The ISLE of the WINDS

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Synopsis of Previous Chapters.

Sir James Stansfield, of New Milns, in company with his grandson, young Philip, meets in an inn-house his son Philip, and his son's paramour, Janet Mark. They quarrel. Sir James goes home, taking along his grandson. That night he is murdered by his dissolute son, and Janet Mark. They take his body outside and lay it upon an ice floe, in the effort to fasten the crime upon other shoulders. But the boy Philip has witnessed the crime. He tells his grandfather's chief tenant, Humphrey Spurway, and Spurway succeeds in having the real murderer brought to justice. He is sentenced to be hanged, his woman accomplice to be transported. Mysteriously Philip Stansfield escapes the gallows, seeks out his wife, finds her in the company of Spurway, and tries to murder her, but does not quite succeed. She is taken away to Abercairn for cure, leaving her son, young Philip, in charge of Spurway and in company of little Anna Mark, from whom he learns that in some ways girls are worth quite as much as boys.

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But as to little Anna Mark, in short, while I had proved to myself that she was a very different story. For one thing, Umphray Spurway thought her different. For he who admitted none of her sex had taken Anna into his house. Then, again, I liked to play with her and to walk hand-in-hand with her. I never did this willingly or unwillingly with my grandmother, who was wont to extract a catechism out of her pocket and set me to learn proofs of doctrines if she found me idle. Now Anna Mark was guiltless even of "Man's Chief End," and as to the scriptural proofs of that noblest of all summations of human destiny—"Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever"—why little Anna simply did not know that the thing needed to be proved.

I wonder if I can convey any idea of what little Anna Mark was then, when I first knew her in the mill house of Moreham.

"The witch-child," the ill-affected called her, and, indeed, there was something not quite of this world about her. She had a far-off look of her gypsy father, Saul Mark, nothing whatever of her mother, except her dazzling teeth. All else was her own—no child in the village or among the weaver lasses at the Miln cottages in the least to be compared to her. She was slender and tall for her age, quick and lithe in every movement as a wild thing of the woods. Her eyes would follow any one with whom she was not well acquainted with the lightning suspicion of a caged squirrel. This shy wild wood look afterward left her, the bright glancing of her eyes never.

Her hair, as I have said, ran in a ripple of brown crisps and curls over her shoulders and down her back. But even as a child she had a fashion of her own of packing it on the top of her head out of the way, when any childish scheme requiring agility was on hand.

Now, I, Philip Stansfield, the younger, thought well of myself then as now. Whatever I did I tried hard to do better than any one else. And yet, I admit that there was nothing, running, climbing, jumping, standing on one's head, on one's hands, making faces, fighting with fists, shooting at a mark with the bow and arrow, playing at quoits, tops, marbles, tic-tac-toe, jacks, knuckle-bones—it was all the same, I might be good at them, too, but—Anna Mark was better.

For awhile I had the better in learning, but day by day she overhauled me, spurred on with the ambition of beating me. The "Books of the Old and New Testaments" were a stronghold for a long while, because she did not see the necessity for getting them by heart. But one morning she puzzled me with Ecclesiastes, and then when she went on to offer the books of Apocrypha, either forth or back, just as I liked, I rose in wrath and called her a Papist, which was the direst term of reproach known to me.

"Papist or no," she answered back. "I can beat you at the books of the Bible."

I did not care, of course, even if the allegation had been true. For a boy, being manifestly superior in all points to a girl does not need to make good his superiority in particular instances.

I had, however, one stronghold that could not be assailed. Anna Mark could not throw a stone as well as I—this not for want of trying. I remember that once I came on her weeping at a dyke-back, and upon my asking what the matter was she sobbed out, "I have tried to throw stones like you till my arm is near broke with trying—and I cannot do it a bit better!"

"Never mind," I said as kindly as I could, for I hated to see her cry, "we will try a race to the end of the mill-lade, and you can beat me at that!"

"I don't care for running. I wanted to beat you at stone-throwing!" she sobbed.

