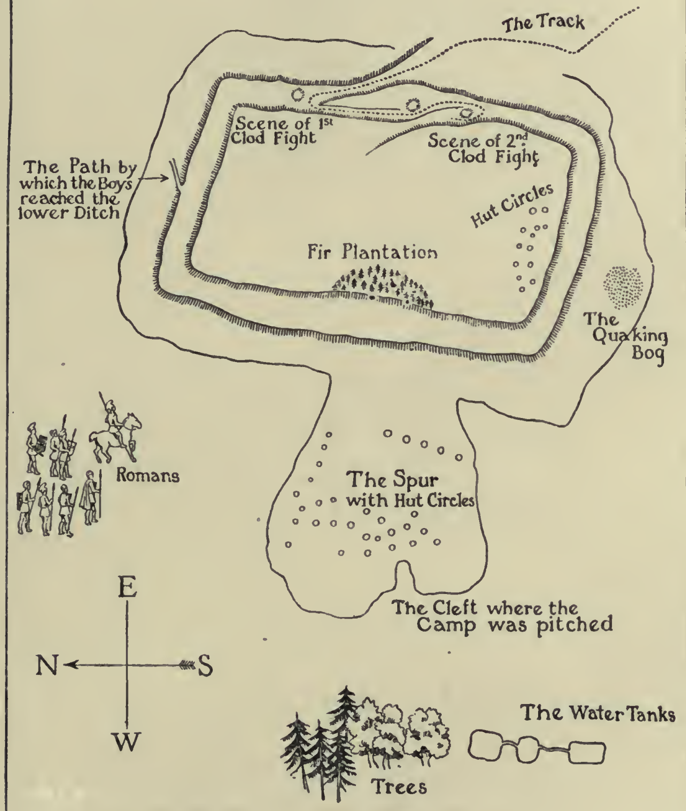
"The Britons would have rolled rocks on to them, wouldn't they, sir?"

"That's what I should have done; rocks and stones,

and balks of wood—anything likely to hurt. When the Romans were going to storm, they formed what they called a ‘testudo.’ They got very close together, with their shields up. They crouched down together with their shields overlapping on their backs, so that the storming party looked like a great testudo, or tortoise, under one strong shell of shields. Then they advanced to the storm, like a great tortoise. As long as the tortoise held together, the men under the shell couldn't be hurt. So, when people in a camp or town were going to be stormed by a tortoise, they tried to break the formation by rolling down rocks, or pouring flaming oil, or pitch, or molten metal upon it. If the tortoise broke, the archers on the walls had a fair mark for their arrows. If the tortoise was not broken, the men reached the walls and placed the scaling-ladders."

"The tortoise men must have been simply plugged while they were putting up the ladders," said Robin.

"Very likely they were plugged," said Mr. Hampden. "But the Romans knew a great deal about war, and they preferred that it should be the other side who got plugged, as you call it. When a party is about to storm a position nowadays, the artillery is brought up, and all the guns blaze away at the position over the heads of the storming party. That is called ‘silencing the enemy's fire,’ ‘preparing the assault,’ or ‘covering the attack.’ The enemy in the position are mauled so frightfully by the fire that they cannot stand to shoot at the storming party. The heavy gun-fire does not stop till the troops of the storming party have begun to enter the position. Well, when the Romans were going to storm, they opened a ‘fire’ on


BROWN WILLY
SHOWING FORTIFICATIONS ETC.
HEIGHT OF BROWN WILLY 1700 FEET
The Track
Scene of 1st Clod Fight
Scene of 2nd Clod Fight
The Path by which the Boys reached the lower Ditch
Hut Circles
Fir Plantation
The Quaking Bog
Romans
The Spur with Hut Circles
The Cleft where the Camp was pitched
E
N
S
W
The Water Tanks
Trees

the defender. They had no guns, but they had catapults—not your sort of catapults, but great strong frames of wood, with springs of twisted hair, which would fling a heavy stone for a quarter of a mile or more. They brought up the catapults to cover the attack. They weren't so unlike modern soldiers as you suppose. They brought up catapults where a modern General brings up his guns. They had them mounted on wheels. I dare say that catapults came into action at a gallop, just like guns. And they had ammunition-waggons with them, full of stones, spare levers for twisting the cords, and spare cords, in case any broke. And before a tortoise set out, the catapults opened on the walls to clear off the defenders. A sharp bombardment from catapults must have been a very terrible thing—not as bad as guns, of course."

"Were you ever in a battle, sir?"

"Yes. In more than one."

"In the war, sir?"

"No, not in our war. I was with an ambulance corps in Cuba during the war between Spain and America."

"What's it like, sir?"

"It is not pleasant. I was not under fire from heavy guns—I don't know what that's like—but fire from field-guns and rifles is quite bad enough. At first you keep ducking, to avoid the bullets. After a time you get out of the way of ducking. But a battle puts you into a strange frame of mind. You get very jumpy and panicky, inclined to cry or to go mad. The ambulance men are worse off in a way than the soldiers: they haven't got the excitement of firing. But in a way they are better

off, for they are moving about, and looking after the wounded. Their minds are more occupied."

"Soldiers don't fire at ambulance people, do they, sir ?"

"Not *at* them—no, not knowingly. But in a battle, when the firing has begun, the men get excited. They fire at anybody and at nothing. And a modern battle begins at a range so great that the men in the firing-line cannot tell an ambulance man from an enemy. The bullets used to come all round me."

The boys were sensitive (as boys are) to the speaker's mood. They saw that Mr. Hampden did not want to talk of his own experiences. They changed the conversation.

Chapter XII

" F we were defending this camp, sir—supposing we were Britons, and the Romans were coming for us—how far away would the battle begin ?"

" If we were defending the camp ? I suppose within about a quarter of a mile. The catapults would begin at that range, I suppose. But that is talking of something which may never have happened. The best defence of a place is made far from it. If you were in your dormitory at school, and you heard that some other dormitory was mustering to raid you with everybody it could raise, you wouldn't stay in bed till you were attacked, would you ?"

" No, sir. We should jolly well lay an ambush, shouldn't we, Robin ? Or we'd go up to their dormi, and catch them before they were ready."

" And smite them simply like billio," said Robin, leaping with the joy of the thought. He flogged with his hat on the ground, to show the appearance of " Billio," in his habit as he lived.

" Bolly-fighting's simply sport," said Mac ; " but you always get caught. Your feet make such a noise on the floor."

" And then, I suppose, you get lines ?"

" It depends on who catches us. If it's old Skipper Gooseneck, he generally whacks us back to bed with a T-square. I say, Robin, doesn't a T-square hurt when it gets you with the edge ?"

" Do you often need the T-square ?"

" No, sir ; we don't often go bolly-fighting. The bolly-slips are so thin they split if we go bolly-fighting. And old Skipper Gooseneck makes the maids report all split bollies direct to him, and whoever gets a split bolly has his pocket-money stopped to pay for the cost of darning. But on the last night of term !"

" Simply like billio," said Mr. Hampden. " That was what the Britons did when the Romans came invading. They didn't want to be penned up in a fort. They attacked as soon as they could, and kept on attacking wherever they saw a chance."

" But supposing," said Mac, harking back to his inquiry—" supposing we were defending this camp ? Supposing we were besieged, and the Romans were coming for us ?"

" Well," said Mr. Hampden, " I should think that if the Romans ever came to attack this place, they would not have attacked it from this side. You go on all round the hill, and note the look of the land, and see which part you would choose for the attack, if you were a General attacking. I don't think you would find this the easiest." As he saw that what Mac wanted was a

description of the battle, he continued. "The Romans prepared for the attack," he said, "or I suppose they did, by opening on the walls with their field catapults. At the same time they sent out their slingers, archers, and javelin-throwers, with orders to shoot at every defender who showed himself on the walls. They did this usually in two or three places, so that the defenders should not know where to expect the main attack. Meanwhile they took care to get their men ready somewhere under cover out of sight, in one of the woods, perhaps, or behind some roll in the ground. When the General thought that the walls had been pretty well cleared of defenders, he ordered the storming-party to advance. While it was advancing, the catapults, slingers, and archers increased their efforts. They kept sending as many arrows, darts, and stones into the defenders as they could. Presently, when the time came, the defenders began to roll down rocks upon the storming party —rocks and great round boles of wood. They flung stones, too, either by hand or from slings and cleft sticks. You know the dodge of the cleft stick? You split a stick for some three or four inches from its end, and then whip the stick tightly, so that it will not split farther. Then you put a flat pebble into the cleft and give the stick a jerk. It isn't easy to describe the kind of jerk— it's a knack; but it is easily learnt. When you have learned it, you will be surprised to see how far you can fling a pebble by it. When this piece of wall was stormed —if it were stormed—this spot where we stand must have been exciting."

"But, please, sir," said Mac, "the stones here aren't

any good for fighting. They're just gravel. Where did they get their stones ?"

" Oh, they collected them in times of peace. They laid in big supplies of them. And they collected nice big nubbly rocks, too. They put them on the edge of the wall, ready to roll over. When the enemy came within range, a man walked along the wall, carrying a lever. With the lever he toppled the rocks off the wall, so that they went rolling downhill into the enemy. The defenders weren't so badly off. People besieged in towns used to hang a kind of breastwork of skins or blankets along the wall-top, to catch the sling-shot and the arrows. I don't know whether the Britons did the same."

" I suppose the Romans really did storm this place in the end, sir," said Robin.

" They may have stormed it. But the evidence shows that the ancient Britons liked to fight outside their camps. This camp was the stronghold of a tribe, or part of a tribe. The Romans probably met the tribe in battle in the open somewhere, perhaps many miles from here. Ancient battles were generally well contested for a long time. The two sides fought hard at close quarters with very little loss, till one side began to give. With shields, helmets, and breastplates, men were well protected. When a side began to give, the slaughter was awful. The men wore no defensive armour on their backs. If they turned their backs, they were at the mercy of their enemies, who cut them down in heaps. When you are older you may read the accounts of some of the ancient battles. You will see how the winners

"The stones went rolling downhill into the enemy."

lost, perhaps, fifty or a hundred men, while the losers lost many thousands. The Roman armies were severely drilled and disciplined. They were also well armed. Their chief weapon was a short, strong thrusting-sword. They didn't cut; they thrust. A man may be cut in fifty places without being severely wounded; but one good jab, two inches deep, in almost any part of the body, puts him out of action. The Romans were seldom defeated here. They met the tribes, wore them out, broke them, and then cut them to pieces. When a tribe was beaten in fight, the forts could not be held. There were no men left to hold them. The Romans marched in, and sold the women and children into slavery. Slave-dealers always followed the army."

"But please, sir," said Mac, "if the camps were never besieged, why did the Britons make them so strong."

"To guard against surprises," said Mr. Hampden, "and to keep out the wolves. The Britons were always at war among themselves. There were many wolves. This place was made very strong (one of the strongest in England) because it is in what must have been a very warlike part. The river there is a natural boundary; archæologists think that it divided two British kingdoms from each other. This place commands one of the few fords across the river. If you take my glasses, you will see the village which grew up round the ford. Look just beyond the trees there. The river is bridged now in many places. The places where the bridges cross are now the important places. Towns have grown up round them. Before the bridges were built the fords were the

important places. A strong place like this kept that ford. The road which you see down below is supposed to be an ancient British trackway leading to the ford. This camp here kept guard over the ford and the road. It is the gatekeeper's lodge. The ford is the gate, and the track down below is the drive which leads to the house or kingdom."

"Yes," said Mac; "but please, sir, couldn't people cross the ford in the night and steal round by some other way? They could creep round at the back of the camp, and get into the kingdom that way."

"Yes," said Robin. "And this is a long way from the ford. The people could easily cross before the men here heard of them."

Mr. Hampden smiled. "Try to look at it from all its bearings," he said. "Suppose you were an ancient Briton living here, do you know what sort of eyes you would have?"

"No, sir."

"Blue eyes," said Robin, thinking of the words, "Non Angli, sed Angeli." Like many other boys, he believed that blue eyes were a sign of British and Saxon blood, and that a person with blue eyes was of a more pure stock than another."

"I mean their power," said Mr. Hampden. "You would have eyes like a Red Indian. You would be able to tell whether a speck seven miles away were a man or an animal. You would have ears so sharp that you would be able to tell the meaning of every noise you heard. You would hear human speech a quarter of a mile away, in ordinary weather."

" Please, sir, how far away can you hear people speaking ?"

" Hear speech ? On a still, clear day, before rain, you can hear it—what shall I say ? A hundred and eighty yards at the most. On an ordinary day I suppose you can hear a voice a hundred yards away, or a hundred and twenty yards. But any wind will make your hearing uncertain. It will set the trees swishing. Though, if the wind be blowing from the speaker to you, it may give you an extra ten yards or so. You can hear voices across a couple of miles of water on a still day. And if you and Mac were to lie down here, and talk as you lie on the ground, I should probably hear your voices a hundred and fifty yards off, if I stooped down a little." He paused to see if the boys wished to try the experiment. " I've not got a measuring tape," he said, " but we could pace it."

" Won't you go on about the Britons, sir ?" said Robin. He wanted to know about the Red Indians who had lived in his own country. " Had they horses, sir ?"

" Yes, very good horses, for their chariots and for riding. They coloured their saddles very beautifully." He took the glasses from Mac, and stared through them at the ford. " If they left a few sentries," he continued, " to watch the ford down there at night, no enemies could get across ' to creep round at the back of the camp,' as you put it. If the enemy tried, the sentries would signal to the camp."

" What were their signals, sir ?"

" I expect they had as many signals as the Red Indians used to have—voice signals, fire signals, smoke signals,

motion signals: signals to be heard and signals to be seen. I dare say you have heard how some of the native tribes in Africa can send swift messages across vast tracts of country. It is thought that they have some method of making the voice carry—some system of pitching the voice, so that what is cried aloud may travel far. If the ancient Britons had that secret, the sentries could have shouted the news of the enemy from post to post till it reached the camp."

"But supposing the enemy sent a few men up the river, and told them to swim across, and then creep down and kill the sentries."

"The sentries would be on the lookout for that. But if they were surprised and killed, it would soon be discovered. Sentries are always visited at intervals by patrols 'making the rounds.' The alarm would be raised almost at once."

"Well, then," said Robin, "but supposing the enemy's army didn't cross at the ford, but crossed lower down or higher up, and got into the kingdom either to the north or south?"

"That's a shrewd question," said Mr. Hampden. He took Robin by the shoulder. "Who taught you to make shrewd questions, eh?" he asked. "But how would the army cross if it didn't cross at the ford? England was a very wet country in those days. That river was swifter and broader then than it is now. Where could the army cross if it didn't cross at the ford? There's no other ford below us. And the nearest one higher up is twenty miles away. I've been all down that river in a coracle, so I know. Well?"

"Please, sir, they could have crossed in boats."

"Just look at this camp here."

The boys looked, wondering. They saw nothing but the great walls, covered with the short sweet grass. They looked again at Mr. Hampden to see if he were joking. Mr. Hampden smiled at their blank faces.

"Don't you see," he said, "that this place held five or six thousand men. Five or six thousand men, each probably stronger and better able to fend for himself than I am. An enemy coming to fight in this kingdom would have had to send, say, eight or nine thousand men, to have much chance of success."

"No, sir," said Mac; "five or six thousand. The people here mayn't have been so wonderful."

"Perhaps not," said Mr. Hampden, "but a General always tries to have a stronger army than his opponent. I don't think that an invading army would have tried to pass this fort with less than eight thousand men. How would eight thousand men cross the river?"

"By boats, sir, or rafts."

"They would have needed something like seven or eight hundred boats. How would they make all those boats unobserved? They would have been seen fifty times over."

"I know what I'd have done," said Robin. "I'd have sent out a fiery cross or something, telling everybody to be ready by a night when there'd be a full moon. I'd get the Druids to calculate when there'd be a full moon. I'd tell everybody to come with three or four days' food. And before they came I'd get a lot of trees cut down, a good long way from the river. I'd tie them

together, so as to make a long bridge. Then, when everybody was ready, I'd send some cavalry across the river, 'cos horses can swim much better than men. Then they would drag the bridge across by ropes, and tie it to the other bank, so that there would be a bridge, and the men could cross by it. And while——"

"I know what I'd do, too," said Mac quickly. "I'd drive a lot of bulls over the ford, with tin cans on their tails."

"Would you ?" said Mr. Hampden.

"Yes," said Mac. "That would make the sentries think the attack would be there."

"I wouldn't do that," said Robin. "I'd send men on, to creep right round the fort, and come up suddenly on the other side—that side." (He pointed to the western side.) "Or I'd march straight to the capital, wherever it was, and take all the money before they knew what I was doing."

"You must remember that the roads were few and bad. The woods were thick, and the ground very boggy. You would have to march through pathless woods across marshy ground."

"I would train my men to do that," said Robin.

"You must remember that they would straggle. They would be scattered all over the wood. You can't keep a marching army in order in a wood." Robin's men were not like ordinary men.

"And when you were ploughing along in the forest," Mr. Hampden continued, "the men from the fort here would come down to take you in flank, and others would sneak round to cut away your bridge. And, of course, if

I were the gate-keeper here, I should send word about you to my King, farther to the west. My King had his capital somewhere about Kinsop, shall we say ?—a town in a clearing in the wood—a good big town of twenty thousand inhabitants. I should have sent a very quick runner. He would have been there in an hour. The King would have turned out with four or five thousand men, to take you in the front. You'd have been squelched, my friend Robin—taken in flank and front, your retreat cut off, and nothing but surrender possible."

"Oh," said Robin, "by the time your King got to you, I'd have beaten off your flank attack, and taken this fort. Then I'd have gone down and taken the King, too." They had wandered on, little by little, to one of the mounds which defended the strange, overlapping walls of the main entrance.

"No getting in here without leave," said Mr. Hampden. He counted the mounds which the traveller had to pass between the outer entrance and the citadel. An enemy trying to enter by the gate would have been exposed to flank attack from thirteen places before he could reach the citadel. It was easier to storm than to try to enter by the gate. The boys saw the cleverness of the arrangement of the gates. The mounds flanking the entrance were very broad at the top, so that many men could stand upon them. They were also very steep, and the walls were faced with unmortared stones of great size. The party clambered down the gentler slope into the ditch, so that they might examine the entry from below. As they went out of the gates into the side of the hill, they turned to look back. Looking back, they felt that strange

awe which all big things give. There is a mystery in all great work. The mystery in these huge ramparts made them all a little afraid. Who could have built those walls? Why were they built? If wonderful people built the gates to keep themselves in, who were the more wonderful people whom the gates were to keep out? Looking up from just below, the boys saw a succession of menacing, dreadful walls, too steep to scale, too vast to be the work of man. They looked like a freak of Nature. The grass had grown upon them, making their savagery gentle. They were surely the work of Nature. No; they were the work of men. There were the sharply-cut great gates. The gates were open. Men were free to go and come as they would. Who had gone in by these gates? Who was the last to go out by them? The stones of one of the walls had been carted away to build somebody's pigsties. There had been a fall of earth where the stones had gone. The rabbits had got in, making havoc. In another part the walls still stood. The boys looked at them. They were good walls. They were better unmortared walls than any Englishman could make to-day. The thorn hedge and barbed-wire fencing have killed that art among us. It is no mean art. It demands a great deal of thought, care, taste, and physical strength—"virtue," in fact—true manliness, to build a wall of unmortared stone. And here was one which had lasted for a couple of thousand years. Who had built it? Men with a great deal of the manly and the kingly in them. Those lucky ones who have been taught in youth to do useful things with their hands have this great joy for ever: that they can delight in honest work

wherever they find it. They have also this great sorrow: that honest work, if it be not getting rare among us, is becoming less usual. Mr. Hampden was deeply pleased by the beauty of the stone-laying. He had once worked for a few hours with a Cornish wall-builder. He knew what special talent wall-building needed. He was never again going to think that a picture-painter, or sculptor, or decorator, was the only worker deserving to be called an artist. He ranked a power which taxed the entire man (like this power to lay great stones trimly, in spite of the difficulties) far above the something done at ease in a stuffy studio.

Chapter XIII

T the entrance to the camp the gate opened out like a pair of jaws. A vast steep mound jutted from the outer wall at an angle of about forty-five degrees. It was like the lower jaw of the hill, opened to snap. It seemed to invite people to enter. It seemed to be spread so that a great many of the enemy might come in to be bitten off. It was the " curtain " of the gate, from which the defenders pelted an attacking force from front, rear, and both flanks.

" Were there gates as well as these mounds ?" Robin asked. " I mean proper gates."

" Yes," said Mr. Hampden ; " there were great gates or doors of some kind. The Romans had great strong wooden gates, studded with nails and spikes. I expect the people here had some gate of the kind across the opening there. It could never have been forced. People could never have stood to work a battering-ram against it. This opening would have been a death-trap to them."

" Let's see where the road goes to," said Mac.

Outside the walls a narrow track led down the hill on a slope so gentle that people walking on it came

within sling and bow range of much of the fort's eastern wall. The track was all grassed over. It was not even rutted. Nobody drove to Brown Willy now that the farmer had finished his pigsties. The road was perhaps seven feet wide. The outer edge or side had a slightly raised rim. The earth had been thrown up to form a ridge about a foot high. It was enough to keep chariot-wheels from going off the road. It may have been enough to keep cattle on the track. Cows will keep within any limits suggested to them. They will not cross a bank a foot high, unless they are frightened or hurried. They plod on ahead.

The three discoverers followed down the road till they were parallel with the south end of the hill. At this point the track entered a wood. They saw that it ran on down the hill, through the wood, inclining towards the river. It was rather overgrown with shrubs and low-growing plants, but its course was easy to trace. They followed down it from curiosity to see where it would lead. It was a very cleverly laid road. It went down the hill at a gentle gradient. The modern road, farther to the north, was dangerous for cyclists, and far too steep for loaded carts. This prehistoric road was made by people who knew that the easiest way up a hill is the quickest way to the top. At the end of the wood the hill dipped down more sharply into the valley. The road led along an open hillside, very thickly grown with gorse and fern. Here the party had to leave it, because it ran through cover too thick to break. But, going aside to the brow of the rise, the boys saw where it reappeared beyond the cover. It went on for about fifty

yards towards the valley, and then disappeared into a cornfield. Beyond the cornfield there was a trace of it on the rissen. Then a little-used country-lane cut across at right-angles. The hedges at the sides of the lane hid its further course from view.

" It keeps pretty well below this rising ground," said Mr. Hampden. " People travelling along it could not be seen from the south."

" I wonder where it goes to, sir."

" I expect it goes on to the ford," said Mr. Hampden. " That's one of the things we must do to-morrow: we'll trace it out as far as we can. The fields have been ploughed up a good deal, but we shall find traces of it. I dare say that we shall find a little fortified place for the sentries, not far from the ford. I shouldn't wonder if the camp up there was first pitched as a customs-house. Perhaps this road was once a great trade-route. Men may have crossed the river here with waggons and pack-horses. The King on this side may have taken toll from them. This land must have been crowded with wonderful living people. It is curious that we know so little of what went on."

The boys grubbed in the earth of the ridge at the road-side. They hoped that they might turn up " some ancient British coins, or perhaps some ancient British arrow-heads." Mac, who had read a guide-book of the district, remembered that British coins had been ploughed up " in the neighbourhood."

" Ought people to be allowed to plough up ancient roads like this, sir ?" he asked. " Oughtn't these places all to be preserved ?"

"I don't see why they should be preserved," said Mr. Hampden. "When a thing has outlived its use, it may be kept for ornament. I don't object to that. But I'd rather see this road ploughed up to grow food for men than left to the gorse and the wood, as it is down there."

"Would you like Brown Willy to be ploughed up, sir?"

"No, I wouldn't. Brown Willy is one of the places I loved when I was a boy. Yet I'd like Brown Willy to be ploughed into kitchen-garden, if people wanted the land, and the delight of getting food out of him. I'd do my best to stop anybody sinking a mine or putting up a factory here. Mines and factories pollute the air and degrade human beings. But as for ploughing, the hill would be a much more beautiful sight in culture than out of it. You know," he went on, "a great deal of bunkum is talked about the preservation of things which are obsolete. Living human beings are the things to preserve. You bear that fact in mind. Never you bother about camps and cattle-pens."

They turned back up the gently sloping road. The boys tried to imagine themselves ancient Britons, going home from the ford.

"What were the Britons like to fight, sir?" was one of the questions. "Were they as good as the Zulus?"

When they reached the gate, the boys persuaded Mr. Hampden to be the judge while they raced from a given point to the top of the curtain. Mac was a clumsy climber when flurried. Robin won the race, more by luck than skill. He ran to the curtain-end to look,

"to see if there were any arrow-heads." There were no arrow-heads, but in the platform or standing-place at the end of the curtain was a sort of hollowed-out basin in the ground, filled rather neatly with stones of about half a pound weight. The stones had been there so long that they had settled down. They had sunk upon each other. A little moss, and a little dusty earth flung upon them by the rain, had helped to bind them into a mass. They were now pretty tightly packed.

"What's this, sir?" Robin called.

"Is it a sort of pit full of stones?" Mr. Hampden asked.

"Yes."

"I don't know what it is," said Mr. Hampden. "Hold on a minute; I'll come up." He scrambled up to the curtain-top. "I've seen stone-pits just like this on the gates of two or three camps," he said. "I don't know what they were for."

"Could they be stones ready to throw at an enemy, sir?"

"They might be that. All these stones have been brought from a distance. Where do you find stones like these? You ought to know that."

Mac fingered a stone much as Hamlet fingers Yorick's skull. "I know where you get stones like these," he said. "Don't you, Robin? In the fields over by the Hazel."

"Five or six miles away," said Robin.

"And the stones in the wall — where were they quarried?"

"I don't know any quarry near here where there's that sort of stone."

"I vote," said Robin—"I vote we pull up all these stones, and see how far down they go. I shouldn't wonder if we came across something underneath. Should you, sir?"

"You'll find the bottom," said Mr. Hampden. "But you'll make your fingers very sore before you get there."

The boys began to grub up the stones with their fingers. What was underneath the stones? Mr. Hampden watched them for a few minutes, wishing that grown-up people would tackle their work with a zest as great. He smiled to hear the quick, excited comment as stone was tossed after stone.

"There's a wolf spider. Mind out, or you'll catch her egg-bag. What's that? Oh, it's only a bit of earth. Here's one of those curly things, like long, thin wood-lice."

