

"No, it will not," he cried back bluntly. "Keep it up, and let out a little line with your fingers when he pulls hardest."

By the time he reached me I was in a sad plight, feet like ice and hands benumbed. But wet and cold went for nothing five minutes later, when the fish lay upon the bank, its prismatic sides slowly turning pale and dull, and I knelt over it half in pity and half in triumph.

"You did that very pluckily, little one, but I am afraid you will suffer for it by and by. You must be chilled through."

Quickly as I looked up at him I only met a good-humored smile. He did not mean to be rude. And after all, when I was in such a mess, it was not possible that he could see what I was like. He was wet enough himself. As for his hands, they looked red and knucky enough, and he had been wading almost to his waist. But he looked, I don't know why, all the stronger and manlier and nicer for these things, because, perhaps, he cared for them not one whit. What I looked like myself I dared not think. My skirts were as short as short could be, and they were soaked; most of my hair was unplaited, my gloves were split, and my sodden boots were out of shape. I was forced, too, to shiver and shake from cold, which was provoking, for I knew it made me seem half as small again.

"Thank you, I am a little cold, Mr. —, Mr. —, I said, only my teeth would chatter so that he laughed outright as he took me up with—

"Herapath. And to whom have I the honor of speaking?"

"I am Miss Guest," I said miserably. It was too cold to be frigid to advantage.

"Commonly called Bab, I think," the wretch answered. "The walls of our hut are not sound-proof, you see. But come, the sooner you get back to dry clothes and the stove the better, Bab. You can cross the river just below and cut off half a mile that way."

"I can't," I said obstinately. Bab, indeed! How dared he?

"Oh yes, you can," with intolerable good temper. "You shall take your rod and I the prey. You cannot be wetter than you are now."

He had his way, of course, since I did not foresee that at the ford he would lift me up bodily and carry me over the deeper part without a pretence of asking leave, or a word of apology. It was done so quickly that I had no time to remonstrate. And while I was still choking with rage, he seized my hands and set off at a trot, lugging me through the sloppy places much as I have seen a nurse drag a fractious child down Constitution Hill. It was not wonderful that I soon lost the little breath his speech had left me, and was powerless to complain when we reached the bridge. I could only thank heaven that there was no sign of Clare. I think I should have died of mortification if she had seen us come down the hill hand in hand in that ridiculous fashion. But she had gone home, and at any rate I escaped that degradation.

"Well, I never!" Clare said, surveying me from a

respectful distance, when at last I was safe in our room. "I would not be seen in such a state by a man for all the fish in the sea!"

And she looked so tall, and trim, and neat, that it was the more provoking. Papa was in the plot against me, too. What right had he to thank Mr. Herapath for bringing "his little girl" home safe? He can be pompous enough at times. Mr. Herapath dined with us that evening; but nothing I could do, though I made the best of my wretched frock and was as stiff as Clare herself, could alter his first impression. It was too bad: he had no eyes! He either could not or would not see any one but the draggled Bab—fifteen at most and a very tomboy—whom he had carried across the river. He styled Clare, who talked Baedeker to him in her primmest and most precocious way, Miss Guest, and once at least during the evening dubbed me plain Bab. I tried to freeze him with a look then, and papa gave him a taste of the pompous manner, saying coldly that I was older than I seemed. But it was not a bit of use: I could see that he set it all down to the grand airs of a spoiled child.

When I asked him if he was fond of dancing, he said good-naturedly: "I don't visit very much, Miss Bab. I am generally engaged in the evening."

Here was a chance. I was going to say that that no doubt was the reason why I had never met him, when papa ruthlessly cut me short by asking, "You are not in the law?"

"No," he said. "I am in the London Fire Brigade."

I think that we all upon the instant saw him in a helmet sitting at the door of the fire station by St. Martin's Church. Clare turned crimson and papa seemed on a sudden to call his patent to mind. The moment before I had been as angry as angry could be with our guest, but I was not going to look on and see him snubbed when he was dining with us and a! So I rushed into the gap as quickly as surprise would let me with "Good gracious, how nice! Do tell me all about a fire!"

It made matters—my matters—worse, for I could have cried with vexation when I read in his face next moment that he had looked for their astonishment; while the ungrateful fellow set down my eager remark to mere childish ignorance.

"Some time I will," he said with a quiet smile; "but I do not often attend one in person. I am Captain —'s private secretary, aide-de-camp and general factotum."

And it turned out that he was the son of a certain Canon Herapath, so papa set to discussing Mr. Gladstone, while I slipped off to bed feeling as small as I ever did in my life and out of temper with everybody. It was a long time since I had been used to young men talking politics to papa, when they could talk—politics—to me.

Possibly I deserved the weak of vexation which followed; but it was almost more than I could bear. He—Mr. Herapath, of course—was always about fishing or lounging outside the little white posting house, taking walks and meals with us, and seeming heartily to enjoy papa's society.

He was such an elder brother to me—a thing I never