Yet there came a time when I had a surprise sprung upon me. It was on the day when Umphray Spurway brought home his "winter beasts." These were rough and shaggy highland cattle from the great droves that, with an army of retainers, passed every year southward into England. They went south mostly about the end of harvest, whether the year were early or late. The lowland farmers bought them, fattened them on the aftermath of the hay and on the stubbles of the corn—presently turning them out on the moors till the snow came, and then killing, salting and setting them apart as "marts" for winter consumption.

Umphray Spurway bought may of these, for, being an Englishman, he loved flesh meat, and believed that his weaver folk worked better on it than on porridge three times a day.

So this buying of the "mart" cattle was a great event with us, and as my mother, though recovered of her wound and now lodging in her own hired house in Abercairn, was still weak, I remained (to my joy) at the Miln house. I had looked forward to the English droving as one great opportunity of proving my superiority to little Anna Mark. And to this day I can remember the shame, merging into a kind of reluctant admiration, mingled with hopelessness, with which I viewed her performances. For some months, indeed, she had made frequent absences from home during the afternoons, and this without giving any explanation of where she had been, though I pleaded hard to know.

Upon the great day we went out as soon as it was light, to choose and bring home our bunch of wild, rebellious highland cattle. It was to the "Tinklers' Slap" that we went, a wild place among the hills to the west, through which the drove road picked a perilous passage, and Umphray took with him a score of his weavers, armed. For he carried money, and the cattle dealers were quite as wild as the cattle they brought with them. At least, it was as well to err on the safe side.

We marched merrily and fast, yet not so fast but that Anna and I played about the company, running round and round like the collie dogs themselves, gripping, grappling and rolling over each other, just as they did, while Umphray watched us, indulgently and yet carefully, lest I should hurt the girl.

So little did he know. He ought rather to have been careful that she did me no harm, for a greater little tiger cat never was.

And now I come to my surprise.

For as Umphray Spurway, with his hand on his pistol hilt, chose out and paid for each wild steer or fleck-mouthed bull, it was the duty of his party to meet the beast, as it was scourged from the drove by the half-naked kerns of the hills, who swarmed all around. Then, having put a distance between the chosen and his companions, the aim of us all was to head him away to the eastward, so that he might not double and rejoin the herd by speed of foot. This was usually accomplished by stones and goads, the men using goads and the light infantry pebbles.

It was wild work at times—indeed at most times.

For the Tinklers' Slap is a deep defile, which leads into the heart of the hills. High above the heather bends its black brows to look over. Bell heather and bent diversifies delicately the middle slopes. All the bottom is smooth and green, save where, in a tunnel of bracken and queen-of-the-meadow, a certain trickle of a streamlet gurgles and lisps in an emerant gloom.

But upon this noble morning of late September, the Tinklers' Slap looked not thus, still and lovely, with only an eagle soaring above it, lost in the sky. Down it surged a vast horn-tossing herd of cattle, with their noses in the air. All red and black they were, like the ragged tartans of many of the drivers (for they were of the broken clans, and mostly MacGregors, though some of them called themselves Campbell, who were the worst of all).

This particoloured tide flowed down the bottom of the glen like a river in full flood. Only in the little eddy of Hunter's Tryst, near the bottom, where Umphray Spurway waited, was there a sort of backwater. Into this the drovers swept a score or two of cattle at a time, some of which Umphray Spurway approved. At other times he would have none of them, but pointed out a beast in the throng as it surged thundering past. Whereat one of the men on little shaggy ponies would plunge, at danger of his life and limb, into the tumult of the tiderace, and guide the animal out, and so bring it, bellowing with rage and fear, to the appointed stance.

It was strange to observe at the summit of the Slap, directly above us, the cattle appearing like a forest of branching horns, standing a moment to overlook the valley, with heads up and eyes dilated, and then, urged by those behind, surging forward again, while the noise of their mighty roaring came to us in the little vale of the Hunter's Tryst like the triumphing of an angry sea that has broken bars and doors.

It was the first time I had seen the great English droving, and a fine sight it was for man or boy to see.

Anna Mark and I ran forward to be ready to receive the first "mart." Anna had been given a stout, pointed "kent," or oaken staff, to use as a goad. With this, and her native agility, she completely outran me. But little I cared for that, for was not the stone-throwing at hand. As I ran I did not observe that Anna had a bag of pebbles fastened to her waist, even as I had myself. She kept close to Saunders MacMillan, a big herder from the rough mountains, whom Umphray employed to watch the sheep he pastured on the easterly hills, according to his agreement with Sir James, my grandfather, when he came first to the country.