"Jarge says they're young adders."

"Shall we squelch it?"

"No. I don't believe it's an adder."

"Adders bite like fun. They stand on the end of their tails when they bite. Jarge saw two of them once at Waters Orton. He teased them with a stick, and they stood up and sissed at him."

"It's jolly dangerous to fool with an adder. Jarge is such a fool."

By-and-by Mac knocked the skin off his knuckles.

"I'm not going on," he said. "I might get lockjaw if I go on. People generally get lockjaw if they get earth into a cut." He sucked the scrape with all his might. "And then," he went on, pausing for breath,

"your jaws get locked, so that people can't force them open with a crowbar."

He would have asked the advice of Mr. Hampden. But Mr. Hampden had stolen away to lay an ambush behind one of the upper mounds. Robin was anxious.

"I know what you ought to do," Robin said. "I'll strike a match down in this hole we've made, and while I hold the match you put your knuckle into the flame. That's what you do with the bite when a mad dog bites you. It burns out the stuff, and then you won't get mad."

The thought of the treatment convinced Mac that the earth of Brown Willy was very pure, like the air above it. He decided that he would not be cauterized. A few final sucks seemed to leave the wound clean. Robin, after a look at the wound, said that the poison was probably all sucked away.

"Only I don't know whether you ought to have swallowed it. Some day," he said, "we must get some of those things the doctors have, and put in them our belts, in case we should want them. Tourniquets to stop you bleeding to death, and to stop the poison going up when a mad dog or adder bites you, and powdered alum and cobwebs to stop cuts bleeding. We could easy get a supply of cobwebs. And another very good thing we might do : we might get Mr. Hampden to show us how he bandaged wounds when he was in action. I expect that was interesting."

"Yes, I expect it was. He must be jolly brave."

"Yes, mustn't he ! I wonder what sort of medicines the ancient Britons had when they got wounded."

" I wonder. I say, what shall we do with all these stones we've pulled out ?"

" I suppose we'd better put them back. I don't think there's anything underneath."

" It's a swot putting them all back."

They had pulled out some thirty pounds of stones. They began to toss them back into the pit.

" I wonder," said Robin, " if this place is anything at all. It might be just a fireplace—a sort of lighthouse to show where the gate was."

" The stones would be black if this was a fireplace," said Mac. " Fire makes a thing black for almost ever. I saw a brick thing once which was burnt fifteen hundred years ago. It was still all black. Where's Mr. Hampden gone ?"

" Gone to clod us."

" Come on, then. We'll get some clods ready. We'll walk about twenty yards apart, and then we'll catch him between two fires."

They ran along the curtain to the lower wall.

Chapter XIV

AFTER the battle they rested in the citadel. At the extreme south of the camp, where they rested, the walls were low. The boys asked why this should be.

"Partly the weather," said Mr. Hampden. "Nearly all the rain we have comes from the south and south-west. Up here in the clouds the wind must drive the rain hard. A lot of those walls must have been washed away. But very likely they were left low like that. The ground beneath may once have been impassable bog. This side may have needed no defence. As it happens, there is still a very dangerous bog just below the lower trench there. If you like, you can go and see if it can be crossed."

"Would it swallow you up?"

"I got my leg into it once, well above the knee. It seemed to suck me down. If I'd not been with a friend, I believe I should have lost my head, and floundered and been drowned. It is called the Quaking Bog. You see it all shake, just like a jelly, when somebody puts a foot on to one of the hags."

He stood up to show the boys where the bog lay. The boys stared.

" People who fall into bogs are mummied, aren't they ?" Robin asked.

" Yes. Something in the water preserves them."

" Then, if we were to drain away that bog, we might find some ancient Britons who'd been drowned. We might find a lot who'd come up here one night to attack, and then fallen in and not been able to get out. And they might have all their spears. And there might be a chariot."

" You'd be much more likely to find a few sheep. And draining a bog is a long business. You have to cut such deep drains. We can't do that to-day. We must be seeing about our camp. Do you see these hollows in the ground ?"

Yes, the boys had seen them. All the ground in the southern part of the citadel was pock-marked with the hollows. There must have been a couple of hundred of them. Some were ten or twelve feet across. Most of them were about eight feet across. They were shallow, irregular pans in the ground.

" Someone has had the turf off !" was the first exclamation which the boys made. Turf is of slow growth. When turf is removed from the ground, so as to leave a bald patch, the mark shows for many years. More than turf had been taken from these hollows. The earth had been scooped away. Long centuries of growth and death had not yet filled the hollows. The marks of these men, who had died, perhaps, when Stonehenge was building, had survived half a dozen empires.

"The hollows show where the huts were," said Mr. Hampden. "All these little pans were once homes. They dug a hollow, and thatched it over with wattle and dab. There were huts all over this hill-top once. For some reason this end has more of them than the other end."

"Why would that be, sir?"

"I don't know. They may have felt safer at the end from which they could not be surprised. Or they may have liked to keep the cattle at the north end. If they were people who minded smell at all, they were very wise to keep on the side from which the prevalent winds blow."

"Did they have haystacks up here, for the cattle in winter?"

"Either haystacks or pits for the storage of grass. They had clearings in the forest. They grew forage for their beasts and grain for themselves. They had a kind of small wheat. They ate pretty nearly every eatable thing in the country. In one of the big hill-forts which was examined carefully some years ago the searchers found a lot of store-pits, containing different kinds of grain. Some of the grain was seed from some of the big wild grasses. Nobody eats that seed now. We can get supplies from over the sea. Primitive man had to depend on what the land gave. In a wet, cold country like this, the supply must often have run short. In the Middle Ages here there was a bad harvest, if not a real famine, once in every seven years. Primitive man must have suffered more than medieval man. I expect always he went very hungry through the last months of the winter. But he was like other savages: he did not much

mind what he ate. If he wanted food, he would eat to stop the craving, even if the food were worms, or slugs, or clay from the field. He would get food of a kind where you or I would lie down and starve. I wish that a primitive man could start up out of the ground here to show us what English roots and leaves and insects can be eaten by people in want of food."

"People in the Irish famine ate grass, didn't they, sir?"

"Yes. They were found dead with their mouths all green from eating grass. In one of the books about the fighting to free Greece from Turkey (about 1825) a young doctor mentions living on roasted wasps. Were you ever hungry?"

"Yes, sir. We're hungry now."

"Really hungry?"

"Yes, sir."

"Would you eat roasted wasps?"

"No, sir."

"You're not hungry. You've only got good appetites. If you were really hungry, you would think of nothing but food—of something to put into your mouth and gulp. You would lie awake thinking of something going down the gullet. You would dream of food. And when you came to food, if you were really hungry, you would shake all over and feel faint."

"Were you ever really hungry, sir?"

"Hungry? I've been so hungry that if a nice plump boy like you had come along, I'd have sprung at him and bitten a lump right out of him. I wouldn't have stopped for salt and pepper."

The boys looked at each other, supposing that this was "only one of his yarns."

"Is tightening the belt any good when you're hungry, sir?" Mac asked. "It says in one of Captain Mayne Reid's books that it is."

"Yes, I think that it is some good. If you think that a thing is doing you good, it does you good, and

"'I'd have sprung at him and bitten a lump right out of him.'"

continues to do you good. I've cured more than one Australian native of various complaints by dropping two spots of glycerine into a cup of water, and telling him to "drink it off, because it was strong medicine, able to cure a dozen men." They thought that I was a tremendous fellow, so they drank off the dose, and then believed that it was doing them good, and at last it cured them. They got up and walked about."

"And if you're thirsty do you bite a bullet, sir? What does that do? They do that in one of Mayne Reid's books."

"It doesn't do very much more than make you think that you are quenching your thirst." He paused to think of the exact effect produced by it. "It makes you think of the bullet instead of your thirst," he went on, having come to this conclusion; "that's what it does. That's something, let me tell you."

"When you come to water when you're very thirsty, sir, do you just rush in and drink and drink?"

"If you do, you die there and then. No. If you're *very* thirsty, you aren't in your right mind. You think that water is fire, and fire water. Men may come raving out of the bush and fling themselves into your camp-fire, thinking they're plunging into water. I've seen a man do that. Generally the tongue and mouth are so swollen that drinking is not possible. The thirsty man has to suck it in by spoonfuls, holding it in his mouth for a long time. He recovers gradually, but it is a tremendous strain on the system." He stood up, looking down the hill. "Now, come on," he said. "You haven't seen the site of the village yet. Come on down the hill here."

He led the way over the rampart top into the upper ditch, then over the wall downhill. The boys came leaping after him.

They pushed downhill till they came to the big spur which made Brown Willy's lower south-west side. Its highest ground was far below the lower wall of the fort. The nearest part of the wall was two hundred yards above, out of shot of sling. Though it was only

three hundred feet high, the heave commanded the valley. It was higher than any land for four miles to the west of it. It had steep sides, not easy to climb. From the top of it one had a view over lovely woodland to the hills which bounded the plain. It was a pleasant place for a house, pleasanter than the top of Brown Willy, where the winds blew a gale nine days out of ten. But for the steep climb the site would have been chosen long before. It would have been built upon for the sake of the view and the sweetness of the air. Primitive man had built upon it when the camp on Brown Willy, big though it was, had become crowded. Everywhere upon the spur were the pock-markings of the huts. The place must once have been a populous town. It looked as though the top of the spur had been worn level by long occupation. The place was as wild as wild Wales, but in spite of the gorse and the fern which made such a tangle on the slopes, there was a suggestion everywhere that man had been busy there. No place where man has lived loses its memory of him. Places are haunted by all the life which they have known. This lonely wild hill of the west, eight miles from a railway, ten from a station, eleven from a market-town, had a spirit about it. He who stood there felt conscious of a busy, invisible life about him, as though the hill were still thronged. It had once been a town. Men and women had lived their lives there. Life had marked it for ever. One felt that the hill was proud to remember the pageant to which it gave the setting.

The settlement on the spur was a peaceful settlement. Early man would not have left the shelter of

Brown Willy's walls without good reason to believe himself safe. As far as the boys could make out, the spur had not been stockaded. The pock-marks of the huts spread down the hill. There were traces of them on all the level or fairly level patches of the lower slopes. At the bottom of all, where the hill grass ended and woodland began, the hollows could still be traced. The ground at the edge of the wood was wet with many springs. There were some shallow ponds, almost white with a many-blossomed water-plant. In the old wet times long ago the bogs must have made that side of the hill difficult to approach.

"Are these the ponds where they got their water, sir?"

"Come into the wood a little," said Mr. Hampden. "I'll show you what they did for water."

He led the way for some thirty yards into the covert. He stopped at the edge of a big water-tank, now about eighteen inches deep. It was foul with weed, like the other ponds. Trees growing over it had dropped dead branches into it. Bunches of rushes stuck out of it, like the bristles on an ill-shaved chin. It was marked here and there with those scarlet patches of minute life which appear on the mud of shallow ponds in the warm months. The scarlet patches interested Robin. He took a bit of stick.

"Watch a minute," he said. "I'll make those things disappear."

He thrust the stick into the soft mud a few inches from the tremulous scarlet patch. There was a shrinking in the delicate life. It seemed to shut up into itself. It disappeared within the mud with the completeness of

something sponged away. A faint reddish filament showed here and there on the mud, like the blood streaks on the cheeks of old people. After Robin had withdrawn the stick, the scarlet patch reappeared, as scarlet and as delicate as before. It seemed to delight in the sunlight which fell upon it in the chequering of many moving branches. It trembled as though trying to rise. Though it was one of the meanest of created things, one could not see it without the feeling that it wanted to rise above the water, into the light, to praise God more perfectly. In my ignorance, I know neither the name nor the nature of the creature. It is one of the many thousand things which give delight to the mind. Perhaps, if one knew that it had a vacuole, and a blephara-plast, and all the rest of it, one would like it no better. Only knowledge is always good. Boys living in the country should have enough knowledge of the creatures in the earth about them to enable them to enter into other lives than their own. They should know what the red thing in the pond eats, how the weasel hunts, how the partridge calls at twilight. There is no greater delight on earth than to enter another brain by an act of the imagination. Lying stock-still in the grass watching life at work in fox or rabbit makes a man ashamed of the little he can understand. Life is always miraculous. Life is the lesson never learnt. But it is the only lesson worth learning, worth trying to learn.

The pond had once been about sixteen yards square. Some of it was no longer pond. The undergrowth of the wood had filled up nearly half of it, though the lines of the whole were still visible. It was a neat water-

tank. The sides had been raised to keep out wandering cattle. At one place the side had been trodden flat, as though by many hundreds of thirsty people, who had there quenched their thirst and filled their jars. North of the tank there were traces of an artificial watercourse, which had drawn water from one of the upper ponds to feed the tank. The ruin and rotting which goes on in woodland every autumn had long since choked the channel into bog, but the marks of it were plain enough. Mr. Hampden thought that there had once been a chain of ponds, linked by these channels. Twenty centuries had made the upper pools more like morasses. There were so many springs on the lower slopes that neglect had turned half an acre of ground into bog.

" So this is where they got their water, sir ?"

" Yes, this is where they got their water. There is a path leading up the slope. It's mostly covered with gorse, but you can see the line of it. They came down here, filled their jars, and went back."

" But supposing people came to besiege the fort ?"

" No. This side was a safe side—the friendly side. But even if the place were besieged closely all round, you can see that there are lots of springs farther up the hill. They could easily make a big pond in one of the ditches. There must have been fully three times as much water in the springs then. If the springs failed, they could make what is called a dew-pond—that is, a big shallow pan, lined with clay. Any cold surface of the kind, exposed to the night air, tends to precipitate dew. A properly made dew-pond causes the dew to form in great quantity. They could have supplied themselves and

their cattle easily. Some day, when we have time, we'll make a dew-pond. At present we must make a camp. By the way, you see that yellow flower ?"

"Yes."

"That is woad. You might pick a little. It isn't very common. It is with that that the Britons are supposed to have stained themselves blue. We'll see if we can stain ourselves blue. A light dress of the kind would be cooling. It's hot enough for woad, isn't it ?"

The boys experimented on their hands with the juice of the plant.

"Don't think that the Britons smeared it on," said Mr. Hampden. "All the painted savages whom I have seen were painted with very delicate art. Some of the painting and tattooing is most exquisitely done. I've seen a big buck chief with a white frill painted round his throat and chest exactly like the finest lace."

"Does the juice alone make you blue, sir ?"

"No. You'll have to find out how to get the blue. The Britons were very fond of bright colours. They made very good bright green and red dyes. Now we're going to be ancient Britons for the next twenty-four hours. We'll take it in turns to be chief. I shall be chief first, because I'm the oldest. Each chief will hold office for eight hours. I've left my things about a quarter of a mile away. We'll go and get them. Where shall we camp—up in the citadel or on the spur there ? I strongly recommend the spur. It's warmer, and you won't have to carry the things so far. But if you would like the glory of being on the top, why, we'll go to the top. The wind is going to freshen. You won't get much

sleep on the top of Brown Willy in a gale. And you'll hate the work of carrying all the water, and firewood, and heath and stuff."

"I think," said Robin, "we'd best hunt about and find a place where we shan't have to go far for everything."

"I vote we don't go up to the citadel," said Mac.

They carried Mr. Hampden's gear to the foot of the spur in three journeys. There was a good deal of gear. Among it was a bundle of long, strong, pliant rods, which were to be the framework of the hut. The heaviest part of the load was a roll of felt for the covering of the framework. They laid the stuff together, and prepared to seek for a camping-ground. Mac was sent to the top to bring down the packs from the place where they had been left. Robin and Mr. Hampden went round the spur to find a camp.

Chapter XV

ATHER below the main spur, on the north-west side, they came upon a triangular cleft between two great rolls of earth. The place was an inner wedge of sheltered valley, hidden by the rolls from the north, east, and south. The little valley was about twenty yards long by fifteen yards across at the broadest part, near the mouth. The look of the grass on the floor of the valley reminded Robin of the look of the grass in the ditches. It had a peculiar light in it.

"What gives the grass that look?" he asked.

"I don't know," said Mr. Hampden. "But all the grass on ground much trodden by primitive man seems to have that look. I've noticed it in many places. Perhaps it is because you see it in hollows of the ground. The light comes queerly to it. This place has been a cattle-pen. They've stockaded up the mouth and kept their beasts here."

Certainly the ground at both sides of the mouth of the cleft had been prepared as though to receive palisades for the enclosure of the little valley. The floor of the

valley had been sloped artificially. Man had spent a good deal of thought there long ago.

"We'll camp here," said Mr. Hampden. He took Robin by the scruff of the neck and walked him to the opening. "Yes," he said; "man ran a palisade across from that mound to this. When we're ready for the night we'll dig up some of the ground to see if we can find the ends of the pales. They hardened and sharpened their pales in the fire. The burning preserves them. We are sure to find some. Now, you run up to the top of the spur and flag-wag with your handkerchief to your brother. I suppose you can flag-wag?"

"No, sir."

"What! You go about with your brother day after day, and can't flag-wag? Can you semaphore with your arms?"

"No, sir."

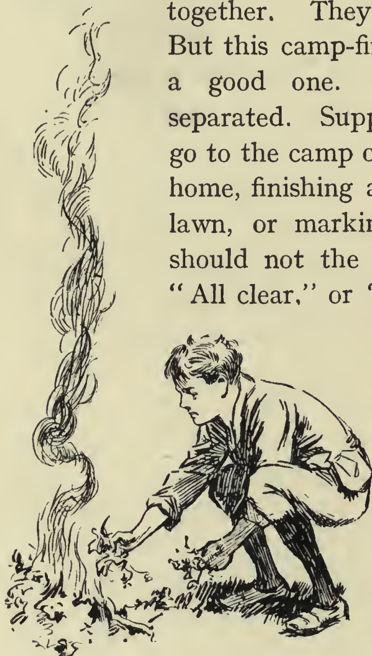
"You must learn. Well, run up and wave your handkerchief, to show him where we are."

"Suppose I make a smoke, sir."

"All right; make a smoke."

This was Robin's first attempt at making a smoke signal. He set about it with zest. He had noted some biggish fire-blackened stones in one of the pock-markings on the slope of the spur. He made his jacket into a sort of sack, and carried down a few of them for his fireplace. He was well used to the making of fires in the open. He took care to light the fire well to the leeward of the site of the hut. Very soon he had a column of smoke ascending. He had read somewhere, in some book of adventure among the Red Indians, that it was

the custom of Indians to check the smoke by covering the fire with turf. There was some system of signalling by suddenly checking the smoke. He felt that Mac had never properly tried the different methods of signalling. That was because they were so much together. They were seldom separated. But this camp-fire way of signalling seemed a good one. Suppose they should be separated. Suppose one of them were to go to the camp one day, leaving the other at home, finishing a job for mother, rolling the lawn, or marking the tennis-court. Why should not the one in camp signal back, "All clear," or "Nothing in the traps," or "A fox has grubbed up the cache"? And then they must try the flag-wagging and the semaphore. They could make signal flags. They could ask their mother for some of the little print Union Jacks which had been hung out of the windows on Coronation Day. They could easily fix them on to garden sticks. The semaphore would be fun, too. They could do it from far off with their arms. They could invent a secret code of their own. And then at parties, when the grown-ups were talking about stupid things, they could signal to each other by their



"Very soon he had a column of smoke ascending."

fingers, and no one would know. They might be able to have long conversations together. Then, there was the knocking system. He had read somewhere of prisoners in the Bastille, or in some other prison, conversing together by knocking on the walls. One tap upon the wall meant A, two taps B, and so on to Z. It must have been very slow. And perhaps outside the dungeon door someone would be listening and listening, taking it all down, spelling it out, learning when the attempt to escape would be. And then, when the night of the escape came, when one snapped through the well-filed bars and lowered oneself down by a rope of knotted blanket-strips, there would be black musketeers at the bottom, with masks over their faces. A voice would say, "Take him to the Little Ease." And afterwards one would lie in the Little Ease, cramped up, knees touching chin. The irons would rust into wrists and ankles. People would forget. The gaolers would forget.

"Prisoners conversing by knocking on the walls."

Long afterwards somebody would burst in the door, and find a few bones dangling from chains, and perhaps a legend, scratched with overgrown finger-nails by the

light of the one sunbeam which came through a mouse-hole just at sunset :

> " Forty years,
> 480 months,
> 2,080 weeks,
> 14,560 days."

That was the kind of thing. The number of hours and seconds needed paper and pencil. Another thing which they ought to do was to invent a secret alphabet. The two Bramptons at school had a secret alphabet. Their father had made it for them. He was an artist. But the Bramptons had mixed up the letters afterwards, so that not even their father could read a word written in them. It was a fine little alphabet, with little pictures of ships and horses. The Bramptons could write notes to each other during prep. He thought of all these things as he got his fire under way. When it was burning vigorously, he covered the hottest parts with a thin layer of moist leaves, gathered from one of the boggy patches at the edge of the wood. The burning instantly changed to a most profuse yellowish smoke, which rose in a thick column high above the tree-tops. He did his best to cut the column, by covering the fire with turf, but he failed. Mr. Hampden called to him to take the big waterproof blanket. He turned round, and lo ! the hut was ready. The turf had been sliced off, rolled up, and arranged ready to hand. The surface earth had been scraped away. The framework of the hut was ready to receive the covering. He left his signalling at once. This tepee, or wigwam, was much more to his mind.

"How splendid!" he said. "How splendid! Isn't it simply splendid!"

"Before we put the cover on," said Mr. Hampden, "we'll put the rubber boat-rug down, double, on the ground, to sleep on. I must run no risk with you two delicate lilies. I'm going to make this place as snug as a house. If I were alone, I'd just scrape a hole in the ground to take my hip-bone when I lie on my side. You must have more than that. Do you remember a patch of thick heath just where the spur joins on to the hill-side? You asked if it were heather. Do you remember the place?"

"Yes, sir—perfectly."

"Could you find your way back to it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, take this tarpaulin. You've got a good knife?"

"Yes, sir."

Out came the knife to bear witness to its goodness. It was a sheath-knife, or dagger carried at the back, sailor fashion, in a sheath secured to the belt. A sheath-knife is much the best sort of knife a boy can have. It makes him careful both of the blade and in the manner of using it. It compels the owner to wear a belt instead of braces. As it is a simple weapon, with only one blade, it does not encourage idleness. A boy with a four-bladed knife will blunt all four blades, one after the other, before he thinks of having the knife sharpened; but with only one blade for all purposes, a boy is prompted to keep a whetstone, and to learn how to use it. Both Robin and Mac were very proud of their knives. They

kept them both sharp and bright. They used them so often, for so many different things, that the knives had become their friends. If either of them walked alone, late at night, in a dreary part of the country—as, for instance, when coming home in the winter with the late post from Waters Orton—the feel of the knife in its sheath was comforting. While that was there one had a comrade. The knife was a friend in the dark. Both boys felt for their knives something of the affection which a savage feels for a trusty weapon. Men have something of the same fondness for their favourite pipes and walking-sticks ; but neither pipe nor stick can be so dear to man as a knife is to a boy. When a boy has a good strong knife which cannot shut up on his fingers while he uses it, he is a king over all the world which interests him. He can dig with it ; he can cut sticks of any thickness ; he can fling at a target. He can imagine it to be a cutlass, a lance, or a rapier, a bayonet, a harpoon, or an assegai, as the fancy colours his mind at the moment. To Mac and Robin the big manly knives were an ever-present prompting towards manliness. With such powerful tools in their hands they were able to attempt bigger feats than most boys. And though the feats which they could do amounted only to this—that they could cut bigger sticks and attempt bigger subjects in taxidermy than boys with the ordinary pocket-knives, they felt that the possession of such knives put them above littleness.

Mrs. Shenstone did not like the sheath-knives. She felt that the boys would " put each other's eyes out," or fall upon them somehow, as a Roman of the good

time fell upon his sword. But time went on, and neither thing happened. The worst that came of them happened on the day of their arrival. The boys went out to play at Red Indians. Mac, the stronger of the two, seized Robin, and scalped him close to the skin, taking off a good-sized tuft. The knife-blade was blunt at the time, and " scalping " with a blunt knife, even without raising the skin, is very painful to the person scalped. Robin had howled, and there had been a battle.

Robin pulled out his knife.

" What do you call your knife ?" Mr. Hampden asked.

" Moro, sir."

" Why Moro ?"

" After a horse in the ' War Trail,' sir."

" Well, take Moro, then, and cut a tarpaulinful of heath. Heath is very good stuff to sleep on. Unless you'd prefer gorse ?"

" And shall I cut some fern, sir ?"

" No ; don't take the fern if you can get plenty of heath. No one uses the heath, but several people have rights of cutting fern here, for stabling. We mustn't rob them."

Robin piled a turf upon his fire to keep it alive till he returned. He then set out to cut heath for bedding. On his way up the spur he met Mac, who was coming down. Mac was cross from the weight of the packs.

" Where are you going ?" Mac asked grumpily.

" Going to cut heath for bedding."

" What have you been doing ?"

" Making smoke-signals to you. Did you see them ?"

"No. I've had other things to think about, dragging all this load."

"How did you know whereabouts we were, then?"

"I saw the smoke, of course."

"Well, if you saw the smoke, you saw the signal. And Mr. Hampden has made a simply clinking little wigwam, and we're to sleep in it, and stand guard."

This news cheered Mac. He went on down to the cleft, singing what he called his war-song. It was a noisy ditty about "the enemy being in sight." It went to the tune of "We won't go home till morning."

Robin made two or three journeys to the patch of heath. By a quarter to one he had cut enough heath to cover the floor of the wigwam several inches deep. While he gathered heath, Mr. Hampden and Mac went down to the covert below the hill for some fir-boughs, which they stripped of their needles to add to the covering of the floor. The boughs blazed up well on the fire. The needles and the heath together made a beautifully soft mattress. The boys sprawled upon it to test it. It was like sprawling on a good spring mattress. Mr. Hampden told them to rest there while he got dinner ready. He was afraid that they might get overtired in the heat of the day. They rested for a few minutes, thinking that they were British warriors on the war-path, hiding in a secret ravine, or pirates just landed on an island, or some of Bendigo Mitchell's men, waiting for the coach to pass.

Mr. Hampden, rummaging in his own stores and those of the boys, chose out the ham, some eggs, and a few beef sausages. He wanted the dinner to be one of the

"He met Mac coming down."

delights of the day. He planned to fry them all up together, with some brown bread, potatoes, and a half-hand of wood-sorrel, for the first course. The second course was to be potted meat spread upon ship's biscuit. He was going to tell them that the potted meat was pemmican. The third course was to be plums from his own garden. The fourth course was to be chocolate. He did not understand why the boys had brought corn. He supposed that it had something to do with Julius Cæsar. He smiled, remembering how, as a boy, he had once boiled and eaten a plateful of corn. It had been like making a meal of minute snippings from the outer tyre of a bicycle. He laid out his dinner-table not far from the fire. Then he got ready all his cooking things. He put the butter into a bowl of water ; he afterwards covered the bowl with wetted flannel, so that the butter should remain firm. He hung up the canvas water-bag, which had been with him for so many miles in waterless parts of Australia. He explained to the boys that the evaporation from the canvas would keep the water within as cold as ice. He greased his frying-pan, stirred up his fire, and set to work. The boys offered to come to help him, but he told them to rest.

" In camp," he said, " each man does the job set to him. I am cook. After dinner you'll have to help wash up, and gather more firewood. You rest now, and try to get cool for dinner."

The boys sprawled back upon the springy bed of the heath. Robin was happier than he had ever been. Once before, when Jowett's Circus came to Waters Orton, he had known supreme joy. But the circus had

lasted only for an afternoon. The procession in the morning was something thrown in as a makeweight, and to see them going away in their vans the next day was an after-taste. The elephants had gone slumping by, looking strangely cold in their great grey floppy hides compared with the piebalds at the cart-tails. The clown had come along, smoking a pipe. The ring-master had walked with him, smoking a cigarette. They had looked like ordinary people. The rain was falling. Mac and Robin had watched them pass by, huddled into their coats, the horses steaming, the gilt of two or three processional cars looking very dingy in the mud. The wild beasts grumbled and growled as their van jolted. Then they passed out of sight round the corner, along the old British portway. They had never come back. A few waggons showed. By standing on the gate's bars the boys had seen over the hedge-tops. They had seen the backs of the elephants, moving along with a rippling movement, rather like that of caterpillars. Presently they were out of sight with the rest. They had passed out. When they had gone, something very wonderful in life was gone.

The next greatest joy in the boys' lives had been the passing of the soldiers. Two years before this story begins there had been army manœuvres on a big scale in that country. A Red Army had tried to invade the Blue territory, in which Waters Orton stood. The Blue Army, making a forced march, fell on the right flank of the Red Army, rolled it up on to its centre, cut it from its base, and forced it, so the umpires said, to lose all its infantry. The boys heard the roar of the battle ten or twelve miles away. That was exciting. But the

wonderful thing was the passing of the Blue troops on their way to the battle. The day before the troops passed stray cavalrymen came scouting. One or two men with rifles cycled through Waters Orton, climbed to the top of Toot Hill, and gazed at the landscape through glasses. Then, just at lunch-time the next day, a squadron of Lancers came cantering up. After them came some Dragoons. Then regiment after regiment, horse, foot, and guns; thousands of men, with a mile or two of waggons. The boys thought that they would never pass. They poured in, dusty, sweating, worked to the last ounce, none of them speaking, all "cooked," all the officers carrying two or three rifles, the sergeants excited, a great cloud of dust floating up over the whole. A battery of field guns halted in the road opposite where the boys were standing. The horses sweated, dropping foam; their flanks heaved. The soldiers shifted in their seats, looking ahead. Presently an orderly came galloping up to give a paper to an officer. The smell of dust was very strong, and the road was much broken by the guns. The officer read the paper, and called something. Somebody blew a bugle. The men caught up their horses. The horses seemed to start into life, as though they knew what the bugle meant. Chains clanked as the traces tautened. Mac said something about a battle, and the shells going to go off. The dust, which had settled down in the brief halt, rose up again at once in a great cloud. It made a blur all along the road, a blur of grey through which one saw the drivers, their eyebrows puckered to the dust, and the men sitting still upon the limbers, as though they were a part of them. More bugles sounded

far away. A man came tearing down the ranks at a gallop to shout aloud to the rear guns. The wheels made a heavy rolling grind. Hoofs struck out sparks upon the stones torn loose from the road. The guns went past, all pointed downwards, just as though they were deep in thought. And after they had all gone some men drove up a waggon, hitched to a team of mules. The waggon had a huge red cross upon its side. The drivers were very hot and very merry. They sang a song about "it breaking their hearts to go, ta ra ra." Mac said that the waggon was the ammunition-waggon. The drivers, he said, were merry because they wouldn't have to be firing, and very likely wouldn't get killed.

After they had passed the roads became quiet. The dust slowly settled down, till it lay like a soft, thick covering on the road. Everybody in the village ran out to follow the guns ; but the guns were out of sight, far on ahead, somewhere below a cloud of dust which rose high above the hedge. Mac and Robin had run, too, to see the battle, but they only saw a couple of weary regiments lying on the broad grassy horse-path at the roadside. A little knot of officers talked together in the middle of the road. One of them was explaining something on a map. Mac and Robin stood staring at a distance, afraid to go very near. By-and-by the bugle called the men to fall in. They fell in swiftly. Sergeants and officers spoke sharply. A clear note came from the bugle. Far away a man on a horse shouted something like the howl of a dog. The regiments stepped out with a swing. It seemed to the boys that they stepped out the faster when a dozen rifle-shots cracked far ahead.

Chapter XVI

OTH those days were red-letter days in the lives of the boys, but this day on Brown Willy surpassed them both. They were to sleep out of doors, like ancient Britons. They were to have a camp fire, a watch-word, and sentry-go. They wondered whether they would be able to come there often. Instead of having a gang, as they had planned that morning, they might have a tribe. They could get three or four other boys to join them. They could come there sometimes at night, perhaps. They could let themselves down out of their bedroom windows.

" We could creep round to the Rectory, and get a little gravel and fling it up to Colin's window. Then Colin could creep round on tiptoe and wake Julian, and then they could both slide down ropes out of the window. Or we could send out a fiery cross to Colin and the two Higginsons, and perhaps to Lance as well. We could put a slip of writing: ' N.E. 8 miles when the moon doth rise.' And then bind a strip of heather round the cross. And then they would think : ' N.E. 8 miles, and a sprig of heather ? That would mean Brown Willy. There's

only heather on Brown Willy, and that's eight miles north-east.' Then they would come to Brown Willy, and we'd have a beacon burning, or scouts out. And as they came near we could hoot like owls, or make a noise like bats, and they would answer; and then we would camp together, or perhaps creep out together, and go along. . . . And *I* know what we could do: we could leave word the night before that we wouldn't be back till middle day, or even tea-time, and we could go down to the river—it's not so very much farther—where the ford is. And we could cut out a boat from the ferryman, and go and be pirates down the river. Or, I know what. We could take our own boat, and drop her down through Mr. Hampden's lake. It's not many miles. And before very long we should come to where it broadens out, just where it runs into the Gara. There's an island there. We could camp there. And we could lie in ambush, and if any ship came up out of the Gara into our river, we could whang at her. Or we could put up false lights, so that she would think the island where we were the mainland, and run ashore. Then we would tell the crew to come ashore, or 'suffer the mercy of the sea.' That's what the pirates always did. Of course, 'the mercy of the sea' was when they threw a person into the sea with round shot round his heels. And he went down and down in among the coral. I dare say there's coral in the Gara. It would be fine if we could get a boat-load of coral. We could easy get it, I expect. We'd put down an anchor, and then we'd climb down the cable under the water, like they made the slaves do, and then you pick great sprays of coral, either red or white, like picking

flowers, and then climb back with it. And when the crew came ashore, we would maroon them. We would give them a musket between them, 'cos I expect there'd be wild goats on the island. Goats are awfully wild. They swim on to islands to get away. You know, the people here say that all goats belong to the Devil, and that they go to the Devil for one hour every day. So if a farmer tries to shut up a goat, it's no good, 'cos it's got to go to the Devil at twelve o'clock. I wonder, if we watched a goat, we would find out where it goes down. I expect it eats a kind of plant, and goes round backwards three times. That's what the witches did. And then it disappears, and leaves its skin on the ground. And by-and-by it comes back, when the hour's up, and puts on the skin again. We could chain up a goat some day and watch. And then, if you take the skin away, the goats haunt you. So that's why goats always go to islands, 'cos there they can take off their skins.

"And when we marooned people on the island, we'd tell them where the powder and ball would be buried, so that they could shoot the goats. And then we'd take their ship. We'd get her off the rocks, and mend her, and we could go cruising up the Gara. And there'd be little brass cannons on both sides of the deck, sticking out of little portholes, and we wouldn't want much crew. Colin and Julian and the two Higginsons, and perhaps Peter. Or I vote not Lance—Lance is such an ass. And we'd have a little cabin, with pistols in it, and bunks with curtains, like real sailors ; and we'd have a secret island of our own, with a little town on it. And perhaps, cruising about, we might land on an Indian

island, and find an old Indian who'd tell us where Manoa is. That's the golden city, all built of gold. And all the people in it are white—that's the funny thing. It's somewhere in South America, in the forests where the humming-birds are. And there's supposed to be a spell on it, so that if you go to look for it, you hear all beautiful singing, and women come out of the forest and tell you they'll show you the way. And they bring you beautiful red and green apples, and if you bite one of the apples, you drop dead ; and then the women change into flaming dragons and eat you up. But there is one way through the forest, and the Indian would show it to us, 'cos we'd promise, if he did, that we'd give him his freedom. And we'd creep along by moonlight, through the forest, and great blood-sucking moths would come down. And when they bite you, you don't feel it, 'cos they fan you with their wings, so they suck all your blood out if you're not careful. And we'd get into Manoa, the golden city, and see El Dorado. That means ' the gilded,' 'cos the King of Manoa is covered with gold. They gum him, I suppose, all over, and then roll him in gold-dust. It's just like tarring and feathering, only done with gold-dust. And he gets all stuck with gold-dust. He isn't allowed anything else, and he glistens like anything. And that's what El Dorado is. And when he goes about in the street, everybody falls down and says : ' Great El Dorado, mercy !' No one's ever got to Manoa except some Spaniards, and when they were coming back they all went mad from thirst. They came back raving about white men in a golden city, and then they died of madness, yapping like dogs. So, of course, everybody

thought it was madness. Oh, and then an Englishman got there; but nobody believed what he said, 'cos he was only a common sailor. And he went blind, because of the moonlight on the voyage home, 'cos that's what sailors do go if they sleep in the moonlight; so that's

"'Sir Walter Raleigh tried to find out about it.'"

what you really mean when you call Lance 'moony.' And ever after that he used to go about telling people that he knew where a golden city was. He used to sing songs about it. And the sailors in the inns gave him pennies, 'cos he'd once been a sailor. Only, when Sir Walter Raleigh tried to find out about it from him, of

course he couldn't show him the way, 'cos he was blind.

"So when we got to South America, we'd leave our ship in a creek, covered with palm-leaves, so that the Spaniards wouldn't find her. And then the Indian would show us the way, and we would by-and-by come to Manoa, and go up the golden streets, with a trumpeter blowing. And when we talked with El Dorado, we wouldn't be like the Spaniards. We wouldn't try to take all the gold. We'd say that we came from the English King to make a treaty, so then England and Manoa would always be friends. And if any enemies came to fight England, Manoa would send an army to help, 'cos they're said to be very good fighters. They've got long wooden swords with flint edges, which can cut a horse's head off. I say, mustn't they be simply swipers to cut off a horse's head? 'Cos it isn't like beheading people, 'cos then you have a block.

"And when we got back to England, the King would forgive us being pirates, 'cos we'd made friends with the Manoans. And then he'd let us come on shore. So then, perhaps, we'd go back to the island where we'd marooned the people, 'cos we wouldn't want them to be always marooned. We'd heave to off the shore, and fire a gun, and they'd come out. They'd be all hairy, like animals, 'cos that's how people go when they haven't any clothes—they get all hairy. I'll tell you who's hairy—the old Colonel. I saw him at cricket once over at Upton St. Mary's. He'd got his sleeves rolled up, and he was just simply hairy—simply awfully hairy! That was because he'd been in India so long, where they wear

hardly any clothes. Of course, the English have to wear some, 'cos they've got uniforms. So when the marooned people came out, some of them would be all hairy, and some would have goat-skins, like Robinson Crusoe. And they'd kneel down on the spit and beg me to take them home. So then I'd take them home. And a very good thing to have for marooned people is Parmesan cheese, 'a kind of cheese made in Italy—very nutritious,'

"'I'd give the maroons some sardines!'"

'cos that's what they generally ask for. And I'd have sardines for them, for sardines are jolly good things for sailors to take to sea, 'cos the oil preserves them; and besides, they're all soldered up, so that they can't get air into them, which is one of the things you have to look out for. And then I'd give the maroons some sardines. And at first they wouldn't be able to speak much, 'cos all maroons forget how to speak. But, perhaps, if there were a lot of maroons together, they

wouldn't forget so much. And I s'pose, if there were many, one'd have to put them down in the hold, with a gun pointing down, 'cos if you didn't they'd very likely seize the ship. And we'd have a spy down in the hold, to hear if they made a plot to mutiny. We'd have a big barrel there, labelled 'Rum,' but it wouldn't be rum really; it'd be a spy's hiding-place. And all the time they were planning to file their irons and fling us overboard, the spy would be making notes in shorthand, 'cos that's a famous dodge. And then, when all was ready, we'd have them all up, and say: 'So this is a nice return for all our kindness.' But we'd forgive them, unless, perhaps, we made them draw lots which should suffer 'the mercy of the sea,' or perhaps throw dice on the capstan; for that was what they did sometimes, and then the man who drew the bad lot—or sometimes it was a black bean out of a bag—would have to die, unless we forgave him just at the end. I think we should forgive him just at the end. Or if we didn't, he would haunt us, like the man in 'Tiger Teach.'

"And then, by-and-by, they'd all get home to their villages; but they'd be so hairy that no one would know them, and they'd have been away from home twenty years, and all their people would be dead, except, perhaps, one or two very, very old people, who'd just remember them. So then they'd stay at home for a time; but they wouldn't like it there, with no one they knew, so at last they'd write to each other, and all come together again. They'd meet at some sailors' inn. And then, when they were all met, they'd say they wanted to go to sea again. So then they'd go out where the artillery were, and

capture some guns and pistols, and then they'd dig a big underground passage to the grocery stores—some great big grocery stores where the ships get their provisions. And at night, when everybody was asleep, they'd creep down the passage with dark lanterns. Of course, the grocer would have to be an enemy. He'd have to be in a plot against the King, and they'd have found it out . . ."

"Din-ner!" Mr. Hampden shouted. "Come along. Rally along while it's hot."

He deftly turned the contents of the saucepan into the three tin dishes. The boys sprang up with a cry. They rolled themselves into position in front of the dishes. The action began with a fierce assault all along the line.

"The secret of a happy camp," said Mr. Hampden after dinner, "is making everybody take shares in the washing up, and washing up within twenty minutes of the meal. If the water in the kettle's hot enough, we'll wash up now. One of us'll wash, another rinse, the third dry. 'So shall Charybdis wear a grace.' Come along and let's get it over."

They got it over. After they had finished, Mr. Hampden told them to fill up the filter, and come with him up the hill to excavate. He produced two trowels from his baggage.

"What are we going to excavate, sir? The gateway of this little cleft?"

"No. We'll do that by-and-by, after supper. I thought we might climb up the spur and open one or two of the hut-hollows."

"Oh, hooray! hooray! Come along, Mac. What d'you think we shall find, sir?"

"Oh, hearthstones, perhaps, a few broken bits of pots, and perhaps a spindle-whorl."

"And arrow-heads?"

"Perhaps."

"Mac! Mac! Perhaps there'll be arrow-heads. If there 're arrow-heads, won't it be simply splitting! We could fasten them on to garden sticks, and then we'd have real arrows."

"We very likely shan't find arrow-heads," said Mr. Hampden. "We should find arrow-heads in the place where they were made, or in graves. They were often buried with their owners. Sometimes you can pick them up on bare patches of the hills, just as they were dropped. There must be thousands scattered about, waiting to be found."

"And spear-heads, too, sir?"

"No; not spear-heads so much. They are bigger. They are noticed more if they lie about upon the ground. And then there are fewer of them. A man would have, perhaps, only one spear, but a quiverful of arrows."

They climbed up the side of the spur to one of the many little ledges on which primitive man had built his huts. They halted on one of the ledges in a little open space among the brambles. The place had once been overgrown with the immense hill-nettles, the stalks of which are so prickly with spines that they hurt more than the leaves. Something had killed the nettles. They were all of them dead. Their dead stalks lay in disorder over one

of the hut-hollows. They were whitish and brittle. Their hairs were still stiff enough to prick the fingers.

" This seems a good big hollow," said Mr. Hampden. " Let's clear away the nettles from it, and see what we can see."

When they had cleared away the nettles, and the coarse grass which tangled at their roots, they saw that the hollow was nearly filled with blackened, burnt stones. All the stones had been brought from some distance. There were no stones like them to be found on the hill. They had been there for many years. They had settled into each other. They were all mossy, with a yellowish, close-clinging moss. There seemed to be a couple of feet of stones.

" It's a stone-pit, like the stone-pit on the wall," said Mac.

" I wonder what it can be," said Mr. Hampden.

" Mightn't it be a fireplace ?"

" It doesn't look like one. Yet the stones have been burnt."

" Couldn't it be a big sort of fireplace, where they roasted wild boars whole ?"

" Or couldn't it be a sort of foundation-place, and then the bed on top of it ?"

" I give it up," said Mr. Hampden. " It might be a collection of the stones which they used to make red-hot when they wanted a steam-bath after going on the war-path. The Red Indians did that. They dug a little hole, filled it with water, covered it up, and then dropped in red-hot stones to make a steam. Then the warrior sat in the steam till he was clean. It was a kind of Turkish

bath. Perhaps this was something of that kind. We'll get the stones out, and see if there's anything underneath."

After half an hour of work they emptied the pit. It was about two feet deep by four and a half feet long. The bottom was the crumbly, pale, unburnt earth of the hillside. The stones were light from being burnt. They averaged about a pound in weight. Nearly all of them showed signs of having been in the fire. Mr. Hampden dug down into the earth for a few minutes, but there was nothing hidden below the stones. He patted back the earth.

"No good," he said. "We'll put the stones back. Nothing here. Nothing even to show what the place was meant for."

They rolled back the stones with a good will. It was hard to find nothing, but they had had good fun in the hope. They broke through the cover to another ledge, where one of the hollows was deeper than most.

"This we'll try," said Mr. Hampden.

They thrust their trowels into the soft earth. Each trowelful, when thrown up, was searched by one of the three.

After they had dug for twenty minutes, they were rewarded. Mac, who was searcher at the moment, gave a cry.

"Here," he said—"here's something."

The two diggers turned to him excitedly.

"It isn't much," said Mac.

He rubbed the earth from it, and held it up. It was a piece of pottery measuring about three inches across. It

was scored along one edge with a herring-bone pattern; some half-dozen scorings showed.

"I suppose this is a bit of one of their pots, sir?" he said.

Mr. Hampden looked at it. "Yes," he said; "that is a bit of a British pot. They couldn't make very good pots. They couldn't make their kilns hot enough. Still, this probably held somebody's dinner once. It looks like a bit of the rim. The scoring of the pattern is done cleverly. You couldn't draw lines in wet clay so straight as those lines, could you, now? Put it to one side, Mac. We'll see what else we can find."

Half an hour of digging brought them to what had been the floor of the hollow when it was inhabited. There was a fire-blackened stone at the northern end of the hollow. On it and under it were a few pieces of what looked like charcoal. At the sides of the pit were two or three fragments of the same stuff. The discoverer looked at them curiously.

"The fireplace, and the remains of the fire," said Robin. "I wonder what they had for dinner the last time they had dinner here."

"I wonder. I shouldn't think they had much. I should think it was a bachelor's place. It's simply a tiny fireplace," said Mac. "And a jolly untidy bachelor, I should say. He chucked away the charcoal to the side."

"No; I think the stuff at the side must be all that's left of the wattle. It's the last of the wattling. You know how they harden the ends of hop-poles in the fire, so that they shan't decay in the ground? They did the

same with the ends of the wattling This stuff here has once been sharpened."

"What would it be sharpened with?"

"A flint axe. They're very sharp and very heavy. Would you like to take these things?"

"Yes, sir—yes."

"There doesn't seem to be anything else." Robin picked up a bracken-stalk and probed with it here and there idly. "Here's this, sir," he said, after rubbing among the blacks under the hearthstone. He held up a thin slip of bone in which an eyehole had been drilled. "It looks like a kind of bone needle. Only the point's gone."

That was their last find. The last inhabitants of the hut had left very little behind them when they "moved house." The boys put their treasures very carefully together. They scooped back the earth into the hollow, wondering how long it had taken to accumulate there to the depth of eighteen inches above the floor. Both boys were hot, muddy, and cramped from stooping, before the surface had been patted down. Mr. Hampden was anxious lest they should make themselves too tired.

"What shall we do?" he asked. "Would you like to open another, or shall we rest now?"

"Oh, open another — let's open another," the boys cried. "But let's go up on the top, 'cos I expect the chiefs lived on the top. We might come to a chief's house up at the tipty-top."

"It would be a great deal better," said Mr. Hampden, "if we could find their rubbish-heap. If we found that, we might find all sorts of things."

"What sorts of things, sir?"

"Oh, nice old bones cracked for the marrow, and arrow-heads which weren't quite a success, and flint chippings of all kinds, some of them rather good ones, and wild boars' tusks, and broken pots—all the things you'd expect in a dust-heap."

"Where would the dust-heap be, sir?"

"Somewhere down the hill. I don't see any mound or ridge which could be one."

"Had they always one, sir?"

"Yes, probably. Primitive villages are generally neat in a dirty kind of way, if you understand what I mean. We'll look for it."

They climbed to the top of the spur. At the very top, on what might be called the head of the couchant lion of the spur, were three or four small hollows surrounding one very large one.

"We'll try this big one, shall we?" Mr. Hampden asked. "It'll take us some time to do." He probed the ground with the point of the trowel. "This'll be an easy one to dig," he said. "It's laid on the bare rock as far as I can judge. We'll strip it off from the south end."

As he said, it was an easy one to dig. The earth made a very light, thin cover to the rock of the hill. The rock was of that very old, rotten kind which easily breaks and splits. It had been broken up to a rude level by the man who had once made his home there. Bits of rock deceived the boys many times as they laid the surface bare. They found nothing but a few small bits of charcoal. Perhaps that exposed site had been pillaged long before.

There was nothing left for the boys to treasure. They went over the pile of earth a second time, to make sure that nothing had been missed. They found nothing. The bits of thin, split stone were not bits of pottery ; the occasional tiny clods of earth were not spindle-whorls.

" Drawn blank," said Mac, as he began to scoop back the earth.

He was not well inclined to dig up any more hut-hollows. He got up and stretched himself while Robin did the work.

Chapter XVII

" OW, how would it be," said Mr. Hampden, " if we stayed here for a week or so and made a book about Brown Willy ? We could camp in the cleft there for as long as the weather's fine. We could make a map of the camp, showing all the hut-hollows, and if we were smart we could examine most of the hut-hollows to find out what has been left here. We could make the map big enough to take in all this spur, and the water-pans below it. We could put in the Quaking Bog, and little queer places like the cleft where we are camping. Then, when we had done the camp and its surroundings, we might try to strike the lines of the roads leading to it, and then in time follow them all up, and see where they came to, what forts or towns, and the rest of it. D'you think you would like that ?"

The boys were delighted with the thought of staying for a week on Brown Willy, but how about leave, and was not map-making rather a swot ? Mr. Hampden knew what was passing in their minds.

" I'll go over to get you leave," he said. " I've left my bicycle at the Saunders' cottage down the road

there. I'll ride over to-morrow morning. We shan't make a big map—only a little one for ourselves ; and then we'll put in all the ancient British things we learn, so as to make a little book. Then we'll put in the natural history of the place, the notes of the birds, and where to look for the nests of field-mice and humble-bees. What do you say ?"

"Yes, sir," said Robin ; "and I know what would be fun to do. We could make a map of the town here, as well as we can, and then I know what we could do. We could make a little sort of a museum-place to put all the things we find in. We could have drawers, like the drawers in butterfly-cabinets, and write out neat little labels for everything. And then we could get some clay. There's a place down at the bottom of the garden where there's some simply splendid clay, 'cos I know, 'cos we had an exhibition once of birds'-nests and things which we made out of the clay. You can make simply anything out of the clay, 'cos it's just like plasticine ; and if you stick it in the fire, I believe we could make china out of it. It's simply splendid clay. And I know what we could do. We could make a sort of a big model hill. Of course, it wouldn't do to make it too big, 'cos it'd take too much clay ; but we could make it pretty big. Of course, it would be much more difficult if we made it small ; but I was thinking we could make the model hill, and then put in little tiny models of the huts as they really were. I saw a little model once. You remember, Mac, the Roman villa with real Romans ? It's in the museum at Drowcester, next door to the old Roman baths. Simply rotten baths. The plunge is only about

eight feet long. But I b'lieve the Romans were a lot smaller than real people, 'cos they had to be, or they wouldn't have got through their doors. And the models are ripping, and we could make little huts out of card-board—little tiny-weeny huts. And we could get little farthing jointed dolls to be the Britons. And I know what we could use for the water-pans—glass. Glass makes simply ripping water. We could get a bit of glass from Dawks, the builder. He's got a whole heap of glass, and he cuts it with a real diamond stuck on to a handle. But another way of cutting it is to soak a bit of string in vinegar. Of course, if you have sulphuric acid, you can do it with that. I expect sulphuric acid's really best, 'cos it's jolly strong stuff. When you kill anybody, it's always a good thing to put him into sulphuric acid, if you have enough, 'cos then that destroys him, and then you don't get caught. When you're cutting glass, you just tie the string round the glass after soaking it in vinegar or sulphuric acid, and then you can cut it where the string touches. You have to be awfully careful with sulphuric acid. They call it oil of vitriol. In Paris they throw it at each other. They've got some people in Paris called Apaches. They chuck vitriol into people's eyes, and then it blinds you. And it's awfully rummy about vitriol. It's quite cold—at least, it feels cold when you hold the bottle, but directly you touch it it simply burns like billio. And if you put it into cold water it makes it all hot. So if we got a bit of glass from Dawks, the builder—Dawks is rather an old ass, but he's an awfully good builder. He built the Big Burn Barn, and he's awfully good at knuckle-bones. I had him a game once.

You wouldn't think him at all good to look at. He is, though. I wonder if he's any good at cricket? I shouldn't think he is, should you, Mac? So we could easy get a bit of glass from Dawks, 'cos Dawks is simply awfully decent when you get to know him. 'Marnin', measter. Bist gwine down the river, like? When you be in the boat, you'll have t' anchor her up, like. Some be Red Admirals, and some be on'y Blue Admirals.' He's an awful old governor, old Dawks, the way he speaks. So then we could put in the glass, and it would look just like water, and then up at the top of all we would have a little Briton with a spear. We could make a spear out of a match-stick, and then put in a bit of flattened-out wire or something to do for the spear-head. He would do for the look-out."

"Yes," said Mac, who had waited rather a long time for a chance to speak; "and we could have little fires. You get chopped up match-sticks and paint them red for fire, and then put in cotton-wool for the smoke. And I know what we could do for their clothes."

"Some of our skins," said Robin. "We've got a lot of skins. We got threepence a dozen for clearing the moles out of the mill-stream field. We got twenty-one moles. We got them with springs, just like real mole-catchers. Moles are very easy beasts to strangle. They die at once if you give them a squeeze. So we skinned them, and then we caught a lot of field-mice in the kitchen-garden. They're awfully pretty little things. It seems a shame to kill them, only they do such harm in a garden. They dug up every pea we planted—every single pea—so we had to catch them. We've got lots of skins which

we could cut up to make dresses for the Britons, and we could have some of the wooden animals out of that toy farm we used to have when we were boys. They would do for the Britons' herds. We could pretend they had their herds penned up somewhere in the village, or we might make the cleft big enough in the model to hold the cattle."

"Very well," said Mr. Hampden, "we'll make a plan of the village, and then, when we go back, we'll make that model of it. You'll find it very good fun, but very finicky and worrying work making little model huts. But anything which makes the fingers deft is very good indeed for the brain, so I shall offer a prize for the best hut-maker."

"But what were the huts like, sir ?"

"Well, you've seen the huts which the gipsies use on Crookidean ?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, you make the huts in something the same way —a rounded sort of beehive arrangement. We'll find all the curios we can among these hut-hollows. When we go back, we'll arrange them in some sort of a cabinet. When do you go back to school ?"

"Eighteenth of September, sir."

"Well, look here : Waters Orton's bazaar in aid of the cricket club will be on the eleventh of September—that gives us a good four weeks. Now, suppose we make up our minds to have an ancient Briton stall at the bazaar ? We'll exhibit whatever we find here, and we'll exhibit our model of the village. We'll charge a penny a look, if you like."

" No, twopence, sir—twopence. Nothing's a penny at a bazaar."

" Very well, then—twopence. And we'll set to work to make a very good map of the hill. I'd better do that. I'm rather a good hand at a map. I'll do the map, and I'll have a picture of the Romans storming it, if you like, in one of the corners."

" Yes, sir—yes. I say, won't that be splendid ?"

" And then we'll try to write a little book about what we know of the ancient Britons and about what it feels like living on Brown Willy, for I expect we're the only people alive who have tried to live in this old place. We'll print what we write on my little printing-press. We'll make little books of it, and offer them for sale at sixpence each."

This set the boys careering round with leaps of joy. To leap aloft and whack the earth with a trowel at each descent helps to express delight. The boys saw a ravishing prospect opening down the future of the holidays.

" Don't go quite wild about it," said Mr. Hampden. " We'll go down to the camp now to rest for a time. We'll have stories about pirates for a time. Do you like pirates ?"

" Yes, sir—yes. Tell us about Captain Flint, sir."

" Flint ?" said Mr. Hampden. " Oh yes ; Captain Flint, to be sure. I don't know that anything much is known of Flint, by thunder ! I suppose he lived in a place called New Orleans. I expect it was a little old ramshackle town then, with one street of ramshackle houses, with the shutters all off them. And just across the street was a great row of ships moored to the shore

"'Are you Flint?'"

with their jib booms overhanging the road, so that you could walk along and touch the figure-heads. And Flint lived in that street in the Adventure Inn, when he was at home from a cruise. And one day, when he was sitting in the Adventure Inn drinking rum, there came a knock at the door, and in came a boy dressed like a ship's boy, but all in rags, and he was wounded and dying. He just leaned across the table and held out a little silver casket.

" 'Are you Flint ?' he said.

" 'Yes,' said Flint ; 'I am, by thunder !'

" 'D'you remember Constanza ?' said the boy. 'She told me to give you this.'

" Now, years before, long before Flint became a pirate, he had been in love with Constanza ; but she wouldn't marry him, because she thought he was rather a bad lot. He gave her a casket with his picture inside it before he went away to sea, after she had refused him. He told her that if she was ever in danger or in need of him he would come to her if she sent him the casket. Now here was the casket, and Constanza wanted him.

" 'Where is she ?' he said.

" But the boy had been wounded by Red Indians on his way across the prairie. He just held out a hand and pointed, and then he drew out an arrow-head from his side and drew a map with his blood on the table, and just as he was finishing the map he stood up and gave a great shout.

" 'Three days !' he shouted—'three days !'

" And then he dropped down dead. But here we are at the camp. I must tell you the rest some other time."

Towards supper-time Mr. Hampden set the boys to work. He told off Mac to bring in as much firewood as he could find.

"Bring a great deal," he said, "for we're going to have night-watches, and you may be cold. You may want to make yourself cocoa in the night."

Robin was set to fetch water from the spring, pass it through the filter, boil it in the kettle when filtered, and then pour it into a bucket. He was told to keep a good fire going. Mr. Hampden went off by himself to set snares for rabbits. He knew that by six o'clock the rabbits would be coming out of the cover to feed on the grass of the lower slopes. He set two wires in meuses leading through the hedge. When he had done this, he wondered what relish Nature had to offer to the wild man. There were pig-nuts. But pig-nuts are an earthy fruit, not very pleasant if the boy who eats them has not the excitement of finding them. Blackberries were hardly ripe yet. There were a very few late wild-strawberries. The nuts were going to be very plentiful, but they were not yet ripe. He had read in a book of voyages that the roots of English burdock could be eaten boiled. There were many big burdocks growing in the coarse ground near the bog. Their roots would be as big as carrots, he thought. He did not like to pick them, because he was not quite sure that what he called burdock was called burdock in the seventeenth century. The names of plants change. The marigolds of to-day are not the marigolds of Shakespeare's time. He distrusted a weed on principle. A thing which grows easily in this climate is not likely to be of much use as a food for man.

In the end he gave up the thought of vegetables. As the rabbits scorned his wires, he had also to give up the thought of rabbit. The camp supper consisted of sardines, bread and butter, Dutch cheese, and cocoa. After the wash-up, the boys had great fun in making themselves spears to be their weapons during the night-watches. Each cut a long straight ash-pole from the hedge, sharpened the end, and then hardened the point in the fire. When they had done this, they passed a happy half-hour in digging in the ground to find the ends of the old palisades with which primitive man had fenced his cattle-pens. They found three bits of shrivelled wood standing in the line that the palisade must once have taken. They laid the treasure reverently to one side, with the spoils which they had dug up during the afternoon. Mr. Hampden then called up the boys to make the round of the camp. It was seven o'clock ; it was drawing near to sunset. Mr. Hampden wanted to make all secure for the night. They had got together a good load of wood ; they would be able to keep the fire going all through the night. Mr. Hampden looked at the water-supply, and then discussed with the boys how they should manage the night-watches.

Chapter XVIII

'SAILORS set their first watch at eight o'clock at night," he said. "The first watch lasts till midnight; then there is the middle watch, which lasts from midnight till four o'clock; then comes the morning watch, which lasts from four till eight. The first watch is the easiest to keep, the middle watch the hardest, and the morning the pleasantest. But four hours is rather a long time for you boys to watch. It's light soon after half-past three. There is no need for us to keep watch at all. But I suppose you'd like the fun of the thing. Suppose you each stand an hour of the middle watch, from twelve to one, and from one to two? I shan't turn in much before midnight. I want to be in the woods at night. I am trying to find out if the hooting of the owls fascinates the wood-mice. I can't help thinking it does. Suppose you boys turn in at eight, and then I'll call one of you at midnight. How would that suit you?"

It suited the boys very well, all but that piece about going to bed at eight o'clock. The hill air had made them very fresh. In spite of the hard work, they were not

inclined towards bed. They, too, wanted to wander in the woods after dark, and they determined secretly that they would stand the whole middle watch like real good grown-up sentries. None of your one hours for two ancient Britons, who were going to learn how to make woad neckties. They would just show Mr. Hampden.

"And please, sir, couldn't we come to find out about the wood-mice? 'Cos we were in the Rectory Wood the other night at about half-past eight. We'd been having supper at the Rectory, and we were coming home through the wood, and the Rectory owl was making that chacking noise. He was chacking like anything. He didn't seem to be flying about, but just chacking. And the wood was just alive with wood-mice. They were everywhere. There must have been fifty or a hundred. They were darting everywhere."

"It's very curious," said Mr. Hampden, "that the owl should be so noisy when he goes hunting. Most creatures keep quiet. Come on, now. We'll get the beds made up, and put the cover on the tent."

When this had been done, he told the boys to put a kettle, a cup or two, the biscuit-tin, and the cocoa ready to hand near the fire, so that a night-guard who felt cold might have refreshment during the night. It struck a little cold after the sun had set. The boys were glad of their sweaters. They drew near to the camp-fire, which burned up brightly in the dusk. Mr. Hampden had rolled up a few logs of wood for seats. They sat round the blaze, while Mr. Hampden finished his tale of Flint and Constanza. When the story was finished they went into the wood, but the owls had disappeared by then.

Whatever owls there were were hunting far away in the valley. Their faint hooings sounded from far away now and then. None came near Brown Willy. At nine

" They sat round the blaze."

o'clock the party returned to camp. The boys were ready to turn in.

" Turn in, then," said Mr. Hampden, " and I shall call you at midnight. The word will be ' Keep awake.' Mind you alarm the camp if anybody fails to give the

word. I've stuck a bit of candle in the tin there. You can light it while you undress. You need only take your boots and coats off. And now, good-night."

In the snug hut the boys felt the delight of camping more keenly than they had ever felt it. They sat on their soft heath beds while they pulled off their boots. They rolled their coats and waterproofs into neat pillows, wrapped themselves in their blankets, and then sat up, propped on their elbows, to look out into the night through the hut-door. They could see a few stars over the branches of the wood. They saw the glow of the fire. A little spirt of fire leaped from an ember. It made many queer shadows flicker out from the camp gear arranged before it. The shadows gave the boys the feeling that they were really ancient Britons, not modern boys at all. Surely, long ago, but still some time or another, they had lain in such a hut, among the huts of the tribe, watching the flickering of the camp-fires. They seemed to remember all sorts of things which they had long forgotten. They found themselves listening for noises ; they felt that their spears were near at hand.

" I know what I shall try to do," said Robin, " before that bazaar comes off. I shall try to boil up a lot of woad, and then, when I get the blue colour, I'll paint a doll with it, 'cos that would be a curiosity, 'cos I don't believe anybody really knows what woad is like. And another thing we might try, which would be rather fun. We'll get all sorts of plants and things, and see if we can get dyes like the dyes the Britons had. You get gorse-blossom and lichen, and then you boil them up or something. We'll easy find out, and then we'll dye handker-

chiefs green and yellow and blue. We could sell them at the bazaar."

"Yes," said Mac, "and how'd it be if we tried to make some poisons?"

"I don't think we'd better do that," said Robin, "'cos you might get some into a crack, and then you swell up and turn all blue. Poisons are awful things. But we might try to find out that thing (it was about as big as a nut) which the Britons had. It kept them from feeling cold or hungry or thirsty."

"Yes; that would be something like," said Mac.

"I think we'll go to sleep now," said Robin.

"I vote we do. It's jolly comfortable on this heath."

"Yes. Are you warm enough?"

"Yes; plenty. Good-night."

"Good-night."

They felt that they had only slept about ten minutes when Mr. Hampden woke them by lighting the candle.

"Now, midnight," he called. "Come on. Are you going to stand your watch?"

They rolled over crossly, and propped themselves up on their elbows. A night-watch seemed a much less delightful thing when it happened like this.

"Out you come," said Mr. Hampden. "If you're not out in five minutes, when I come back, cold pig."

They turned out as soon as he had gone. They blinked at each other as they pulled on their boots. As they sat up on their beds, waiting for they knew not what, they almost fell asleep again. Mr. Hampden called to them to bring their waterproofs and come out into the open. They came out, trailing their spears. They put on their

waterproofs, not quite knowing what they were doing. It struck very fresh out there in the night. The stars were bright. All the sky was bright with a dust of stars. The boys blinked at the stars, then noticed the camp-fire still ruddy, then stared into the night, not yet properly awake.

"What's the word ?" said Mr. Hampden.

"Keep awake," said Robin.

"Well, mind you do," said Mr. Hampden. "You go up on to the spur there and look out for the enemy."

The boys saluted silently, and stumbled up the spur together.

Up on the spur, after the first half-hour had passed, they found themselves wide awake. They enjoyed it ; it was something so new. They had never been out in the wild at night before. It was not so awesome as they had expected. They could see the outlines of things pretty clearly. Brown Willy was black to one side ; the woods were black below. They felt that in a little time they would be able to train their eyes to see things in the night, as the cats see them. The wind had freshened. They were glad of their waterproofs. They faced the wind, letting it blow them wide awake. Presently, when the mood took them, they went down to the camp-fire, heaped on more wood, made cocoa, and then sat upon logs drinking it, with an open biscuit-tin between them.

"We'll have jolly fine fun making that model," said Robin.

"It'll be rather a swot," said Mac.

" Mr. Hampden said he'd pay us for all the work we do upon it."

They talked in low voices, for Mr. Hampden had told them that sailors on watch always keep very quiet, lest they should wake the sleepers. They did not want to wake Mr. Hampden, who, as they supposed, had turned in for the night. As a matter of fact, Mr. Hampden was a night-bird with a taste for roving in the dark. He had gone down into the wood again to watch a fox's earth.

" If we were to go ahead at it," Robin continued, " we'd perhaps get half a sovereign, and we could save up our pocket-money and buy one of those long brass cannon. They cost about ten shillings. And we could get a tin of powder and fire it off. We could put the old tin gunboat Uncle Jarvis gave us in the pond in the orchard—she was never any good—and then we could blaze away at her till we sank her. And then perhaps we could hike her out, and patch her up with clay or something, and then sink her again. So I vote we work like billio at the model."

" All right," said Mac, " and get all the things we can by digging in the huts here."

They talked on excitedly for rather more than an hour. Mr. Hampden found them there when he returned from the wood. They offered him cocoa.

" I hope you've been keeping your eyes open," he said, " because directly we get back to civilisation you'll have to start that book we talked about. And now you go and turn in. It's getting on for three o'clock, and you'll have a hard day to-morrow. Into bed with you. I'm going to roll up in a blanket in front of the fire."

Four weeks later, the visitors at the Waters Orton Bazaar were much impressed by a map and model of Brown Willy, and by a couple of big glass cases full of remains from the British village. Nothing very interesting was among the remains. They were mostly spindle-whorls, broken bone-needles, bits of pottery (one of them rather a big bit containing some of the bones of a hare), and withered pieces of charcoal. They were described in a printed twopenny catalogue, which was one of the attractions of the bazaar.

"THE BRITISH VILLAGE ON BROWN WILLY,

AND HOW IT FELT TO BE AN ANCIENT BRITON.

By Three of the Villagers,"

was the heading on the title-page. At the end were some advertisements.

" People who are interested in Ancient British Customs may have their handkerchiefs dyed yellow in British Dye for sixpence each handkerchief. Apply, the Keeper of the model village.

" N.B.—The dyers hope soon to have the secret of dyeing with woad, only woad isn't very common round here.

" Look ! Look ! Look ! Model dyed handkerchiefs.
Only sixpence this style."

The handkerchief was marked " R. Shenstone." It was of a sickly yellow colour, with deep orange bands where the dye had run upon it. Only two people (both of them young ladies bribed by Mr. Hampden) supported that

particular ancient British custom. But the book sold well, and over a hundred people paid the extra twopence to have the relics and model explained to them.

Three days after the bazaar Uncle Jarvis's gunboat was riddled to the likeness of a sieve by a magnificent brass M. L. Parrot gun, which would put a catty-bullet through tin at a range of at least five yards.

Chapter XIX

NE day, after the return from camp, Mr. Hampden suggested that the two boys should set to work to make a chart of the river from the bridge which blocked the way upstream to the farther end of the lake.

"If you were real sailors," he said, "instead of a pair of young pirates, you'd have done that long ago."

"Please, sir," the boys said, "we don't know how to make a chart."

"What?" said Mr. Hampden. "Don't you make maps at school in your geography lessons?"

"Yes, sir," said the boys; "but we only copy maps in our atlases, or draw them from what we remember of the maps in our atlases."

"That isn't much good to you," said Mr. Hampden. "A map ought to be a record of a place of actual use to the people who make it. Don't you ever make maps of the school-grounds, or of the village near by, or of the places where you can always find birds'-nests?"

"No, sir."

"Could you tell the points of the compass wherever you might be?"

" No, sir," said Mac.

" I think," said Robin, " the north would always seem to be in front, and the east to the right, as they are in maps."

" Yes," said Mr. Hampden ; " they are in maps, I know. But you wouldn't go very straight if you acted on that theory in making a map for yourself. The first thing you must know in making a map is the bearing ot one place from another ; so let's get the motor-boat out. We'll go upstream, and start a chart of the river. Here's a drawing-book with plenty of leaves in it. I dare say you've got a pencil between you. We'll see how near the truth we can get."

It was a fine, hot August day. The English country was at its best. The osiers rustled coolly ; the kingfishers darted like flying jewels. There was a murmur aloft of all the multitudinous life which drones and buzzes in the summer air like the world humming as it spins. The world seemed at peace all about the boys as they threshed upstream, but it was not really at peace. Birds, wasps, dragon-flies, and innumerable lesser murderers, darted, and hovered, and killed, as though the fine weather were only sent to make murder easy, when food was a little more plentiful than when the cold struck. Kestrels hovered here and there, poising deliberately, then wheeling away with a sudden swift fluttering and long sweep. Over in the wilderness a weasel was chasing a rabbit. The boys could hear the beast screaming almost like a human being, screaming from fear, not from pain, long before the little red devil leaped upon its back to kill it. Shoals of tiny fishes flickered upstream over the

shallows as the boat approached. In the sun the shallows rippled like gold. A dragon-fly poised a moment on Mr. Hampden's head as he steered ; a snake on the bank whipped itself into a hole ; a water-rat swimming hard downstream, with eyes staring, intent on some business, dived suddenly, making a little hollow wallop in the water. A moment later there was a stirring in the mud near the bank where he took to ground.

Presently the boat drew alongside the bank near the cattle-ford which led across the river just below the bridge. From there the boys could see down the long straight stretch of the river, which they called Long Reach. They could see the queer old cottage, with a high-pitched roof, which stood on the slope above the bend. William Jones, the tenant of the cottage, was working in his garden. They could just see that it was William. He seemed to be swarming his bees. A farm-team came clinking to the ford, and slopped slowly across. A ruddy lad, whose legs dangled down the horse's side, eyed them with a grin. His horse, mouthing the water, raised his dripping muzzle as though considering the bouquet. It was high summer everywhere. The drone of the yellow-hammer on the spray (so clear the little bird was against the burning dim blue of the heaven) made a kind of sleepy music above the drone going on in the air. Heat-haze was shimmering on the cornfield, though it was not yet twelve o'clock. The smell of the meadowsweet was drowsy sweet about every ditch.

" Now," said Mr. Hampden, " this is the last navigable point. We can't get the boat any farther upstream, because there's no water, and even if there were, we

couldn't get through the bridge ; so here we'll begin our work. The first thing to do is to find out the points of the compass. Let's have your watch, Mac. Take it off the chain. Now lay it on the open leaf of the drawing-book, up at the corner. Now turn the hour-hand to the sun. Your watch makes it twenty-five minutes past eleven, I see. The sun is still a little to the east of south. Now the south point lies exactly between the hour-hand and the twelve-o'clock mark of that watch. Here's a pencil. We'll just make a circle round the watch. That will draw a neat compass for us." He rapidly traced round the watch with a pencil, and marked the south point with a dot. "There," he said, "thank you, Mac. You can put your watch away now. Here we have a compass all ready drawn. All we've got to do is to mark the other cardinal points. North must be opposite south, and east and west must be here and there, mustn't they ? Now, this reach is very nearly straight for a quarter of a mile. Cast your eye along it, and tell me in what direction it runs, now that you know your cardinal points."

After some trouble the boys came to the conclusion that the river ran from something north of west to the south of east, but as they did not know the intermediate points of the compass Mr. Hampden had to mark them on the chart.

"Well," he said, "we'll call it west by north to east by south. Now settle how big a piece of the reach you will chart on each leaf of the book here. A hundred yards will be ample. That will be just twenty-five of this boat's lengths, or a little less than five cricket-

pitches. Now, if you were making the map in earnest, to be of use to your fellow-men, what would you put in ?"

" It would depend whether it was for landsmen or watermen," said Robin, " wouldn't it ?"

" Well, for landsmen, what would you put in ?"

" The breadth of the river," said Robin.

" The depth of the ford," said Mac, " and how high the floods go. The floods go right over the road in a bad thaw, so Jarge says. But I've never seen it up above the arches, have you, sir ? Jarge is a yarner ; he always was a yarner. And I suppose I'd put in whether there's another ford, and who the ground belongs to, and . . . I don't know if there's anything else . . . whether the ground's clay. But it's all clay. And where you hit the road to Waters Orton, and where the Upton Bridge Road hits it. The river isn't very important to landsmen, if you come to think of it, is it, sir ?"

" And supposing it were big enough for ships," said Mr. Hampden—" supposing ships could come up here from the sea—what would you put in ?"

" The depth of all the water," said Robin, " or otherwise they might stick in the mud."

" Yes," said Mr. Hampden ; " you'd certainly want the depth, and you'd want to know the breadth, and the nature of the bottom, and a lot of other details—where you could get good fresh spring-water, and where your ship could come alongside to load, and what big trees or hills or houses her men would have to keep in a line in order to keep in a safe channel. Then you would have to mark the average rise of the floods, and the way the floods scoop out the river-bed, and where all the snags

and sunken dangers are. Now, here is a leaden plummet, just like the plummet used by real chart-makers, only not so heavy. You see that at the bottom of it there is a lump of grease let into the lead. That is what is called the arming. When the lead is dropped into the water the plummet goes to the bottom, and the arming receives some mark from whatever is at the bottom. If the bottom be rocky, the grease gets scratched; if muddy, the mud sticks to the lead; if sandy, sand gets into the hollows of the grease; if shelly, scraps of shell stick into the grease. The depth of the water can be told by a glance at marks on the line. The marks are of red, white, and blue cloth, leather, knots, etc., and a look at the arming shows the nature of the bottom. Now, if the depth of the water and the nature of the floor below it be known (and known to be constant), the seaman or waterman can grope his way along quite confidently on the darkest night by the use of the lead alone. He puts a skilled waterman to heave the lead, takes his chart of the passage he is making, and compares the leadsman's results with the figures and letters on the chart.

"Now, you are not ship captains in charge of a valuable cargo; and this boat will stand all the knocks this river is likely to give her; but if you were in a tidal river, taking a precious ship to her berth, you would have to handle her as if she were glass. For a ship may be anything from five hundred to twenty thousand tons, and her cargo may weigh anything to about a third as much again; and a weight of that sort, if it strikes anything, strikes it with fearful force—with the force of its own weight multiplied by its speed. A ship of ten thousand

"A skilled waterman to heave the lead."

tons, going ten miles an hour, would strike a rock or shoal with an impact of one hundred thousand tons, which is, of course, a force that cannot be imagined. It is something too awful for the mind to conceive. It would crumple up her plates like brown paper. Perhaps you have seen the bows of an iron ship which has been in collision ? The plates are all crunched and rolled like so much paper. I have seen the half of a ship which had been cut in two by the force of such a blow. So you will realise that the makers of charts have to take the utmost care lest they leave any danger unmarked in their work. Here is a little bit of a chart of an English harbour. With all these soundings and buoys and bearings, anyone could bring up a ship to anchor by daylight ; and at night there are all these lights, and in foggy weather these sound-signals noted at the foot.

" Now set to work, and see what sort of a chart you can make of this bit of the reach. You might make a note to begin with something like this : ' The depth of water noted on this chart is that of a normal August. Highest recorded flood is . . . so many feet higher ; usual depth is . . .' Come, what is the usual depth ?"

" I don't know, sir," the boys answered.

" Well, look about you. Use your eyes," said Mr. Hampden. " There's the bank, with the usual depth of water written in capitals on it. Surely you can see where the watercourse usually runs ? And there's the bridge, with notes of all the floods since 1702. Look at the stone on the middle pier. It is smeared with flood-marks. Call it four feet from the height of the normal August flow to the latest big flood. That was the big flood after

the snow two years ago, when the sheep were drowned just above my rapids—twenty-one sheep. There was a sudden thaw, with great rain. You'll remember it, perhaps. You can see from the banks that the normal height of the water is about a foot above what it is at present. Now tie this line to the plummet. I've marked the line just as an ordinary sailor's handline is marked, only the marks are all in feet instead of fathoms. You will see that the line is twenty feet long instead of twenty fathoms. I'll tell you the marks as you uncoil the line. You can repeat them after me. A little bit of black leather both at two feet and three feet ; a white rag at five ; a red rag at seven ; more black leather at ten and thirteen ; white again at fifteen, and red again at seventeen. The feet which are not marked are one, four, six, eight, nine, twelve, fourteen, and those after seventeen. These unmarked feet are called deeps, or, as it was once written, dips. When you are heaving the lead (and, by the way, I'll trouble you, while you're here, to drop it, not heave it) you ' call ' the soundings as you make them. You see what depth of water you have, and call it aloud : ' By the mark, seven '; ' By the deep, nine,' or whatever it may be. If the line of the water be not exactly at a mark or deep, you guess how far it is from it, and call out accordingly. If the depth, for instance, is seven and a half, you call out, ' And a half, seven.' If it be more than that, but still less than eight, you call out, ' Quarter less, eight.' Can you remember those funny rules ?"

" Yes, sir," said Mac ; " but I don't see how you're to tell the depth on a dark night."

" Oh, it is easy enough," said Mr. Hampden. " The

leadsman has always good eyes as well as a lantern. After a little practice he can tell pretty well what marks have run out from his hand, almost without looking. He is, of course, some little distance above the water when he heaves, and he allows for that length of line when he hauls in after heaving ; otherwise, if the ship be fairly steady, and the waves not very big, there is no difficulty at all. But the act of heaving needs practice ; that is why I told you not to do it in the boat here. You sway your lead to and fro like a pendulum till you get it going at a good speed ; then you swing it over your head once or twice. When it is in full motion you heave it as far forward as you can into the wash of water at the ship's bows, and let the weight of the plummet carry the line out till it reaches the bottom. You notice the depth of water as the line straightens out vertically under you. It takes some practice to do it well—in fact, nothing can be really well done at first without practice. Beginners are very liable to get the plummet down on their skulls when they first try to swing it right round. As it weighs from seven to nine pounds, this is not very pleasant, especially if you are swinging with a long line.

" Now begin at the ford, and find the depth of water in the river. Draw pencil-lines on your paper to mark the general trend of the river according to the compass. Draw them faintly, for afterwards, when you draw the actual lines of the banks, you'll want to rub the lines out. They will give you the general trend of the river, and you will then have to show how the banks vary from the general trend. You will have to fill your map with all sorts of information—depth of water, strength of current,

places where the current is bad, places where there is a back-wash, the bearings of different objects on the shore likely to help navigators—all sorts of things. Now you put me ashore here. I'll measure out a stretch of ten yards from the bridge down the stream. That will be a tenth part, won't it, of your first sheet of chart, or about an inch and a quarter of river on your drawing? You will have to make very neat tiny figures, or you will get your work out of scale. I'm going ashore."

He jumped ashore from the bow, and set to work to measure ten yards from the bridge and down the stream.

" Here," he said, driving an osier-withy into the ground of the bank, " this is your ten-yards' mark. Now you get to work on your chart. I'll be back in about half an hour with some lunch."

He waved his hand to them as he set off up the road. After a few steps he turned.

" By the way," he called, " don't fiddle with the motor. You can poke the boat about quite easily with the quant."

He passed quickly up the road, round the bend, towards Dick's Hill. The two boys looked at each other.

" I know what I shall do first," said Mac, after they had agreed that the lunch idea was a jolly good one. " I shall just sit down and draw in the outlines of the banks from here, and then fill in the water afterwards."

" No ; I wouldn't do that, if I were you," said Robin, " because we've only got a space of twenty lines for the whole ten yards—two lines to a yard. Let's do what we do at school when we want to do a specially good map for old Jouncer. Let's measure everything. We'll

measure all those little bays in the banks, and then put them in, just as they are, to scale, and get the direction right by the compass. I say, I wish we'd got a real compass. It's such a swot having to do it all with your watch. We'd better begin by getting the actual breadth at the bridge, measuring by the lead-line."

"I forgot we had the lead-line," said Mac. "I was wondering how we were going to measure anything. You're the youngest. You can do the measuring, and I'll pole. We'll measure by the bridge first." He picked up the light iron-shod quant, and nimbly thrust the boat upstream till her nose turned the mud a few inches below the bridge. "You could just lay the lead-line along the bridge parapet," he said. "That would save you the trouble of measuring from the boat."

"No," said Robin; "but that wouldn't be quite the same thing. We'll pretend the bridge is a great cliff, and we're pirates finding out about it in a boat, so that afterwards our ship could come and unload treasure. I wonder what sort of charts the pirates had."

"I don't expect they bothered much about measuring," said Mac, "except the number of paces from the mark to where the treasure was buried." A memory of the map in "Treasure Island" came into his mind. "They did little pictures on their maps," he added, "of ships under sail and whales spouting. Mr. Hampden can draw like billio. We might ask him to draw a pirate ship in the corner when the map is done, and then we could give it to mother."

"I wonder," said Robin, craning over into the mud to fix his plummet. "Now back across, Mac, so as to

stretch the line across as far as it'll go. There," he added, as the limit of the line was reached, "that's twenty feet to this mark on the stone. Now I'll do it foot by foot. Back away, I say. There goes a pike. I say, Mac, under this arch must be a fine place for a pike. I wonder if we could get him with a spoon. They're generally so awfully wily. I wonder, if we crept up with gaffs, we could harpoon him. We could make harpoons out of sticks, and put nails at the end, or try to make them out of fish-bones, like Mr. Hampden says they do in Australia."

"I don't suppose we could really," said Mac. "Pike go so quick. It takes years of practice to spear fish. We might try, though. It would be fun to catch him first go off. I expect he'd kick about a good deal, unless we got him through the heart. But we should want barbs on our harpoons, or he might easily wriggle off. I don't see how we could manage the barbs, unless we got a bit of salmon-spine and sharpened the end, and used that. That would have prongs sticking out."

"We'd have to be careful," said Robin, "for I believe bone barbs are simply awful poison. You get lockjaw even from a scratch. That makes forty-three feet right across the river. The ford makes it broad. Forty-three feet. Threes into forty-three goes fourteen times and one over. That's fourteen yards one foot, or twenty-eight lines and a scrap on the chart. I say, we've got to make our chart on a jolly small scale. Well, here's a beginning. The bridge runs from south south-west. I say, do pay attention, Mac. You're always mooning."

"I'm not always mooning. I'm looking in this mud

for otter-tracks. Jarge says there are otters here, as well as water-ousels. Talking about water-ousels, I know one thing this chart-making 'll teach us—all the best bathing-places."

"Yes," said Robin ; "there ought to be some clinking reaches along here. Only there's the weed. Weed's jolly dangerous. That ass Barnby said a fellow was drowned at his place last summer by going bathing where there were weeds. Now, do look here, Mac. What do you make the bridge ? I say it runs south south-west and north north-east. Take out your watch and try."

"Yes, near enough," said Mac, squinting at the sun across his watch-glass. "Put the bridge in on the map, and then I'll pole you out while you take the soundings. I say, I vote we go home and get that little pocket-compass I won in the hundred yards. You'll never get it in exactly just by a watch."

Robin shook his head. "Can't," he said. "We might if we'd our own boat, but not with this thing. We'd have to pole her, and it's so deep under the cliffs there. We'd never get her back. But I know what. How'd it be if we . . . Lend me your sixpence. I know what. I'll make a lot of little tiny compasses all over the paper. The sixpence will make the circles, and then I'll pencil in the points. That'll help when I put the banks in."

Chapter XX

E was a deft little boy, with a neatness of mind which showed itself unexpectedly in ways of thought seldom followed by boys. He drew his little circles with the aid of the sixpence.

"Now," he said, "we'll start sounding. I'll bet you the water's deepest where the current's strongest—under this second arch. The mud must get gouged out and shoved aside by the pier or carried down."

Mac shoved the boat out till she danced in the cockle below the arch. "All very well your taking soundings," he said, "but how are we to fix the exact place of each sounding?"

This was a hard question. One hole in the water seemed very like another hole. This time it was Mac who solved the problem.

"I know what," he said. "We'll have to take the bearings by the compass. One bearing from in front, and one from some place at the side. We could take that old willow, where the hornets'-nest was, for one of our marks."

"Yes," said Robin, "that's right; and the points

above the centres of the bridge arches would do for the other. We'll begin opposite the centre of the first arch here. I make that to bear due west, and . . . Oh, hold the boat steady, Mac ; the current's just pulling her off. That's better. Now, steady a minute. The tree's north-east. Pole her up a little bit, or she'll be carried down."

Mac thrust with his pole, and Robin dropped his plummet into the water.

"And a half three," he called. "Or do you think it's nearer four ? Keep the boat from drifting, Mac. She's going downstream like one o'clock. Now you'll have to pole her up till I've got the bearings right again. Give her another shove. Yes ; it's three and a half opposite the arch, and within three lines of the bridge. Now then, edge her to the side a bit. We'll get the shallow at the back of the pier."

"Hold on," said Mac. "What have you got on the arming ?"

"Looks like fine sand," said Robin. "Fine sand, sort of. A sort of fine, fresh-water sand. There's a kind of a goldeny look on this."

"Is it heavy ?" Mac asked. "'Cos gold sand is heavy."

"There's not enough of it to tell," said Robin. He weighed the probable difficulty of getting a larger quantity, and decided to damp the project with, "But I don't suppose it's gold really."

"No ; I don't suppose it is," said Mac. "It'd be known about if it was gold. People go about the world looking at places like this to see if there's gold. There used to be gold in England in the rivers. I know about that, 'cos old Jouncer said something about it when we

were doing lessons. But it's all said to be worked out now or forgotten about. It's generally higher up in the hills."

Bit by bit the boys worked out the soundings of their ten yards of water. When they had taken about fifty soundings they had come to have a good knowledge of

"The boys worked out the soundings."

how the water was spread upon the river-bed. First, at the bridge, three deepish channels gouged in freshets through the sand by the rush of the current through the arches; then the shallow stretch of the ford, almost uniformly two feet six, but tapering away to golden-brown shallows at both sides; then a contraction of the stream into the breadth which it maintained all down

the reach, with a gradual deepening to four feet, with sudden mysterious drops to five feet and inexplicable patchy shallows.

"I don't understand these shallows," said Robin, as he paused to mop his face. "Look here, Mac. There's a great deep pot-hole, a good five feet three, right in the middle here, and it goes down quite suddenly out of a shallow. Turn the boat's head to the bank opposite the stump there. Now upstream. Look at this. The depth is barely three. Now you try downstream on your side. You see, you get more than five. You can even work along the edge of the pot-hole, and find out how it lies. Look here ; here it is still—a sort of bar in the river-bed. I say, isn't chart-making interesting ? Yes ; the bar points right across in an almost straight line. I say, Mac, we shall be able to know what goes on under the water. We'll be like the water-rangers in that story. And won't it be fun coming out after a flood to find out what the flood's done ? Here, this is the end of the bar, whatever it is. There must be a bar of something big, ten or twelve feet long, lying across the river-bed. Lend us the quant, or jab it down to see what it feels like. I can only get soft sandy mud and little black bits of sodden leaf on the arming."

"Feels like something hard," said Mac, probing with the quant. "It feels like a great big log of a sodden tree."

"It would probably be a willow-tree, then," said Robin. "It can't be an alder, for alders don't have big trunks. I expect this shallow part at the end is the mud and wreck caught in what is left of the branches. This is a

danger to ships. We'll have to put it in very carefully. It seems to point almost north and south across the stream. Let the boat go downstream a bit there. Let's look at it from below to see if it shows in any way. A big thing like that ought to give some sign."

They let the boat drift for a few yards from the sunken danger. They stared out over the bows at the wrinkling water as it glimpsed in golden flots in a wind-ruffle.

"Suppose," said Mac—"suppose we were discoverers coming up a river now, and suppose we only drew three and a half feet, and we were looking out for danger."

"It doesn't show much," said Robin, "does it? And yet in a way it does. There's that smooth bit, and then a lot of little wrinkles and twists like little tiny whirlpools. Somehow the water looks different on both sides where it's the usual depth. This is one of the places Mr. Hampden meant when he said that . . . what was it? . . . about keeping the houses in a line in order to get safely to an anchorage. I know what we'll do. We'll sound out the best passage past the danger. We'll try getting round the south end first, and note down what marks keep us in the deepest channel. I say, mustn't it be exciting to be really doing it in a big ship in a place where no one has ever been before?"

"Yes," said Mac; "but I should think it would be too anxious to be exciting. It would be horrible to get stuck far from home."

He quanted the boat carefully to the southern channel, while Robin glanced from the water to the watch, which lay on the thwart in front of him, and from the watch to the points from which he took his bearings.

" Deep enough on this side," he called. " Almost all of it four feet, and it keeps pretty deep right up to the bank. Shove her up to the bank ; I want to get a sounding of it. No ; shove her off again : we'd ground."

He was busy for a moment with his pencil and compasses.

" That's it," he said—" that's the south channel. You keep dead for the south arch, as close to the middle as you can, and the danger-line is anything to the north of the pier north of it. It's a pity the bottom doesn't vary more. I'd like to come here at night—wouldn't you ?—and just find my way by sounding and looking at the arming. I vote we ask mother if we may some night."

" Yes, I vote we do," said Mac. " I expect really the bottom varies a good deal," he added ; " only the arming isn't a very good thing for a river like this. The plummet isn't heavy enough, and it doesn't go down hard enough. We ought to have a sort of tin can tied to a sinker, and then dredge with that. That'd be rather sport. We might find some queer things in the mud—all sorts of things. You remember that time I went to the museum in Kinchester ? Half the things there seemed to have been found in the river."

" What sort of things ?" said Robin.

" Oh, lots of things," said Mac. " I forget. There were a lot of swords, for one thing."

" Hadn't the water made them all rusty ?" Robin asked.

" They were copper swords or something," said Mac ; " and then there were Roman helmets."

" How did they get into the river ?"

"Tossed away, I expect, when the Romans were running away out of England. Or I dare say they'd come up the river in boats, and fought in the river itself, and been killed there. Julius Cæsar crossed the Thames. Perhaps these Romans were just crossing the Drowse at Kinchester."

"Were there any skulls in the helmets?" asked practical Robin.

"No; I didn't see any skulls. The fish would do for the skulls. Oh, but one helmet had a jolly big hole in it at the top. Then there was a curious thing found in some river or somewhere. It was in a ford, or a moat, or something. It was a sort of a horseshoe; only you put it on a horse to make its footmarks look like a cow's; and then the mark it made was really the wrong way round, so that people who were following you thought you were going the opposite way from what you were."

"I'd like to see that," said Robin. "That's the sort of shoe they must have used in cattle-raiding. Mother says the Welsh often came raiding cattle as far as here in the old days. I dare say there are lots of those things lying in the mud here. She says that little narrow Waters Orton Road is a Roman road, and that the Welsh used to come along it all the way from Hinton Travers."

"I know," said Mac. "There's a field down King's Orton way called Taffy's Corner, where a lot of Welsh got caught and killed. I asked Jarge about it, and he said as 'a didn't knoa much about en. Ur wur afore his time, like. But there'd come, as he heerd tell, like a lot of Welshmen, some said they was. Come stealing

the cows, like. So the Duke of Wellington, he say, " Noa draa swords." So they draa swords, all on em. Down thur by Pa'ason's field they begun, and they fought all the way along till they come to by Orton Copse, and

"'Tailor, I'm going to hang you up, like.'"

thur the Welshmen said, " Lat them cows goo, or us'll never get home." And the Duke, he says, " Up, Guards, and at 'em !" so I've heard tell. And the last Welshman left alive was Tailor Cradock, and the Duke said to en, " Tailor, I'm goin' to hang you up, like." And soa he

did, truly. He hanged him at Cradock's Tump. And that's why it's called Cradock's Tump.' Jarge is full of yarns like that if you get him alone on a Sunday."

"I wonder if he knows anything about the Romans?" said Robin. "I expect there's a lot of stories about the Romans. They came along this road. They made this road. They had a bridge over the river here, just where the bridge is now."

"I know," said Mac. "They found bits of the Roman brick when they laid this bridge two hundred years ago. It's in Penny's 'Guide-Book.'"

"Yes," said Robin; "I was wondering if they came along here when they were flying out of England. I was wondering if they flung away their helmets into the river when they were hot from running. If they did, I expect they'd be just about here, where the current from the arches stops."

"The helmets I saw were roundish," said Mac. "They'd roll a bit."

There came a hail from the turn of the road. Mr. Hampden was coming down upon them with a basket.

"Well," he said, "and how does the chart get on? Have you done it?"

"Done a good deal, sir," said Robin, while Mac thrust the boat into the bank, so that Mr. Hampden might get on board. "Only we can't put in all the soundings we would like to make. We can't make very neat figures."

"That's a pity," said Mr. Hampden, "for anybody can learn to do that, just as anybody can learn to write a neat and beautiful hand. I suppose they teach you

how to bowl a cricket-ball and how to write impositions at three hundred lines a day, do they ?"

"Yes, sir," said Robin.

"And then you leave your precious school, and go out to Canada to be farmers, and the farmer tells you to hitch up the black yoke and go and yank out a few tons of granite, so that they can get the plough through. What are you going to do then ? Write out 'Quis potis est dignum pollenti pectore carmen' three hundred times, or ask him to send you down a half-volley ?" He took the chart and looked at it with his quick critical eye. "Where are we going to lunch ?" he said. "Only prairie-oysters for lunch. But where shall we eat them ?"

"What's a prairie-oyster, sir ?" said Mac, grinning.

"A prairie-oyster," he said. "You'll soon see. You've eaten a good many in your time. Where do you generally lunch ?" He did not wait for an answer, but continued to scan the chart, with a quick glance right and left to compare the lines of the banks with Robin's version of them. "Yes, yes ; this is good as far as it goes," he said. "But you've not put in the strength of the currents, nor their direction. You haven't even marked where the currents are. You'll have to do that, and then you'll have to notice how they vary at different states of the water, and also how a quite little thing, like the fall of a brook after frost, will alter them. Now come along. Where do you generally eat your lunch when you're out together ?"

Robin was at the point of telling, when fear of Mac made him hold his tongue. He glanced at Mac for a sign that the precious secret might be revealed. He

hoped that Mac would realise that Mr. Hampden had long ago qualified by his kindness for initiation into the secret. Mac ought not to hesitate. Robin blushed to see that he did hesitate. He hesitated and blushed, and looked like a goat. Mr. Hampden smiled a little in his horrid sarcastic way. Robin could stand it no longer.

"We've got a secret camp," he said, "but it says, '*Trespassers will be prosecuted*' on the board, sir."

Mac looked daggers at his brother. His thoughts were: "You young ass! I thought I told you never to tell anybody? And our catties are in the caches and everything."

"So you don't generally invite people?" said Mr. Hampden.

"There you are," thought Mac, with enough expression on his face to make his thoughts obvious to his brother—"there you are! Now you see what you've done, and what you've let us both in for."

"I thought I'd better tell you, sir," said Robin, "because——" He stopped and blushed.

"Because I don't like trespassing? Is that what you were going to say?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, I don't. I don't like it when it's done to me, so I don't do it to other people. When a person expresses a wish that you should not do a certain thing, one ought to oblige him, within honourable bounds. If it's not asking you to betray a secret, whose land do you trespass on? I won't 'sneak,' as you call it."

"It's only old Farmer Giles's," said Mac.

"And he's only an old governor, eh ?" said Mr. Hampden. "Where is the land ? Anywhere near here ?"

"Yes," said Robin ; "it's in that waste bit like a bank only about three or four fields from here. And I know he never used the land, sir. He doesn't preserve, and he can't grow anything on it. Jarge says the land isn't worth a shilling an acre, so we don't do any harm, sir—we don't really."

"Ever pot the bunnies ?" said Mr. Hampden.

"Not since you asked us not to pot at things, sir."

This was quite true. They had not "pulled a catty" since the memorable day when they had been caught on the island.

"I see," said Mr. Hampden. "And what do you do in this famous camp ? Do you ever sleep there ?"

"No, sir," said the boys.

Wild hope rose up in their breasts that he would, perhaps, propose some scheme of "sleeping out," either there or, more glorious still, on one of the islands. To sleep in a camp, rolled in a blanket, with the stars overhead passing across the sky, and the owls calling up the valley ! To see the embers in the camp-fire turning from red to grey ! To stand sentry for an hour or two in the quaking time, when the moonlight fills the wood with ghosts ! The Brown Willy time was still bright in their minds.

"What do you do, then ?" said Mr. Hampden.

"Just cook our dinners, sir," the boys said.

Robin cocked an inquiring eye at Mac for leave to tell about the cache.

"We keep things there," said Mac—"mostly dinner things—in holes in the ground."

" Well, take me to see this camp," said Mr. Hampden.

" You'll have to crawl, sir," Mac explained hesitatingly —" in fact, it's rather a job to get there if you're afraid of tearing your clothes."

" My clothes are made for the woods," Mr. Hampden answered, " so come on."

" It's trespassing," Mac explained.

" I know," said Mr. Hampden.

" Farmer Giles says he'll . . ."

" Farmer Giles won't hurt me," said Mr. Hampden. " As a matter of fact, I bought that ground from him a couple of years ago. There was some talk of Sir David Flimflam's buying it in order to lay out a racecourse on the level there, which would have meant this country-side being flooded by all the scum of England two or three times a year, whenever there was a race-meeting. I didn't want to have that, so I stepped in and stopped it in the only way I could. So come on. I kept the sale secret, so as not to annoy Sir David. That is why you never heard about it. I hope that, when you grow up, you will never go to race-meetings."

" Please, sir," said Mac, " don't they improve the thoroughbred ?"

" For what ?"

" For going fast, sir."

" Do you think that that's important or useful ? What's the good of going fast ?"

" You get there sooner," said Mac.

" And what do you do when you get there sooner ?"

" I don't know," said Mac. " You just mess about, or do whatever you like."

"H'm!" said Mr. Hampden. "Did you ever see the array of scoundrels which musters on a racecourse? Thieves and knaves and cadgers, betting-men, sharpers, drunkards—every variety. You would think the horses the only noble things there. I hope to keep that kind of amusement out of Waters Orton."

The boys glanced at each other. Something in Mr. Hampden's face made them check their smiles. They realised that this side of horse-racing was one that had been hidden from them. The vague, thoughtless tradition of the English school had given them the impression that horse-racing was a manly pastime, and that our love of horse-racing was a sign that we were a manly people.

"Treading on your corns?" said Mr. Hampden, following their thoughts by the blankness of their faces. "Well, horse-racing *can* be a manly pastime. When the lovers of it really ride their own horses, instead of going in thousands to see other people ride, why, then I feel that it may be a good thing. One can't be quite a skunk if one cares for horses. But one must be idle, as well as rather an ass, to think that watching others do a manly thing can make one anything but empty." He stopped as the boys pulled up outside the tangle of the covert. "Now, how are we to get through this?" he asked.

"Hands and knees," said Robin. "It's not far in, but it's a bit prickly just at the beginning. We'll go first, sir, and brush the stuff aside. We've not been in lately, and it does grow so."

He began to squirm his way through the thicket, with Mac close behind him.

" I say," said Mac over his shoulder, as he began to back out, " how about wood for a fire, sir ?"

" We shan't want a fire for prairie-oysters," said Mr. Hampden, " so shove along in. I want my lunch."

A prairie-oyster turned out to be nothing more than a raw egg sucked through a hole in the shell. Mac balked at it at first, but took it on being told that Mr. Hampden had once seen a gipsy eat a dozen in three minutes for a bet of a gallon of beer. After the prairie-oyster, the boys drank ginger-beer from the bottle, and munched some chocolate biscuits, while Mr. Hampden looked at the chart and puzzled out the meaning of some of Robin's hieroglyphs at the side.

Chapter XXI

"RATHER a good map," he said. "You must finish it, and then enlarge it. Or do it on a larger scale, and finish it, with everything put in neatly—currents and their strength, and all the rest of it. Then write underneath it short accounts of what you see while you are doing it. I'll buy it from you if you do it as well as you've done this little bit. Do it from the bridge to the sandstone cliff—about a week's work, taking it easy. You'll find it gets easier as you go along. But you've got a whole month's summer holiday still coming to you. You mustn't make the mistake of going at it every day till you get stale. Spend an hour at it when you've nothing else to do. I'll pay you a sovereign for it if it's well done, and if it's badly done I'll give you what I think you deserve. It may be nothing at all. I want you to do it, because boys so often make the mistake of never really learning any bit of England thoroughly, and it is a very big mistake. England is so beautiful, and the world is so wonderful, and the more you know the more wonderful

it seems. If you were to make an exact chart of that river, with notes of all that goes on in it and about it, you would possess this country-side for ever as perfectly as one of the rabbits in the burrow here. When I was a youngster of about eighteen or nineteen I was stranded with a ship's company in a lonely reach of the Magellan Straits. I was wrecked there. The ship lost her way in a fog, and went on the rocks. We got ashore in a ship's boat, which was so dry from standing on deck that the seams all ran little rills. We were lucky to get ashore. It is a gloomy part of the world. It is all rocky hills, frosted with snow, and torn with glaciers. Here and there was a colony of birds, all so tame that we could catch them. It was very bleak and grim, living there. We rigged up a shelter out of a sail. We used to sit and shiver there, while the wind howled over us. I can tell you, the wind there takes the heart out of you. It comes up straight from the Pole, with a kind of yell which scares you. We had nothing much to drink, either, except melted snow. As for food, we had the birds, a few shell-fish, and a few very precious sodden biscuits, which had been left long before in the boat's locker. I suppose they had been put there when the ship was in dock some time, when an owner or somebody wanted to see if the boats were ready for an emergency. They were in a horrible state, but they were great dainties to us. We had no other breadstuffs. Well, there we were, in a part of the world where no ships ever came. We didn't even know the name of the reach or bay into which we had come. The Captain said he thought it was Rossey Bay, but both the mates thought it must be a part of St.

"'A sailor swarmed up and made it fast.'"

Saviour's Sound. There we were, so lost that sometimes a man would go out of the hut and wander up among the rocks, and stare at the loneliness, and then come back and cry. Lonely? You don't know what loneliness is till you look out of a hut in the morning and see an iron-grey sea sulky with frost, and the masts of your ship sticking out above the water. She had been a two-masted ship. Her name was the *Inesita*. There she was, deep in the sea, with the fish flipping in her hold, and those two iron fingers raised. We couldn't stand the sight of those two masts. In the end we rowed out with one of the boat flags, and a sailor named Jim Dane swarmed up and made it fast, so that she might cut a better figure."

The boys had often read about shipwreck, but nothing which they had read had been in the least like this. They were so interested that they sat staring at Mr. Hampden, half afraid to speak, though full of questions. So this was what shipwreck was like, this quite quiet thing. It was a matter of loneliness, lostness, and shortness of food. They had been accustomed to something much more stirring—to masts coming down, a sea roaring, and the ship high and dry, when all was done, or close to the shore, so that the shipwrecked men might have supplies. A sense that men might be left in misery like this through no fault of their own, perhaps until they died there, dashed their longing to be sailors. They had a clear mental picture of rocks by the sea looking like the bones of earth. They saw the men huddled under the weather-cloth, tucking their fingers into their arm-pits. They looked at each other, and then looked again

at Mr. Hampden, who seemed to be living it over again.

"There was a hill at the back of our camp," said Mr. Hampden. "At least, when I call it a hill, I insult hills in general. It wasn't a hill. It was a rock from which all the earth had been washed away by the weather. It was an extinct volcano, about three thousand feet high. There was no grain of earth upon it, only shale and rock, which had been frozen and buffeted till they were rotten. It was like a black cake dusted with snow instead of sugar. We called it Mount Misery. We went up it soon after we landed, hoping that it would give us our bearings. We hoped to see the channel from it, or the smoke of some steamer in the channel, or at the worst the smoke of some Indian's fire. But nothing of the kind. One could see the Sound curving and winding, and hills like Mount Misery shutting out the view, and crags, and ghastly great boulders, and never a green thing. There were always clouds, too, not very far away. We would see them banked all round us, but always thicker to the south—always rather reddish, I remember. They were not like English clouds. Clouds here are never very wicked-looking, even at times when they are full of poison from the smoke. They were like—let me see, what were they like? They were always there, and always not very far away. They gave one a feeling of being shut in. Yet, though they were never far off, they looked in a way like distant land—as though they were a kind of ghost-land into which the landscape turned. They were strange, those clouds. We used to stare at them till we believed that they were the gods of those

parts, amused at us. The worst of it was that they were always shutting down and blotting everything. They closed in twenty times a day. It would come on a thick whitish-yellow fog, wet as rain, and raw with cold—horrible!—and whenever this fog came down we couldn't see our hands in front of us."

"Did you try to get away, sir?" said Mac.

"Oh yes, we tried," said Mr. Hampden; "but first we had to caulk our boat with seaweeds, since she leaked like a sieve, and then we had to provision her. We killed a lot of stupid sea-birds. That was horrible, too, for I have always loved wild creatures. We cut them open, meaning to pickle them in salt water; but one of the men found a kind of salt pond—I suppose (though perhaps I am wrong) that it had been an arm of the sea, and that it had somehow dried up—so we salted the birds there. I am rather a good salter; but you go home and get catties, and go and kill rabbits and salt them, and live on salt rabbit for eleven days. You'll loathe the sight of a rabbit till you die. That is how I feel now towards salted penguin and Cape pigeon, and all the rest of them. When we had provisioned the boat we had to water her.

"We had only the ship's breaker, or 'barraco,' a tub containing (as far as I recollect) about fourteen gallons. In one of the boat's lockers there was a sailmaker's bag—a sort of small canvas sack with a wooden bottom. When this had been thoroughly soaked it held water well, but it was quite small. It only held about a gallon. That brought the boat's water-supply to fifteen gallons, which wasn't very much for so cold a place. Cold makes

one very thirsty. I was thirstier there than in the tropics. The throat gets dry with the cold. I remember we were always eating snow. Well, we got together storage for fifteen gallons; then the question came: Who should go in the boat? We couldn't all go. There were over thirty of us. The boat would only hold a dozen with any comfort, and I think everybody there was more than eager to be one of the first away. We spent a whole evening arguing about it, and then put it to the lot. We drew matches out of the Captain's cap, and those who got the unburned matches were to go. The second mate and ten others were the lucky ones. They were the gladdest men in camp that night. They were in great spirits. They made sure that they had only to get out of the Sound to run into the main channel where the steamers pass two or three a day. To leave that camp was only a step to getting home. I thought of buying or, rather, of trying to buy the place of one of the lucky men, but then I felt that I ought not to do so. We were all equal there, and the Fates, or Providence, had chosen to give him this chance in preference to myself. I decided that I would bear what was coming to me like the rest, so I said nothing. I went to the man whose place I had thought of buying. I gave him all the tobacco I had (I was a smoker then) to post a letter for me when he got to Punta Arenas. He was a fair-haired man of about twenty-three. Henry Drage, his name was. He came from Colchester. He was in great spirits about what he called his luck in getting a seat in the boat. Some of the others told him not to sing so loud, if he'd never been adrift in an open boat.

One old man, whose name was Jenssen, stripped his shoe —he had no socks—and showed us a foot with only two toes on it.

" ' I was in an open boat,' he said, ' off the Horn. I got me toes pinched. What do you want, going in an open boat, Henry ? You got enough to eat, plenty of water, no work to do, and your wages running on all the time. Cold ? This ain't cold. You wait till you smell the Brunswick Channel, Henry. You'll wish yourself back in the camp, me son.' Henry thought Jenssen was jealous of him for having the chance to get away.

" After the drawing of the lots, the second mate and the other officers argued and wrangled with the Captain about the course the boat should steer. They could not agree about it. They were not sure within twenty or thirty miles of where we could be. They were quite in the dark. We had been running for five or six hours at half and quarter speed in dense fog in the blindest part of the Straits, and where we were we hadn't the ghost of a notion. It is easy to say, ' Oh, why didn't you follow along the shore of the Sound till you came to the channel ?' The Sound spread out its arms like a great grey octopus. It was heart-breaking to see it. How were we to know which arm led to the channel ? We tramped along arm after arm over those miles of rotten rock. We would see the bends on ahead curving round the hills, and each bend led, as we thought, into the channel, but none did. You cannot think how cruel that branching water seemed. We called each arm by a bad name—Misery Harbour, Skunk's Delight, Disappointment, Old Footsore, The Rest Cure, The Last Place

Made, Old Contraption, etc., etc. Well, it was decided at last. They gave the second mate a course, and when day dawned he sailed with his ten hands. We lined up on the beach, and gave them three cheers, and they gave us one cheer back ; then we sang a sea-song called ‘ Rolling Home,’ which sailors are very fond of singing. After that they cheered us again in the sea-fashion, with just one cheer. We saw them get smaller and smaller as they sailed away over the reach in the very light wind. It was a still morning, with a sort of hard grey rawness on it which made all things grim. The last face I saw of them was the second mate's face. He was standing up in the stern-sheets steering the boat with an oar. He turned back and shouted something over his shoulder—something about home or cold, we couldn't quite hear what. After that they passed into a blur, all the men sitting in a line on the side, and this one man standing."

"What became of them, sir ?" said Mac. "Did they get drowned ?"

"We never saw them again," said Mr. Hampden. "They disappeared. Whether they were drowned, or starved, or run down, or wrecked, we never heard. They just sailed away into . . . who knows what ? Perhaps the natives killed them. Natives were a bad lot in those days. They cut off many poor fellows who were wrecked there. I like to think that they are all alive somewhere, though I'm afraid they were all dead before we left Port Misery. I like to think of them getting into the interior, to the settlements, to some good place or another, mining or ranching—not much chance of it, of course.

"'They sailed away.'"

" We were very melancholy after they had gone, but by the end of the day we had begun to be the brighter for it. We were so sure that they would get to the channel and be picked up by some ship. Sometimes I have thought that that is what happened—that they were picked up by some ship which never made port. I remember that we talked among ourselves about the probable length of our stay there. The boat had sailed on Wednesday morning. She would be in the channel at latest, we thought, by Thursday noon, allowing for some delay in finding the way out of the pocket where we were. Thursday, at 3 p.m., as we reckoned, would be about the time for the Pacific liner from Punta Arenas to Chile. And if the Pacific liner passed the boat in a fog or snow-squall, as she well might, there would still be the Coronel Line's boat going the other way with the Chile mail. We reckoned to be out of the place aboard a good big liner within forty-eight hours—say, by Friday night. We waited three solid weeks there.

" At first we were on tenterhooks all day long. Friday was a bad day. We were up betimes to make a smoke on Mount Misery as a sailing-mark. Most of us stayed on the Mount all the morning, going down in relays to get stuff for the fire—a kind of dry moss, a kind of peat. I don't know how to describe it. It was about the only plenty the land afforded. Towards noon we began to get anxious lest the boat or ship should come in a fog. I think all of us were a little afraid lest by some accident we should get left there. It was absurd, of course ; but misfortune often makes people childish. Soldiers often cry when they have to fall back from a position. I've

seen men cry because there was no water in the water-pan after a day in the desert. Cry? I've cried myself. One only grows up in certain things. A man's a great baby in most things till the end. Women have more sense.

"By the early afternoon we had all left the mountain for the beach. We stood about on the beach looking out up and down the Sound, but there came no trace of any ship, not even the sound of a siren. We kept talking among ourselves, saying that it wouldn't be long before she came, or making excuses for her.

"'I've known them get delayed at Punta Arenas.' Or, 'Sometimes it comes down thick off the Evangelists, so that they can't make the entrance.' Or, 'Maybe she's had a break-down.' But in our hearts we thought all the time that the boat had come to grief somewhere. At dark we built up a good fire on the beach to guide them to us if they should come in the night. A good roaring blaze ought to show for five or six miles or more. We all worked hard gathering fuel for it. We cut into the stuff with knives, and tore it out with our fingers—heaps of it, armfuls of it, enough to keep the blaze going till next day. We still hoped, of course, for the steamer, but by dark we felt that something had gone wrong. None of us said so, only nobody protested when the Captain put us back to our allowance of salted bird. Ever since the boat sailed we had been eating as much as we pleased, thinking it foolish to stint ourselves when our misery was so nearly over. Now the Captain served out the allowance twice a day. It was not a really short allowance. It came to about the size of a pigeon each in

a day. It was roughly-salted sea-bird, tasting of fish, bad oil, and salt. Sometimes we had soup of it. Many poor people here in England live on worse food—far worse. The sailors had lived harder all their lives. What made it so horrible was its sameness. It was either penguin or mollyhawk, either boiled or in soup. I mentioned shell-fish just now. We had shell-fish for the first two or three days—a sort of mean little mussel, which we tapped off the rocks with our sheath-knives. Then some of the men got very ill. They had been poisoned by the shell-fish. They were in great pain for nearly a whole day—almost convulsed with pain. The Captain said that, as a boy, he had been in Ireland during the famine. That was in 1848, when so many of the Irish poor died of starvation or of the pestilence which came later when they were weak from starvation. He said that the fishermen of his village lived on shell-fish off the rocks—'mussels and snails'—just the same as we had there in the Sound. He said that the fishermen always boiled a silver sixpence in the pot with the shell-fish when they cooked them. If the sixpence turned black, then they knew that the fish were poisonous, and threw them away. If the coin remained bright, then they knew that they might eat them without fear. I don't know if the test be sound or not scientifically. We put Chile dollars in the pot with the next batches. They always turned black. After two or three attempts we gave up gathering shell-fish. Even if the coins had kept bright we should have been afraid of them after seeing the men suffering from eating them.

"Well, we picked watches that night. Some of us

kept a bright look-out by the fire till Saturday morning. We saw nothing of any ship. Once we had a great start, thinking we heard the wash of a steamer's screws somewhere far off in the night ; but it was nothing. Two of us said definitely that they had heard a ship ; a third thought that it was like a ship's screws, but that it came from somewhere in the land. We listened with our ears close to the water's edge, but no sound came along the water. Our friends had been mistaken. Perhaps they heard a little fall of shale from one of the cliffs, or perhaps a big sea-bird or flock of birds swooped into the sea with that rushing scutter which sends them sliding twenty yards along the surface. Anyhow, it was not a ship's screws which they heard. You know, of course, how sound travels over water ? Often at night, especially in clear weather before rain, when sounds travel better than at other times, I have heard quite clearly the screws of a steamer beating past far away—so far away that her head-light, which ought to be visible for five miles in clear weather, was out of sight. That was not the only start we had during those watches. A shooting-star fell low down, and close to us (as it seemed)—so near to the water that those who saw it mistook it for a rocket. That was a lively alarm while it lasted, but it did not last long, of course. We very soon saw that we were wrong. After that nothing happened till daylight left us all free to turn in.

" Saturday was not so hard to bear as Friday. The first disappointment and the keeping awake all night left us all a little dull and stupid. It was on Sunday that the real hardships began, for then we began to look

at each other to see if anyone were going to be brave enough to say what all felt—that we were in a tight fix, without much chance of getting out of it. The Captain was a good man. He called us all up to him after mid-day dinner. Probably he thought that we should all be at our strongest and pluckiest (as men are) at about that hour. He was an elderly man—sixty-five or so—married, with a family. He gave us a lecture on the situation which did him credit. He had lost his ship; he was hardly likely to get another at his age, even if we ever reached home; he had more home ties to brood over, and a harder future to look forward to, than any of us. But he was Captain still; he was responsible for us. I can't remember that he ever showed by any sign that the cards were against us. He told us that, although the boat had not returned, we were not to give up hope on that account. He had been in and out among the Straits for thirty years, he said. If any man knew the Straits, he was the man. He had been lost in a surveying cutter in them for three days in the early sixties (so he said). There was therefore no sense in taking on about the boat's crew. The weather had been fine, for the Straits, ever since she sailed. We were to pluck up heart, and cross no rivers till we came to the water. All the same, he said, we were beginning to be melancholy, which was a sign that we hadn't enough to do. He had been wrecked before, he said (on the coast of Hayti). I remember he made us all laugh here during his account of the wreck by telling us how the Captain of his ship had come ashore without his trousers. He said that on that occasion want of work had made the crew very

melancholy, so that there had been a lot of trouble—'men drowning themselves, and silliness of that sort.' He wasn't going to have anything of that kind while he commanded, so in future we were to work. The usual work of the camp—getting fuel, killing birds, keeping the fire going, and cooking—was not enough for us. He was going to set us a new task, which he meant us to do. We were to explore along the shore of the Sound till we found out where we were. We were to split up into parties of exploration. One-third of the company was to stay in camp in case the boat should return, one-third was to go up, the other third to go down, the Sound Each exploring party was to travel for three days in its particular direction before returning to camp to report. The parties were to take what provisions they could. They were to have their share of the awning, so that they might make 'weather-cloths' or wind-screens in case it came on to blow; and, lastly, the sooner we were out of that place the better, so let us all cheer up, he said, and never mind the rotten rock, but step out boldly and find the channel. We cheered him when he finished. Afterwards we drew lots to decide which of us should go. I was drawn for the party of camp-keepers, unfortunately for myself. The Captain was quite right. Want of work does make shipwrecked people melancholy. Those black crags, and the water like steel, and the flurries of snow always blowing past—never enough to lie more than an inch, if as much, but always dusting down, fine and dry, on that dry cold wind from the Pole. Ugh! that was a horrid place! It lowered at one, and almost every day it started to blow a short, howling

south-wester which loosened your joints. A whirl of snow driving everywhere in a yell of wind which was like death. And nothing very much to do except to sit still to watch the snow coming from the Pole on the south-wester.

"Well, at last I've come to the point to which I wanted to come. I learned then that I had wasted my time from my youth up. I had been to school—to an English school, that is—where I had learned to play cricket and to write very bad Latin verses. I had been for about a month at Oxford, when my health gave way; and now, for the first time, I was face to face with something which really taxed my mind, and showed me where I was empty. Some of my education had given me a tough, active body; another part of it had made me cheerful, and able to take whatever came without grumbling and troubling; but when I came to overhaul my mind for something to amuse me and take me out of myself, I found that I had very little—less even than the sailors. The sailors knew how to make things with their hands; they knew how to sing, how to dance step-dance, and how to endure. Whatever they knew, they knew thoroughly. It was a part of their lives. Whatever I knew, I knew partially. It was something I had read in a book. You must remember, too, that I was a landsman—the only landsman there. I was rather looked down on by everybody.

"Well, I had to find my amusement in myself, or go melancholy mad, like the men in the Captain's story. I set to work to imagine my home in the country. Whenever I was not working at my share of the camp duty, I

was imagining the country which I knew as a boy. It was nothing very wonderful, of course. It was a little piece of Shropshire with a radius of about three miles, more or less. But it was England and home and whatever was dear to me. I went over every little bit of it time and time again. I tried to reconstruct that countryside in every detail, to make it real to my mind, so that I might, as it were, live there, or imagine myself living there, whenever the horror of Camp Misery became too great. I had lived in that little bit of the world for all the years of my boyhood; but when I came to build it up in my mind, so as to rest in it, there was so much that I had to write down as unexplored. There were so many blank spaces, fields which I had never entered, fields with shapes which I had forgotten, brooks with rapids and shallows which I could not place correctly, hedges into which I had never looked, animals and birds which I had shot at, perhaps, but never really known about. That seemed so strange to me, when I thought of it in Camp Misery—that I should have taken those creatures' lives without knowing what life meant to them, without ever having tried, or thought of trying, to get at each strange little atom of life, so different, yet so alike. I made up my mind then and there that if I ever got back to England I would not waste my time again. I would look at the world with very different eyes; I would never forget, as I walked about, that I was there for a very short time; and that the time would soon be over, and that each instant was wonderful, and never to be brought back; and that the world is a continual miracle to be looked at earnestly, and remembered and read, or at least a

strain made to read. Each little bit of the world is beautiful and interesting unspeakably. I vowed that I would never again forget that ; I vowed that I would never lose an opportunity of teaching others to do the same. That is why I have tried to show you a little (only a very little) of what is in the country here. I have tried to make you look closely at certain parts of it, for I am quite sure that the more closely you look at a thing the more interesting it will become to you, and the more interesting it becomes to you the brighter your brains will get. All wisdom and all progress come from just that faculty of looking so closely at a thing that one can see its meaning as well as its appearance.

"Of course, when I had once fully realised all this, I was much happier ; but for a full dragging week I did not realise it, and I was intensely miserable for that week. Miserable, and utterly home-sick—so home-sick that I could feel the pull of England in my body, just as the compass-needle feels that magnetic something away in the North. I could turn round and face directly to England only from the feel inside me. I believe I could have steered a ship straight home from there without once looking at the compass, only from that inner prompting.

"When I realised that I had wasted my time, and that I must never do so again, I realised, of course, that in a little while, perhaps in a few hours, I should be away from that place for ever ; that if a ship came into the Sound I should go on board her, and be in a town of men within a day and a half, if not sooner, and I should never see that place again. Yet it might be that

in England or elsewhere, in a fit of loneliness, or during some sorrow or anxiety, I might long for that place, and wish myself back there among the rocks, dusted over with the snow, near the grim steel of the Sound I said to myself that a man's moods are very fickle. Hate is only love turned upside down. Such a little thing will turn or kill it. I might love my memory of this place within the year. I felt that it was my duty to take an exact record of it, so that in after years I might never feel that I had failed to get out of it all that it had to teach me; so that I might not rebuke myself when a few comfortable weeks at home had turned my present hate of it the right way up. And when I came to examine it, and to look into it closely, there was an infinity of beauty and interest in it. I began to puzzle out to myself how it was that the plants and creatures had adapted themselves to the natural conditions there; why the moss was as it was; why the seaweeds were as they were; why some of the birds had longer bills than others; and what the rocks had been long ago, before the wear of the weather ground them down with its files."

Chapter XXII

HE smiled at the interest in the boys' faces, and twitted Mac with wanting to go to sleep.

" Won't you go on, please, sir ?" said Robin. " Did the exploring parties get lost, too, sir, or did they find the way out ?"

" They didn't get lost," said Mr. Hampden, " but they didn't find the way out. They came back half frozen and half starved, showing symptoms of scurvy, which we managed to keep under with a sort of decoction or soup from the freshest moss which we could find. That, and a few bents from a sandbank, were the only medicine we had.

" I went out on the next search expedition. We went about twenty miles along a never-ending wilderness of inlets. We didn't get scurvy ; we got little touches of frost-bite. We didn't find anything, except on the last day one thing—a little cairn of stones with an iron bar sticking out of it, and a tin box tied to the end of the bar. Some of the sailors thought that it was the mark of some shipwrecked crew, but it was really a surveyor's mark. It had been there for years and years evidently. We opened the tin box, hoping to find in it some writing

from civilised people. You cannot imagine how eagerly we broke it open. We felt like people rifling the tomb of a King in Egypt. We did not know what secret might be hidden inside. There was nothing much inside except scraps of what had once been writing-paper smeared with what had once been ink. All quite illegible. There wasn't even enough writing left to let us guess the date of the writer. Handwriting changes from genera-

"'A little cairn of stones.'"

tion to generation. Some day, when you are older, you ought to study the changes through which it has passed. It will teach you a good deal more than you think if you will try to get at the changes in mental character which the changes in the handwriting reflect. There was nothing else in the box except a queer brass 'anchor' button—that is, a button stamped in high relief with an anchor. British naval officers have worn such buttons

since some time in the eighteenth century. We did not know how old this particular button was; it looked pretty old-fashioned. The Captain tossed it over to me.

"'Here's a curiosity,' he said. 'You can show that to your society friends when you get home.'

"I brought it home. I'll show it to you some day. Long afterwards I showed it to a man who knows about naval costume. He said it was of a kind supplied to naval officers about the year 1830. That gave me a clue, of course, to the date of the surveying-party, so I followed it up at the Record Office. The survey had been made by the officers and men of the thirty-six-gun frigate *Alert* in the year 1832. As far as I could make out, that particular cairn had been built by a party under a Lieutenant Milsom, who was killed in 1839 in a brush with Chinese pirates off Formosa. Further search in the records brought Lieutenant Milsom's reports to light. I saw his handwriting. I was able to guess what kind of man he had been. I read in a dim, rather frowsy room in England the duplicate of the writing he had shut up in the box sixty years before, more than six thousand miles away. He said nothing about the button. Whether it was his, or whether it was put there by somebody else, and what the story of it was, I shall never know. But I followed up Lieutenant Milsom from ship to ship till I found him the Commander of a brig on the Chinese coast engaged in putting down pirates. I read the reports of his death in battle. He was shot down just as he had jumped aboard a pirate junk. I also read copies of what the Admiral wrote to Mrs. Milsom and the Admiralty. I have seen the memorial tablet put up to

Commander Robert Milsom in the church of his native village. I even went down to the country to see descendants of that Commander playing in a garden. I'm afraid I looked over the garden wall at them; and then, plucking up my courage, or what you would call my cheek, I went to the house-door, asked for the present Mrs. Milsom (grand-daughter-in-law of my man, wife of his grandson), told her my story, and was shown Robert Milsom's portrait. He was a dark, soldierly-looking man with something stern about his mouth. Some queer lift of the upper lip. Perhaps it was due to the badness of the painter. It was a stiff, grim, unnatural kind of portrait. The figure looked like a waxwork pirate. Still, I was glad to have seen it. It taught me what a lot of interest can sometimes be drawn out of a button."

"Please, sir," said Mac, "weren't you able to make out from the position of the cairn whereabouts the open sea or the channel ought to be?"

"No," said Mr. Hampden, "we couldn't, for tne very good reason that we were still on the wrong side of the Sound; and we found afterwards that the Sound reached on inland thirty miles from the farthest point reached by our explorers, so that it would have taken us a good five or six days farther tramp to get round it to the side from which we could see the channel. We had been wrecked most miraculously in the most awkward possible place the ship could have chosen for us. If we had not been picked up by another miraculous chance we should have left our bones there."

"And how did you get away, sir?" asked Robin, sitting up, in a moment's burst of youth, to fling a stone

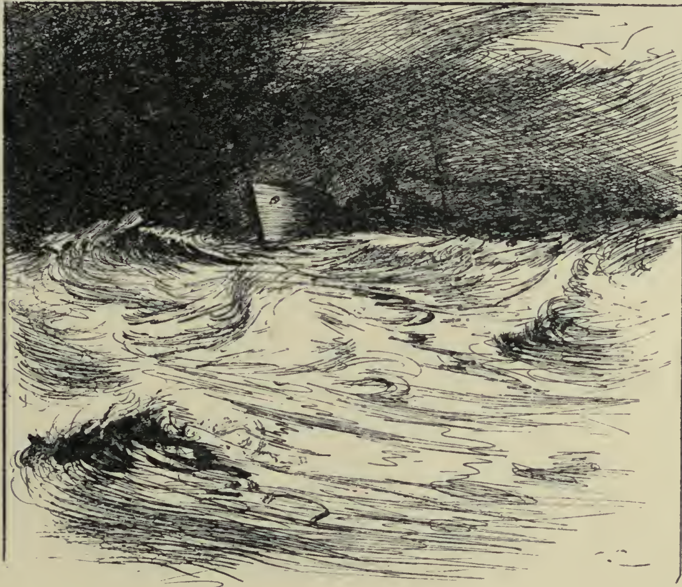
at the topmost twig of a gorse-bush. "Hit it!" he exclaimed, as he relapsed. "You couldn't do that first shot, Mac. I beg your pardon, sir," he added. "I just wanted to see if I could hit that spray. How did you get away, sir?"

"It was very curious," said Mr. Hampden. "The day before we went ashore, one of the hands had been set to put new life-lines on the life-buoys, of which, of course, we carried several. They were hung about the ship in handy places. Well, as he worked upon them he stood at the ship's side, with his spun-yarn and line on the rail in front of him, and the life-buoy all handy, hung up upon a belaying-pin. The belaying-pin in question happened to be the pin to which the signal halliards were belayed. As the man worked, he happened to glance up. He noticed that the halliards had got what is called 'turns' in them—that is, the two parts were so twisted together that there was certain to be a great deal of delay when next we wanted to signal to a ship. So he took the life-buoy off the pin, laid it on the rail for a moment, and began to clear the halliards by untwisting the turns. The next instant he had managed to knock the life-buoy overboard. He took a glance up and down to make sure that the loss had not been seen, and then went on with another life-buoy as though nothing had happened. As a matter of fact, a great deal had happened, for he had saved all our lives merely by knocking that life-buoy overboard. The life-buoy had the name of the ship *Inesita* painted upon it. While it floated it was a sort of advertisement of us. Anybody who found that life-buoy would say to himself: 'Yes; the ship

Inesita has passed this way, and something strange has happened on board her. Either she has sunk, or a man has fallen overboard from her, probably in bad weather, since they haven't picked up the buoy.' Then at the next port the finder of the buoy would report the matter, and give the latitude and longitude of the spot where the buoy was found, with some account of the finding, the date, the state of the weather, and the condition of the buoy, whether soaked and ready to sink, or apparently newly immersed. If the *Inesita* were missing, or so delayed in reaching port that one might conclude her to be sunk, these details would give a clue to the site of the disaster, so that, if a search-party were sent to look for her, the seekers might know where to begin their search.

"The *Inesita* ran ashore the day after leaving Punta Arenas. She was bound through the Straits to a place called Coronel, in Southern Chile. While at Punta Arenas she lay at moorings near a ship called the *Chiloe*, which was about to sail through the Straits for the same place when we left the port. I suppose she started some twelve hours after us. Quite by chance her look-out man saw our lost life-buoy bobbing in the sea. He reported it to the officer of the watch, who had it fished on board. When the officer saw that it was the *Inesita's* buoy he reported it to his Captain, who came on deck at once. It had been very blind, squally weather. It was a very blind, bad part of the Straits. Anyone finding a buoy in such circumstances would have jumped to the conclusion that something was seriously wrong. A few minutes later it happened that the Captain of the *Chiloe*

saw what he took to be drifting wreckage—a cask, and a half-submerged case or two, which looked like a water-logged boat or floating hen-coop. His mate said that it was undoubtedly ship's wreckage, and added that 'it looked like the smash-up of the *Inesita.*' They agreed that they had better poke about a bit to see what evidence



"'One of the bad Straits squalls.'"

they could find. They sent a man aloft to the crow's-nest to look out for boats and survivors.

"And then down came one of the bad Straits squalls, yelling like a battle. It gave them plenty to think of for the next hour or two. As for seeing through it, that was impossible. One couldn't see ten yards from the

ship, nor hear a hail nor a signal. The current happened to run strong against them in that part of the Straits. What with the wind blowing the snow into their eyes, and tearing off the tops of the waves to fling them, as they froze, over their heads, and the worst bit of the Straits ahead, those officers had no time to think of the *Inesita.* They had to use all their wits to make a head against the storm, and to win through to safety. When the squall blew over there was no trace of the *Inesita's* wreckage. What had been mistaken for it lay ten miles astern.

"The *Chiloe* continued her passage westward. She 'spoke' a French tramp-steamer the next day, and told her to look out for the *Inesita's* crew in the place where the buoy had been picked up. When the *Chiloe* reached Coronel she reported the finding of the buoy, and the sighting of floating wreckage. People concluded that 'something had happened,' and that we were all drowned. Somebody cabled it to England, and a distorted line about it got into the papers. People who knew me said that it was a judgment on me for going in a ship which was not a liner, only a big sea-tramp, going wherever she was paid to go. They gave me up for lost, and wondered whether they ought to order mourning. Now the cable said definitely that the loss of the *Inesita* was 'feared,' not certain. The journalists distorted it, as I am afraid journalists very often do, through sheer carelessness, and through that want of preciseness which mars the work of hurried people all the world over. They said that she had gone to pieces on the rocks, and that 'the fate of the crew had awakened the liveliest forebodings.' And if

the journalists had not been careless, it is possible that nothing would have been done. We might have been left to our fates.

"But an elderly lady—a very good, energetic soul—a great friend of mine, saw the announcement, and, as luck would have it, she had just been reading the story of a party of Spaniards who came to grief in the Straits in the sixteenth century. They had built a fort there, so that they might bar the Straits to the English. But the fort was a failure from the first. Some of the Spaniards mutinied, and got themselves hanged; others died of starvation or of sickness. The whole thing came to ruin, while, as for stopping the English, it did nothing of the kind. The English learned that there were two other ways to the Pacific—round the Horn and over the Isthmus of Panama. Well, this kind friend of mine wondered if I had got ashore by any chance. She had a great belief in my luck, and she felt that I would have got ashore if there had been any sort of chance of it at all. And she wondered whether I were there like the Spaniards, with a crowd of starving, dying seamen; and the more she wondered, the surer she became that that was what was happening. She felt quite sure at last that I was alive there somewhere, living on shell-fish, watching for a ship. She cabled to the British Consul at Punta Concha, but the Consul could tell her nothing further. No further traces of the *Inesita* had been found. Ships had passed along her course almost every day, finding no trace. In his opinion, the *Inesita* had sunk with all hands. Men who knew the Straits said the same. We were 'posted as missing,' and my relatives ordered mourning.

"But not my good friend. She was quite certain that I was alive somewhere. She came up to London, and set to work on the charts of the Straits to see where I might have got to. A nephew of hers, a young naval officer, helped her with them, telling her at the same time of all the possible accidents which might have happened to us. They had the position of the *Chiloe* when she found the life-buoy, the set of the current, and . . . that was all they had to go upon. Or not quite all. An eastward-bound steamer, which ought to have passed the *Inesita* near the mouth of the Straits, reported that she had seen no sign of us. So that put the scene of the disaster, if there had been one, between the mouth of the Straits and the place where the life-buoy had been found. They reckoned that the exact spot would be about twelve miles west of the spot where the life-buoy had been found. Their next move was to look up the old logs of Captain Haines, of the *Inesita*, so as to find out the course he usually took in going through. The move after that was to decide what ought to be done to find out if there were any survivors. The young Lieutenant said: 'Cable to the Consul at Punta Concha. Tell him to send out a tug to explore.'

"But for some reason this lady had taken a prejudice against the Consul. Something in his former cable made her suspect that he was not seriously interested. It was very shrewd of her. The man's cable only contained about a dozen words, yet his choice of words made her think that he was not concerned. As a matter of fact, he was alone at the office, and seriously ill. That is an instance of a woman's swiftness of perception. It is a

talent or quality unlike anything which men have. It is a quality which makes me inclined to take off my hat to every woman I pass. It decided my friend against cabling to the Consul. She was puzzled and harassed, but she decided that she would not cable. Meanwhile, she had been slaving all day without proper food, and she was tired out. She went back to her friend's house and went to bed.

"In the night she had an extremely vivid dream of me standing at the edge of the sea looking out towards England, with a mass of desolate rocks behind me all white with snow. The dream was so vivid that she got out of bed and went and called her friend to tell her that she was quite sure that I was still alive; that she had seen me, and that I was alive, though very pale. There were other men besides myself in the dream, and in some way the dream showed her that we had food. But the horror of the place in the dream impressed her so strongly that she cabled to the Consul the next morning, urging him to equip a tug at once a ther cost to go in search of us, and to cable that he had done so. On second thoughts it occurred to her that there might not be a tug at that outlandish place, so she sent a second cable bidding him equip a sailing-boat—any boat at all, or search-party—without losing a minute. She also cabled him some considerable sum of money, so that he could do this. She waited for the rest of the day at her friend's house, eagerly expecting an answer, reckoning up the possible delays in transit owing to the transfers from cable to cable. In those days there was no direct cable. Messages had to be passed from port to port at a cost of five

or six shillings a word. No answer had come by tea-time, so she went to the Embassy, and got them to cable for her. She learned the next day, through the Embassy, that the Consul at Punta Concha was ill; too ill to attend to business. For the rest, they were very civil and obliging, but could do nothing, 'only the matter should not be lost sight of.' She had had some experience of the ways of Embassies years before, when anxious about a friend in Paris during the Revolution of the Commune. She decided that nothing could be done through them in this case. No answers had come to her original cables, and every minute lost was frightful to her. She was quite certain that I was alive there, with other men, and the feeling that she could do nothing at all to help me, and that if she did nothing it might soon be too late, was more than she could bear. The naval officer had gone off to the Admiralty to try to find out if the Board could do anything through their station at Coquimbo. She was left alone with her worry.

"Early in the afternoon she decided that she could bear it no longer. She made up her mind that she would come herself to find me. She obtained a sum of money, found out that she could catch the Liverpool mail-boat when it called at Plymouth for the London passengers, telegraphed for a berth in it, raked together what warm clothes she could buy in the time, and started directly she heard that the Admiralty had no ship available. At Plymouth the agents of the steamship company told her that the ship was full. Those were the days of the great South American boom. The ships went out from England crammed with people bound for the Argentine, Chile,

and Peru. This particular ship, the *Las Casas*, was full to the hatches ; there was no room even in the steerage. Not a berth in her was to be had for money. However, my friend was not easily daunted. She hired a boat, piled her trunks aboard it, and put out to meet the steamer, which was due to arrive there to pick up the London passengers about midnight. It was blowing pretty fresh, with a good deal of rain, but she was determined not to put back till something had been done. A man would have gone to a hotel and smoked by the fire, but my friend was not like that. She knew that the ship might only stay an hour there, or less even if there were no hitch. She was going to run no risks.

" Presently the *Las Casas* came into the harbour. She had had a battering outside, for a big sea was running. My friend ran alongside as she came to moorings, and they lowered a gangway for her and picked her up. She said that she wanted to see the Captain. The Captain was very busy, but it is the custom of this world to let the people who really want a thing with their might and main to have what they want, if only they keep on long enough. Presently the Captain came along fuming at being disturbed, and very well inclined to be rude. He was an old-fashioned kind of sailor, who had been Captain of a passenger ship long enough to make him think that he might be rude when he pleased to any person even dimly resembling a passenger. On the whole, he was justified. Passengers are not human beings, like you and me. They are a race of creatures strongly resembling sheep. Well, he came down fuming from his chart room, and she told him her story there and then in a sort of

stair-head space just outside the purser's cabin. She asked him to take her on board, offering to pay almost any sum for a berth if one could be found—any berth, a stewardess's berth or one of the officers' cabins. But no. It could not be done, he said. Money was no object; the ship was full. He wouldn't take another soul aboard if the Queen herself wanted a passage. That was his last word, he said, and he was a busy man. He couldn't stay there talking; he had a lot to see to. So away he went, grumbling about a lot of silly women wanting to throw the ship overboard. He left my friend aghast. She sat down, not knowing what to do, for the boats in those days only ran once a week, and a week's delay might be the end of everything. Presently her boatman came up grumbling to ask if she were soon coming to tell him what to do with her trunks. He wanted to be gone from that. He was wet through, and the boat was taking in water, for out there at the moorings it was bad weather for any boat. So she told him to bring her trunks on board and go. She gave him a sovereign for his trouble. I don't know why they let her trunks come on board, but in the confusion they did. The boatman left them and went. When he had gone she realised that she would be in a tight place if the Captain should prove a tartar. She saw herself being flung out of the ship into the tug which had brought the London passengers alongside, for she knew very well that the tug would not cast off till the ship had been cleared. However, she had twenty minutes or so in which to think of a plan.

"Presently an elderly stewardess came past. My friend says that the instant that stewardess appeared she

knew that she had come to get her out of her trouble. She just rose up and said, ' Stewardess, might I speak to you for a minute ?' and the thing was done. I am ashamed to think how much it may have cost her, but she bribed that stewardess to give up her post. Within the next quarter of an hour they had settled everything. They had changed clothes. The stewardess had told her of her duties and shown her roughly the map of the ship, and where things could be found. She had introduced her to a friend (another stewardess), who promised to help in every way she could, and she had talked it over with the head-steward, to whom my friend promised five pounds if he would help her. The real stewardess had only just time to get off the ship before the bell rang for the tug to leave. Five minutes later the *Las Casas* was out of the harbour, butting into the heart of the channel, with spray coming over her in sheets. My friend was running about from passenger to passenger with tea and lemonade and ice. She had practically no rest until the ship left Lisbon. After the ship left Lisbon, when my friend knew that she could not be put ashore, she went boldly up and told the Captain what she had done. There was a scene. At first he vowed that he would make her work the full passage to Valparaiso. He was not going to be cheated out of a stewardess in that way. As for the real stewardess, she should never serve that line again. He would report her to the Board. He would have her arrested for ' signing on '—that is, joining the ship's company—and then decamping ; while, as for my friend, she should not go out of the ship till they reached Valparaiso. She was there on false

pretences ; she was a stowaway ; she was this, that, and the other. At last my friend told him frankly that, among other things, she was a lady, and meant to be treated as one. Soon after that the Captain was her very devoted humble servant, laughing with her at the trick she had played him, and admiring her pluck and energy. He offered her a berth, for one was now vacant, but she refused to take it. She would be a stewardess, she said, as far as the River Plate. At Monte Video, at the mouth of that river, she hoped to get some good Welsh or English woman to take her place on from there to the Straits.

" She did her work very honestly. She was considered a model stewardess. Passengers leaving the ship at the various ports of call in Brazil and the Argentine gave her handsome tips (some two pounds in money, as well as much cast-off clothing). At Monte Video she engaged a substitute, but she would not leave her work till the day she left the ship at Punta Concha. She was afraid that there might be something like a mutiny among the passengers if their stewardess were suddenly to become a passenger among them ; so she worked honestly and well till one dull morning, only thirty-four days after the *Inesita* went ashore, she landed alone at a port at the end of the world, with a hundred and eighty miles of sea, rock, and glacier between her and my probable whereabouts. She landed quietly in a little gloomy Magellan port, where a prison and a Consul's office stood out big above a lot of shanties and dockside clutter. She stood there and watched the *Las Casas* straighten into her stride again on her course through the Straits to the Pacific.

Chapter XXIII

" ELL, there is no need to make a longer tale of it. She went to work at once, set people moving, and got them interested. She learned that a sailing-cutter out in the harbour was bound through the Straits in two days. She went aboard her, and paid the Captain to sail two days earlier than he had planned. In three days from then the cutter discovered the inlet into which the *Inesita* had found her way. How in the world a big ship like that got through such a passage without striking was more than we could understand when we came through it on our way out."

"How did you feel, sir," asked Robin, "when you saw her coming round the coast ? Weren't you awfully excited ?"

"Not very excited," said Mr. Hampden. "We had thought of it so often, in so many different ways, that, when it came, when we really saw the cutter coming up to us, we were not much excited—not so much as I had thought we should be. We were a little dazed, perhaps, and in our hearts I think we were one and all a little sore

about it. That place had been home to us for all those days. When it came to the point of leaving it behind for ever it cost us a wrench or two. One old seaman, who had often talked of his loathing for the place, telling us how he would never be such a fool as to come to sea again if ever he once got out of it, was unwilling to leave. He wandered about growling to the other men that they were fools to want to leave a place where they hadn't to work at 'pully hauly,' getting somebody else's ship from port to port for three pounds a month and hard knocks. Why couldn't they be content, he asked, when they had 'all night in'—that is, no watches to stand—and as much fresh water as they could use? He seemed to hesitate about going in the boat when it came to us, but two of the men enticed him on board by telling him they would give him some tobacco. The first person whom I met when I got on board was my friend. She was leaning over the bulwarks, watching the boat come alongside. She was wearing a kind of sea-helmet or woollen face-protector which covers the cheeks. I didn't recognise her at first. When I did recognise her, I had no words with which to thank her. That was the only discovery in which I myself was much concerned. She discovered me, and I discovered what her friendship was worth. I discovered more than that, though—I discovered how interesting the world is. That is why I want you to make the same discovery while you are still free to make it. By-and-by, when your life's work begins to cramp your leisure, it may be too late. So now to work at your chart again. Here's a watch-chain compass to help you."

He took from his watch-chain a neat gun-metal compass a little bigger than a halfpenny.

" You had better take charge of this till the chart is done. Now away with you."

Some days after the beginning ot the chart the boys had worked downstream as far as the sandstone cliff. The chart had progressed swiftly in that fine weather. The promised sovereign seemed to come nearer to the boys every day. The work was pleasant work. Robin showed a marked genius for it. He took his notes and bearings in a pocket-book upon the small scale suggested by Mr. Hampden, and then set them down in the evening on an enlarged scale upon a big sheet of cartridge-paper. He had a slight but undeveloped talent for drawing, which helped him to keep his work scrupulously clean and tidy. Mac was only good at rowing the boat and sounding. He was also often eager to leave the work altogether, so that they might walk to Brown Willy or try a new bathing-place. Robin could only keep him at chart-making by refusing to go with him to any other amusement.

On the day on which the boys reached the sandstone cliff Mr. Hampden strolled up the other bank to watch them at their work.

" Pretty deep there ?" he called.

" Yes, sir," said Mac, leaning over the boat's nose to sound. " It's over six feet in the middle."

" It's one of our best bathing-places," said Robin. " You can get a clinking good dive, sir, off the bank where you're standing, if you give a good sort of a jump out."

" What is it up by the cliff ?" said Mr. Hampden.

"We've not sounded yet, sir," said Robin; "but it's shallower there. The stone of the cliff juts out a bit, so that you can stand."

"Curious," said Mr. Hampden. "Generally a straight up and down cliff, rising sheer out of the water like that, is a sign that the water at its foot will be deep; and if the bank seems to shelve down into the water, it's a sign that the water thereabouts will be shallow. At least, that is how the sailors judge of the depth of water near a coast."

He looked at the cliff curiously, wondering what strange freak of tortured Nature had put it there. What was that water-carved block of sandstone doing alone there, so many miles from its friends? He noticed the curious hole in the cliff a little downstream from where the boat lay. He had noticed it before, but never with any interest.

"And what is the hole in the rock there?" he asked.

"Oh, just a hole, sir," said Mac.

"I see it is," said Mr. Hampden dryly. "Did you never find out what is inside it?"

"No, sir," said Robin. "We've bunged a few stones in, because we thought there might be owls there, but I don't think there are."

"There were jackdaws there one year," said Mac, "and starlings another year. We could hear them inside, but we couldn't get at them. I shouldn't wonder if there were kingfishers. And one year we thought there might be a way down from the top for foxes to burrow through. There was a sort of smell of fox,

But we couldn't get very near the edge because of the brambles and stuff making it so thick."

"It's a curious hole," said Mr. Hampden. "Just bring the boat over here, will you? I want to have a look at the cliff myself to see . . . what there is to see."

He jumped nimbly into the very centre of the boat's stern-sheets as Mac backed her in. Nothing shows the extent of a man's knowledge of the sea like his way of getting into a boat. There are so many ways. But the right way is not to be imitated. It comes of long practice on many moving stages. It can only be done properly by those who have done it in places where to do it wrongly is to risk the lives of others. Mr. Hampden jumped with such absolute control of his body and absolute judgment of the place to land on, that any seeing eye would have set him down as a sailor from that one thing alone.

"What do you think could be in it, sir?" said Mac.

At the moment he was more sensitive to romantic possibilities than Robin, being a good deal idler. He was very glad of some excuse, even a bad excuse, for stopping the work of chart-making.

"I don't know what *could* be in it," said Mr. Hampden. "Many things might be. Jackdaws, for instance."

"But what do you think, sir?"

"Treasure, I hope," he answered. "No; it may be nothing more than the result of a fissure. But I would like to make sure. I know in Ireland a red sandstone cliff with a hole in it half-way down. When I was a boy, rummaging about on the little hill in which it shows, I found a way down inside to an inner cave to which it formed the window."

"Was anything inside the cave?" asked Robin, looking up eagerly.

"At first I thought not," Mr. Hampden answered; "but afterwards I went there with some people who know about these things, and then we began to discover a great deal. We discovered that the place had been a dwelling-place of men for something like five hundred years before the use of metal had been discovered. The floor was a sort of hard, stamped-down mass of flinty flakes, potsherds, chippings of a hard bluish stone which could be chipped to a good edge, wood ashes, clay from the countryside, bones of all sorts of creatures, and a sort of slime caused by the tricklings from the roof decomposing the softer portions of the rock. We dug out about a foot of the floor; every bit of it was full of relics. I don't think there'll be anything of the same kind here, but we may as well find out." He steadied the boat directly under the hole. "Take a cast here," he said, "between the boat and the rock. What do you make it?"

"Only a little more than two, sir," said Robin. "It's very shallow here. We've often noticed it when we've been bathing. It's deeper the other side, though," he added, taking a cast or two with the nimbleness of an old leadsman. He lunged out over the side to take an extreme cast. "It seems to deepen gradually to about the middle," he said. "It's only a patch of shallow, like the roots of a worn-down island."

"H'm," said Mr. Hampden, trying to get a view of the bottom through the trailing cloud of mud stirred up by the touch of the plummet, "what is there in the arming?"

"Nothing but mud and a few black specks," said Robin, turning up the lead. He brushed a few of the black specks on to his forefinger, and rolled his thumb upon them. "A sort of black grit," he said.

Mr. Hampden took the lead and examined the grease attentively.

"Have you got your scoop with you?" he asked. "I mean your drag. What is it you test the bottom with?"

"A tin lashed to the end of a stick," said Mac, handing the weapon over. "You have to jounce it down hard, and then give it a kind of a twirl, so that the stuff won't fall out as you raise it."

"I see," said Mr. Hampden. "This is rather a clever drag. I like it. We'll take a sample. Give me the baler. I'll pour the stuff into the baler, so that we can see what we get."

He thrust the tin into the water, and raked it across the bottom (from upstream down) till it was full. With a nimble twirl of his hands he brought it to the surface. He poured some of its contents into the old saucepan with which the boat's leaks were baled.

"It makes one feel like a gold-digger, washing a tin of dirt for the gold in it," he said. "We'll do it very gently, as though there were gold here."

He added a few handfuls of water to the pan, and slowly twisted it in his hand, so that the mud washed away. Under the mud were a few black sodden scraps of leaves, a few bits of black woody stuff, and a few water-worn pieces of bone. Mr. Hampden crushed some of the black woody stuff between his fingers. He seemed to consider the nature of the paste which smeared his

finger-tips. He looked thoughtfully at the bones, and laid them to one side on the thwart.

" I'll take another scoop in the same place," he said.

This time he drove down the tin with force, so as to make a deep scooping. The boys were full of interest as he raised the tin over the gunwale. A black and heavy thing was trailing from it. It showed for an instant above the surface, and then splashed heavily back again. It looked to Mac to be an old boot covered with weed. Robin thought it was a small log of wood with drift upon it.

" It wasn't a boot, and it was heavy for wood," said Mr. Hampden, as he emptied his catch into the baler. " What have we got here ? Bones ? No, a horse-tooth. Another horse-tooth. I wonder what sort of a horse ate grass with these. Anything else ? Bits of bone. Black stuff again—silt, mud, stone. The stone's interesting, and this heavy thing is interesting. It feels like a bit of slag. Now we'll fish a little over the stern to see if we can raise that black thing again."

After trying without success to raise the black thing a second time, they pulled back to the boat-house, so that Mac might run up the hill to the tool-shed to get some stout wire, some thinner wire, and a pair of pliers. With these materials Mr. Hampden began to make a grapnel, or arrangement of several stout hooks projecting from a single stem. He weighted this by tying the plummet of the leadline to it. When the grapnel was finished he began to drag with it over that bit of the river-bed into which the mystery had fallen.

" I've got it!" he cried, " but I doubt if I can raise it

with the hooks. We really want a landing-net for it. Grope for it with the dredger, and try to pin it into the grapnel. That's it; that's got it. Now pin it well in while I lift it. Here it comes."

He carefully hauled in upon his line, and raised the strange thing over the gunwale. A piece of thorn-bush was stuck fast to it. It was by the thorn-bush that it had been caught by the dredger.

"What can it be?" said Mac, looking curiously at it.

"I believe it's a boat," said Robin.

"It is a boat," said Mr. Hampden, pulling away the piece of thorn-bush. "It's rather in a mess. Wait till we've got the water out of it." He sluiced it vigorously over the side to clear the filth from it, and then held it up to let the water out in a black stream from what had once been a hatchway. "A model ship," he said. "A frigate of about the time of the Battle of the Nile. This was probably made by some sailor for an ornament."

"Wouldn't it be some boy's model?" said Robin.

He looked at the ship keenly. The heavy wooden hull had a line of gun-ports round it from which imitation cannon pointed. He was wondering how a boy might fire those cannon simultaneously, yet get a fair view of the flames leaping from the muzzles. There were the stumps of three masts sticking from the deck like broken teeth. The little cannon were the things which attracted him.

"No, not a boy's model," said Mr. Hampden. "This was an ornament. She was once a full-rigged ship, and you cannot sail a full-rigged model. Probably she came down in the world when her masts were broken. I dare

say boys have dealt with her in her time. I wonder how long she has been under the water here ? I wonder who wrecked her ? What would you like to do with her ? Shall we set her down the river again ?"

" No, sir," said the boys.

It was as though he proposed that the *Golden Hind*, newly dug from the mud of Deptford, should be cut up for firewood. Mr. Hampden tapped the hull.

" Pretty sound wood," he said. " Why not take it home and rig it ?"

" Yes, sir ; yes," the boys cried together.

" The deck is split. We must have a new deck," said Mr. Hampden, " and then we'll see what we can do to rig it exactly as she would have been rigged a hundred years ago. We'll look up some of my old books, and see what can be done."

" Wouldn't it be easier to rig it in modern fashion, sir ?" said Mac.

" No," said Mr. Hampden ; " because one can't really rig a model in the modern fashion. The standing rigging in modern ships is made of wire rope, and one cannot represent that properly on a small scale. A hundred years ago there were no wire ropes. Now we'll get another scoop with the dredger to see what more luck we may have."

Chapter XXIV

FTER half an hour's scooping they began to scoop up old, dirty broken bones.

" It looks as if some animal had been drowned here," said Robin. " Go on scooping, Mac. Perhaps we'll rake up the skull, and find out whether he's a horse or a cow."

" He might be a two-toed horse," said Mac. " There used to be two-toed horses, usedn't there, sir ?"

" Yes," said Mr. Hampden, " long ago ; but I don't think you'll find many here." He was looking at the bones with a curious eye. " Bones and stones," he said.

Some of the bones had a blackened burnt look. He picked up a curious curved bone from among the mess.

" Do you know what this is ?" he asked.

" Looks like one of those fossil things, only bigger. The round things, broken, which go round the marrow," said Robin.

" Not quite so exciting as that," said Mr. Hampden. " It's the tusk of a wild boar."

" Oh, sir !"

" Is it really ?"

" Oh yes. They must have been common in this wild part till long after the Romans. This is a wild boar's tusk, and a pretty big one. It's a rather fearful weapon when it's fixed to a live wild boar."

" And are these wild boar's bones, sir ?"

" They may be," said Mr. Hampden ; " but to me they seem to be such a mixed lot that it would be hard to say what they are. They are very much broken. Do you know what that means ? It means that the creature which cracked them was fond of marrow."

" A dog, sir ?"

" No ; these bones have been burnt. They've been in the fire, some of them. They've been cracked by men."

" What men, sir ?"

" Who can tell ?" said Mr. Hampden. " But I should think a good many men, from the number of the bones. Do you begin to guess something now ?"

" No, sir," said Mac.

Robin began to guess something. He grinned, and glanced at Mr. Hampden with brightening, expectant eyes.

" Well," said Mr. Hampden, " here's a bed of bones so big that it's made a shallow in the river. How did it come here ? The bones have been cracked by men, so it's reasonable to suppose that they were thrown here by men. Do you begin to see something now ?"

" Men threw them in ?" said Mac, groping for the truth.

" Where do you suppose they stood when they threw them in ?" Mr. Hampden asked.

Mac stared. Robin's eyes travelled up the little cliff.

" The shallow's in a line with the hole in the cliff," he said.

" Of course," said Mr. Hampden. " That means that there's a cave inside beyond that opening—a cave big enough for the home of a good many men. They must have lived there a long time, and eaten an enormous lot of meat, to leave so many bones in the river. The hole there was their window and kitchen-sink. The river was their drinking-cup and their drain. Somewhere up there among the brambles is the entrance to where they lived. Now how are we to find it ?"

" Get in among the brambles and hunt round. We should soon find it," said Mac.

" Do you mind if we drop the chart-making ?" said Robin.

" No," said Mr. Hampden ; " I should like to find the entrance if we can. But these things aren't always easy to find. A little fall of earth may block them altogether. If the cave used to be the home of primitive men it probably had a very small well-concealed entrance only just big enough for one man at a time, and the cover up there is frightfully thick."

" We'll get through it all right," said Mac.

" Yes ; you're boys," said Mr. Hampden. " But I'm thinking of your clothes."

" Couldn't we burn it off ?" said Robin.

" It wouldn't burn," said Mr. Hampden, looking up at the cover. " And if it would burn, one couldn't tell where the fire would stop. No ; we must hunt about properly. Let us suppose that we are Romans hunting for a few ancient Britons who have gone into hiding. What would be our first step ?"

" They'd have had dogs, wouldn't they, sir ?" said Robin. " Like the Spaniards had ?"

" Not with the armies," Mr. Hampden answered. " No ; we shall have to look with our own eyes. What is the likeliest part for the entrance ? The least likely place. The most difficult to find. Let's get ashore. We'll scramble up and begin the hunt."

About an hour afterwards Mac gave a hail from the middle of a thicket not far from the brink of the cliff.

" I rather think I've got it," he cried. " It looks rather like an entrance, only the stone's fallen. Could you wriggle up here, Mr. Hampden ? It's not so bad after you're past the gorse."

Mr. Hampden and Robin wriggled to him. They found him hacking away at brambles with his knife, so as to clear a little space. He was flushed, but happy. His hands were badly scratched. He showed with pride a hollow in the ground, a sort of pit, such as one sees in old warrens, where the earth, long undermined by the rabbits, has at last fallen, leaving a part of the passage bare. The passage in this case was lined with neatly-laid stones, some of which had fallen from their places. The heavy rains after a frost had broken in the roof at last. The cover of brambles had kept it ungrassed. A few spare tufts poked up. The passage seemed to lead right and left from the fall-in.

" It's not the mouth of the passage," Mac explained proudly. " It's a bit where the roof has fallen. I shouldn't have noticed it if it hadn't been for a bunny. He ran this way, and I happened to get a glimpse of where he burrowed."

Mr. Hampden looked at the stones lining the sides of the passage. He struck matches, and peered down the dark openings one after the other.

"You're in luck," he said. "Yes; this is a passage. Now we want a spade and candles."

"We could grub it up with our fingers, sir," said Mac.

He did not want to be sent for tools, while Robin remained to grub with his fingers.

"I dare say," said Mr. Hampden, "you could carve your dinner with your fingers. We'll get a spade and candles. Half a dozen full-size candles, not stumps, for you've no idea how quickly they waste in the open air and underground. D'you think your mother could supply us?"

"Yes, sir."

"Right. And you, Mac—you're the discoverer—you go down first. You'll have to take a trowel in case the way's blocked. And always take care to hold your candle low down, near the ground, for bad air gathers near the ground, and if there's bad air in the place it's just as well to let your candle go out instead of yourself. Now we'll go off to your mother."

In about twenty minutes' time Mac was burrowing down head-first into the clammy darkness, with a candle guttering hot tallow on to his fist. Robin, who followed him, could see him as a black lumbering blur with a waving dimness ahead of him. The air was not bad in the passage, only a little strange. It was damp and close, as though it needed a tonic. The passage was high enough for the three to scramble along it on their hands and knees. As they scrambled, gripping their candles,

they noticed the well-laid stones on both sides of them rising up in dampish, regular walls. Suddenly Mac stopped.

" It seems to broaden out a bit here," he said. " I can almost stand up. Wait a minute till I light another candle."

He lit another candle, and stuck it into the floor, where its flame wavered as flames will, even when no draught can be felt. The three could see a sort of dim room, about four and a half feet high by eight across. It was a circular room, shaped exactly like a bun, higher in the middle than at the edge. Gaps in the walls showed that passages led from it into further darkness. A hurried scurrying of a frightened rabbit rattled a pebble far up one of the alleys. They heard the thump of a rabbit's warning.

" Which is the passage, sir ?" said Mac. " Straight on, I suppose ?"

Mr. Hampden scraped at the floor with a testing finger.

" Straight on," he said. " There's been fire here. Straight on, and mind where you're going. We'll leave the candle burning to guide us back."

" We can find our way back without that, sir," said Mac.

" I wouldn't be too sure," said Mr. Hampden. " These ancient burrowings are often very strange. There are some in Kent, cut in the chalk, which lead under the earth for miles. They twist so strangely and they go so far that a man who goes into them runs a very good chance of being lost for ever."

" What were they for, sir ?" Robin asked.

" Nobody knows," he answered. " We know nothing, really, about any kind of life which we haven't lived. Historians think they were used for hiding-places or storing-places, and others think that they were temples ; and some say that they are merely galleries cut by the men who worked the chalk for the flints which it contained. We know nothing at all about it. Probably, if the men who made them could come to talk with us, they would give us an explanation so simple that we should be amazed at our own folly in not guessing. This place here is queer enough, so go carefully, friend Mac, and look out for a well. Nothing like putting a well in the middle of the hall to keep out strangers."

They groped on again in the dark. The walls of the passage shot up suddenly, so that the boys could stand if they bent their heads a little. Presently Mac ran into the wall of rock. The passage ended suddenly in the blank stone. Nothing but a little suck of air upon his ankles told him that more remained to be discovered.

" I say, it ends here," he called. " No, it doesn't ; but you've got to crawl again. Here's a passage, and it seems light beyond. I say, this is the cave beyond here. You kneel down and crawl sharp to your left."

" It would be easy to defend this place," said Mr. Hampden. " You could spear anybody who tried to get through without giving him a chance to spear you. Go ahead, Mac."

Mac was already squirming through the hole. It was a narrower passage than the other. It had been primitive man's front-door ; it had been built by people who lived their lives in continual fear of death. Mr. Hampden

was forced to haul himself along by sticking his fingers into cracks and on to knobs in the rock. When he came within reach the boys hauled him through with a will.

"Shut your eyes, sir," Robin called—"shut your eyes. It's simply splendid. Don't open them till you're inside."

He shut his eyes as he was bid, while the boys dragged him into the inner chamber. He felt a sensible coolness upon his cheeks as the chill of the vault struck upon him after the heat of wriggling.

"Can I stand up without bumping my head?" he asked.

"Yes, sir; yes," the boys cried. "There's lots of room simply. Simply lots of room."

He stood up and opened his eyes. "Well," he said, "I'd never expected this. What an amazing place!"

As far as he could see by the light of the candles and by a shaft of sunlight which slanted in through the hole in the wall, he was standing in a cave about twenty feet square by nine high. How it had come to be there he could not tell, but it seemed to him to be a natural hollow, only slightly adapted in some places by the hand of man.

The river went past outside with a slight clucking gurgle, like the noise of the tide loitering past the body of a ship. The noise of the birds came in a faint chirrup from the cover above; otherwise, they were in a place as secret as an inner tomb. The sense of its secrecy weighed upon them. All three stood quite still, letting the wonder of it grow. This was their discovery; this was something which nobody else in the wide world knew about. What a place it was! Better than an eyrie of planks in an elm-tree; better than a lair among gorse. The boys wondered whether any boys in the world's

history had ever had such a haunt ; and it was new, not explored yet, not touched. They were perhaps the first people to come there since the days of the Cæsars. It had lain under their noses all these years, and they had never guessed ; and now they were standing in it, moved to the quick, waiting for a sign from Mr. Hampden.

" Well," he said, " this is better than chart-making and hearing about Columbus. We'll turn out our pockets, and light all our candles, then we shall see what there is here."

They brought out all their candles, lit them, and stuck them about the cave, so that they could see. Robin, moving into a corner, started suddenly at a black thing lying on the ground. He had feared lest it should be a skeleton ; but it was no such thing, only a big blackened flat stone, presumably a hearth-stone.

" Here's the fireplace," he said, " and here's some charcoal left from the fires, and some ashes."

The others came over and looked at the relic, wondering what sort of people had made that fire, and when, and why. A couple of rude clay saucers, rather big and clumsy, but decorated at the rim with herring-bone scratches, lay beside the hearth. There had been other crockery, too, but time had destroyed it. A few shards lay there, a few half-burnt ears of corn, a few bones. From the way the bones lay scattered one felt that the last diners in the cave had been about to leave that place for ever, and had had a friendly cock-shy match with the bones at the crockery from which they had eaten. Mr. Hampden looked at the corn through his magnifying-glass.

" We've improved our corn since then," he said. " This is scanty and poor. I dare say, if we grub about,

we shall find a little hole in the ground quite full of grain like this. There's a camp in Somersetshire which I examined once with a party of archæologists. We found a little hole in the ground crammed to the brim with ears, not only of corn, but of some kinds of grasses. The hole had been carefully covered, and the ears were quite recognisable. I wonder if any of this stuff would grow? One often hears that seeds found in this way will grow. We might try next spring. What else is there here?"

They knelt down and examined the floor. It was not merely the bare sandstone. Some of the long-ago men who lived there had pampered the softness of their bones with leaves, rushes, the needles of the spruce, sprouts of young heath, and bracken. Time had changed these to dust, and other generations of men had beaten down more, adding clay from the country-side, the débris of their sport and work, chippings of stone, bones, skins, horn, etc., which later generations had pounded flat as they came and went.

"They've slept here," said Mr. Hampden. "This fine, withered, beaten, dusty stuff is what is left of heather. I wonder if they fetched it from Brown Willy?"

He took out his knife and dug gently at the compost of the floor. A chunk of it came up in his hand, and broke as he held it from very dryness. It fell with a little rattle of chips. He picked up a few of them.

"Here you are," he said. "Mac, your fortune's made. Here's two years' work for you. The floor of this cave is made, you might almost say, of flint chippings. Here's an arrow-head, broken when he'd got it nearly perfect;

here's the beginning of a spear-head ; here's a handful of scrapers. You'll have to write a book about the contents of this cave. It's one of the richest in this part of England. You'll have to bestir yourself, and become an archæologist."

The boys grubbed with their fingers at the floor, crying out with delight at every new discovery. Robin got an arrow-head, Mac a neat bone skillet. They were overcome by the sight of the wealth below them. They had come into an endless treasure, which would give them arrow-heads and other joys, enough to supply every boy in their school. Mac picked up a bone rudely scratched with the drawing of a man. Mr. Hampden went to the window and looked out.

" There must have been a fine view from here," he said, " before the plantation grew so full. They were able to look out on this side."

Something made him bend quickly to examine the stone in the hole of the window through his lens. It was only a scratch upon the stone, almost weathered out by the beating in of the south-west rains. What it had once been he could not guess, since so much of it was perished, but enough of it remained to show him that Romans had been there. What Romans ? What were lettered Romans doing there in that strange place, so far from any Roman road or town ? He said nothing. He stared out into the valley, lost in though. At cry from the boys made him turn again.

" What is it ?" he asked.

He saw that Mac had turned up something strange from the jumble of rubbish which made the floor. It

was a beautiful worked stone axe-head, worn smooth by incredible labour. A withered shaft was still secured to it in the usual way with a gut lashing. Mac made a playful chop with it at his brother's head. Robin ducked.

"You haven't seen any metal in the cave?" Mr. Hampden asked.

No, the boys had seen no metal. The cave was seemingly the home of workers in stone, who had never known the use of metal.

The boys stopped their grubbing at the floor in order to dance a kind of war-dance to show their delight. They ran to the window to look out, as primitive man must have looked out centuries before.

"I say, Mac," said Robin, "your face is simply filthy."

"So's yours," said Mac. "So's Mr. Hampden's. It'll wash off."

"You're not half discoverers," said Mr. Hampden. "You're not looking to see what's at the lower end there, where it's dark. Take a candle there. There may be a well, and it's as well not to go carelessly, lest we should tread on something, and perhaps break it."

"What sort of something?" said Robin.

"Any sort," said Mr. Hampden. "From bones to a King's crown."

They took their candles, and advanced cautiously to the corner, examining every inch of the floor. The boys noticed that Mr. Hampden examined the wall carefully with both his candles.

"Are you looking for writing, sir?" they asked.

"Not so much writing as pictures," he answered—"or, rather, drawings. The cave-dwellers sometimes drew things, or scratched them on the walls of their caves. Though I'm not sure that any such drawings have been found in England. In Africa they painted with extremely brilliant lasting colour, and some of the paintings (of ostriches, other birds, and animals) are very good indeed, full of spirit and life. But there seems to be nothing like that here."

As he spoke his boot struck something which gave out a chirring sound, like rusty metal suddenly moved. He bent down and picked it up. It had lain for hundreds of years in what was plainly a damp portion of the cave, for, though the August heats had dried the wetness which ran there at other seasons, the stones there were mouldy with damp. The damp had eaten away the metal with rust. It was hard to say what it once had been. It was an oblong of metal (even the kind of metal was not very certain). That it had been the work of man was evident from its shape, and from a hole pierced in one of the upper corners. The other corners had broken away, rusted through.

"What is it, sir?" the boys asked.

"I think I can guess what it was," Mr. Hampden answered, thinking of the scratchings at the window, "but I won't tell you till we've seen if there's anything more of the same kind. I'll only tell you that the cave's getting a good deal more interesting."

The boys glanced at each other delightedly. They worked their way to the darkest, farthest corner of all, where something seemed to stick up rather from the cave-

floor. In the uncertain light they were not sure at first that it was more than a roll of the rock ; then it took on the shape of a heap of dust blown in at odd times, and drifted there by some odd twist of draught given by the cave's shape.

" It might be the dust of a dead fox or something," said Robin, kneeling down beside the heap.

" How had we better examine it ?" Mac asked.

They were afraid of being hasty after what Mr. Hampden had said about the King's crown.

" It is quite dry in this part of the cave," said Mr. Hampden, touching the dust. " A rather curious shape, the heap, isn't it ? Oblong, like a . . ." He did not finish the sentence, but picked up a fragment of what had once been wood. " Wood-dust," he said. " Perhaps this is their little wood-pile."

Very gently he swept aside a little of the wood-dust with his fingers. Something fell over with a tinkle of metal into the powder about it.

" Coins," said Robin—" coins !"

Mr. Hampden picked up a coin and looked at it. It was a little-worn, little silver coin of the Emperor Constantine. It had been the topmost of a little neat heap of similar coins, which now lay tumbled (about a dozen all told) in the soft dust.

" I know what this is," said Mr. Hampden. " This heap up here in the corner was once a box of Roman money; either a military pay-chest or the weekly or monthly wages of some business establishment, a big farm or factory. All the money is put up in little neat tiny piles, all ready to pay out the workers; and it was stolen, I

suppose, on the way, and brought here and hidden, and then never found. I wonder if the thief got caught? Or perhaps it was brought here in a hurry, and flung aside when the Romans were flying out of Britain. This Emperor Constantine came towards the end of the Roman rule here. It's a pity that the coins cannot talk to us. Mac, you're fonder of running than any of us. You run back home and ask your mother if she will very kindly lend us a bellows. We'll blow away all the dust here, and then we shall see the coins exactly as the Romans left them, in little piles ready for the workers."

Mac was not usually given to hurry, but on this occasion he went off like a young colt.

"Be careful, Mac," said Mr. Hampden. "Don't lose your way. You'll find that I've burnt little black soot crosses on the walls to the right of the passage as you go out, so don't take a wrong turn. And while you're there, please bring some more candles."

When Mac returned with the bellows and the lights Mr. Hampden gave him the work of puffing away the heap of dust from the coins which lay below it. In some places traces of skin or hide still showed above the little piles, but for the most part the dust blew away readily. When all was gone they saw a hundred and twenty little piles of Roman money, most of them of silver, some of them of copper, arranged in neat rows. In the centre row were stacks of square brass checks or tallies, arranged for issue to unknown workmen, when Rome was still the world's ruler.

Mac routed about the cave's side for a moment. He picked up something, and handed it to Mr. Hampden.

It was a sort of oblong metal plate about five inches long. It had a partly legible Latin inscription on it, which Mr. Hampden transcribed. It ran something as follows :

> " horseman of the . . .
> years, is hereby authorised to keep
> wife
> service.
> and to follow."

" It's a Roman soldier's discharge," said Mr. Hampden. " They issued plaques like this to the old soldiers who were past service. He was probably authorised by this to keep two slaves, and not more than one wife, as a reward for faithful service. I wonder what brought the plaque here, and what it is doing here with all this money. There has been something very fishy somewhere. Well, we shall never know. I think this is the most wonderful of our discoveries."

" And what shall we do with it, sir ?" asked Robin.

" Keep it very secret for the present," said Mr. Hampden. " We'll all three set to work at once on the contents of this cave, and write a book about what we find." He paused a minute to look at the two boys' faces, glowing with excitement under the mud. " They may say what they like about discovery," he added, " but the wonderful discoveries lie under our noses all the time, if we only had the sense to make them."

THE END

WELLS GARDNER, DARTON AND CO., LTD., PATERNOSTER BUILDINGS, LONDON, E.C.

DARTON'S
FINE ART SERIES

SUITABLE FOR

PRESENTS AND PRIZES

LONDON
WELLS GARDNER, DARTON & CO., LTD.
3 & 4, PATERNOSTER BUILDINGS, E.C.
And all Booksellers

Illustrated by F. D. Bedford

CENTENARY EDITION.

THE 'ORIGINAL POEMS' AND OTHERS

By JANE and ANN TAYLOR
And ADELAIDE O'KEEFE

'Why should you fear to tell the truth?'—p. 71.

Edited
By E. V. LUCAS

'The quality of the poetry of the Misses Taylor has been praised by such great judges that any praise from ourselves would be superfluous. No other writers of children's poetry have written of childish incident with all the child's simplicity.'—SPECTATOR.

'Mr. Bedford's illustrations are not only very well drawn, but inspired by just the right feeling. It may be added that the Taylors were really the founders of a school. They gave a form and character to nursery verse which have become classic, and have been followed more or less by a long line of later writers.'—STANDARD.

'Thanks are due to that delicate lover of literature and of children, Mr. E. V. Lucas, for reprinting this veritable classic.'
TIMES OF INDIA.

Large crown 8vo. printed on superfine paper, cloth boards,

Illustrated by F. D. Bedford

Forgotten Tales of Long Ago

Edited with Introduction by

E. V. LUCAS

Beside numerous Black and White Illustrations, the Frontispiece and Title-page are in Colours.

The Contents include:

Dicky Random; Jemima Placid; Two Trials: Th Fruits of Disobedience; The Three Cakes; Scourhill's Adventures; Ellen and George; The Journal, by Priscilla Wakefield; The Bunch of Cherries: The Life and Adventures of Lady Anne; Captain Murderer, by Charles Dickens, and many other favourite old stories, now forgotten.

'*Is Mr. E. V. Lucas going to provide us with one of the prettiest books of each Christmas season? For successive years we have been delighted with his clever selection from the child-fiction of our grandparents, and we are left like Oliver Twist, asking for more.*'—Bookman.

'She cut her beautiful hair close to her head!'—*p.* 102.

Large crown 8vo. printed on superfine paper, cloth boards.

Illustrated by F. D. Bedford

ANOTHER BOOK OF VERSES FOR CHILDREN

Selected and Edited by E. V. LUCAS

Profusely Illustrated in Black and White, with Frontispiece and Title-page beautifully printed in Colour.

'A delightful compilation, and noticeably excellent in the method of its arrangement.'

ATHENÆUM.

'We may briefly and emphatically describe it as the most charming anthology for children that we have seen, original in choice and arrangement, beautifully bound, and owing no little to Mr. F. D. Bedford's delightful and sympathetic illustrations.'

GUARDIAN.

'Most happily selected, Moreover, the light and humorous verse — verse harmless without any obvious moral — is too much neglected, for children like to be amused, and this need is sometimes forgotten.'

SPECTATOR.

'The volume is in itself a real gift-book, being admirably bound, printed, and illustrated.'

THE WORLD.

Large crown 8vo. printed on superfine paper, cloth boards.

Illustrated by F. D. Bedford

'Sat him astride of the saddle of mutton.'
p. 126.

'A charming book. The one ambition of Mr. Lucas' authors is to be interesting, and they succeed very well.'—Daily Telegraph.

'Beautifully printed, illustrated, and bound.'—Schoolmaster.

Tales are given from the following Popular Authors :—Thomas Day, Maria Edgeworth, Mrs. Sherwood, Anne Letitia Barbauld, Charles and Mary Lamb, Jacob Abbott, Alicia Catherine Mant, Caroline Barnard, Peter Parley, Catherine Sinclair, Dr. Aiken. The authors of some of the best tales in the volume are unknown.

Old-fashioned Tales of Long Ago

Edited with Introduction by
E. V. LUCAS

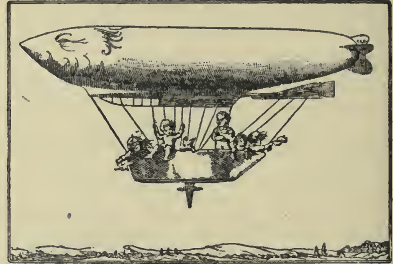
Besides numerous black and white Illustrations, the Frontispiece and Title-page are beautifully printed in Colours.

'A large hole burst open in the wall.'
p. 381.

Large crown 8vo. printed on superfine paper, cloth boards.

Illustrated by F. D. Bedford

RUNAWAYS & CASTAWAYS



Edited with Introduction by E. V. LUCAS

"Hands his lady out, and gives the guard something for himself."

Besides profuse black and white illustrations, the frontispiece and title - page are daintily coloured.

—

'Mr. E. V. Lucas has deliberately set himself to capture hearts while young and tender. . . . In twenty years he will have become such a power in the land as to be a national danger, and his new work, "Runaways and Castaways," is only another step towards this enviable destiny.'—TIMES.

—

'A collection of the most exciting and delightful run away stories in the world.'
NATION.

Large crown 8vo. printed on superfine paper, cloth boards.

Illustrated by Gordon Browne

A Child's Book, for Children, for Women, and for Men.

SWEETHEART TRAVELLERS

By

S. R. CROCKETT

'It is the rarest of all rarities, and veritably a child's book for children, as well as for women and men. It is seldom, indeed, that the reviewer has the opportunity of bestowing unstintea praise, with the feeling that the laudation is, nevertheless, inadequate. "Sweetheart Travellers" is instinct with drollery; it continually strikes the softest notes of tenderest pathos, and it must make the most hardened bachelor feel something of the pleasures he has missed in living mateless and childless.'—TIMES.

'A more delightful book for young, old, and middle aged, it is scarcely possible to conceive.' —TRUTH.

'We confess to having fallen under the spell of these delightful chronicles. The illustrations are just what was wanted to make this one of the most attractive books about children.'

PALL MALL GAZETTE.

On the road to Conway.—*p.* 64.

Large crown 8vo. printed on superfine paper, cloth boards.

Illustrated by Gordon Browne

'I create you General of the Commissariat.'—*p.* 171.

The Surprising Adventures of Sir Toady Lion

With those of

General Napoleon Smith

By S. R. CROCKETT

'When we say it is one of the most delightful stories about children we have ever read, we are still short of the mark.'
Daily Chronicle.

'It is distinctly the best Christmas book of the season.'—Daily Mail.

'In this excellent book for children, which the elders will enjoy, Mr. Crockett comes right away from kailyard into a kingdom of obstreperous fancy, and is purely, delightfully funny, and not too Scotch. . . . Mr. Gordon Browne's illustrations are as good a treat as the story; they realise every thought and intention of the writer, and are full of a sly and characteristic drollery all the artist's own.'—World.

'How quaint!'—*p.* 375.

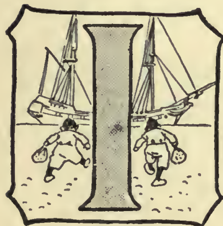
Large crown 8vo. printed on superfine paper, cloth boards.

Illustrated by Gordon Browne

A Chapter Heading.

SIR TOADY CRUSOE

By S. R. CROCKETT



T *will thoroughly satisfy the children's most fastidious taste.'* MORNING LEADER.

'The best book for children, if not the best book we have seen this year.'—WESTMINSTER GAZETTE.

'We have seen nothing for a long time to equal the admirable illustrations.'—DUNDEE COURIER.

'Watch 'em, boy !' said Dinkey.—*p.* 245.

Large crown 8vo. printed on superfine paper, cloth boards.

Illustrated by Gordon Browne

FAIRY TALES FROM GRIMM

With Introduction by

S. BARING GOULD

'Of new editions of old favourites the palm must be given, we think, to this collection of Fairy Tales from Grimm. . . . We do not think a better edition has appeared.'
REVIEW OF REVIEWS.

'No more acceptable edition of some of Grimm's Stories has been published.'—STANDARD.

'Altogether delightful. The illustrations are full of charm and sympathy.'—SATURDAY REVIEW.

'A fairy book beyond reproach.'—GRAPHIC.

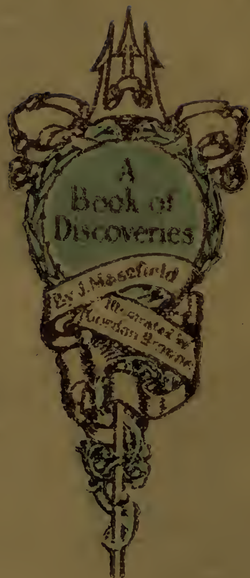
'Grimm is always delightful, but in his present new dress he is more delightful than ever. Mr. Gordon Browne charms us always with his dainty pictures.'—GUARDIAN.

'All the illustrations are simply inimitable.'
QUEEN.

'The Prince who was afraid of Nothing.'—*p.* 216.

Large crown 8vo. printed on superfine paper, cloth boards.

M2FB66


A
Book of
Discoveries
By J. Masefield