The first beast is always the worst to put on the home road. For he has as yet no companions and he turns and twists, doubles and trebles, with feints and stratagems, as well as straight charges, tail up and horns down. As ill-luck would have it, he came straight at me.

"Out of the way, boy!" cried Umphray Spurway, whose eyes were everywhere. But I wanted to distinguish myself and stood straight in the beast's way, as he dodged to get back to the herd. The bull came head down, and just as I was firing a round pebble at his forehead, down I tripped over a stone. I felt hot breath blow upon me, and looked to be trampled to death. But though at the gallop he almost missed me, one cloot alone grazing the calf of my leg, and as it happened, turning it many colors in a day or two.

There was now no one between the brute and the herd, and the Highland kerns had already set up a triumphant yell at our stupidity.

But in the critical moment, there in front flickered little Anna Mark, a "kent" shortened in her hand. One blow across the nose. He swerved. A poke in the shoulder. He turned. Anna dropped the kent, and with her right hand she selected a stone from the wallet at her waist, and with a sharp "clip" jerked it from her hip, after the manner of shepherds. It flew straight and took the "mart" on the hip. Another and yet another, each as truly aimed, succeeded. The beast turned no more, but with Anna behind it, and Saunders MacMillan and half a dozen weavers in chase, took a straight line through the little green hope of the Tryst for the vale of Moreham.

Then, indeed, there was a noise to speak about, and I, sitting up dazed and stupified, heard the Highlandmen shouting to Umphray Spurway. "Who is the lassie?"

"The lassie," shouted anotner, contemptuously, as he dressed the herd on the left flank. "Yotn's nae lassie! Yon's a killie lad—a son o' Donald Olg's, I'm thinkin' by his lang legs!"

For little Anna Mark's high-kilted petticoats had misled him, ano, indeed, not without some reason. For her hair was tied in a red kerchief after a manner that she had doubtless learned from her father, and for the rest she was dressed much like one of their limber he-slips who scampered and climbed and yelled alongside the drove.

This was a great blow to me, and it was an hour or two before I could make any headway to get over it.

It was not jealousy so much as that she had not told me what she was doing, but had gone secretly to that great lout, Saunders MacMillan, as coarse and clamperrome a lump as any of that name. And in Galloway that is saying no little.

"I wanted to surprise you—that is why I did not tell you," she said afterward, as she ran alongside when once the homeward column was in good going order and out of the disturbance caused by the routing of the herd.

I said nothing. I was not ready to make up.

"Of course," she said softly (for she could speak very gently when it liked her, which was not often), "I cannot throw as well as you, nor flourish my arm about over my head. It is not the same thing."

"You hit the beast and turned it, after it had knocked me over!" I replied, gloomily.

"But see," she cried, "I can miss as well!" she persisted.

"Let me see, then," said I.

A bullock at this moment turned and tried a last bolt.

"Turn him—turn him, witch Wean!" cried Bowie Fleemister, the only Moreham man in the company, and a man who, having lassie bairns of his own, hated Anna Mark's favor with his employer.

Then the girl, with her eyes full on the charging bullock, "henched" a pebble, which indeed missed the animal, but by a strange chance took Bowie Fleemister on the elbow joint!

"Ye hae broke my funny-bane, ye flichtersome wisp o' brimstane," he cried, dancing to and fro, and nursing his elbow in the palm of his other hand. "I'll hae ye discerned for a manifest witch as your mither was afore ye!"

"You see, now!" said Anna, calmly, with her eyes cast down. "I can miss. I missed the bullock by as much as 20 yards."

Yet somehow the instance was to me not wholly convincing.

Bowie Fleemister made his complaint to Umphray Spurway before the pain had wholly died out of his tingling finger tips.

"Yon ill-set randy has broken my shuttle-airm wi' a stand," he said, truculently. "I'll never work mair! I want her banished out o' the country like her mither. There will never be peace in the mill till she be gane."

"Oh, yes, there will," retorted Umphray Spurway, significantly, riding a little nearer to Bowie, who shrank away from him. Then, bending a little from his horse, and clenching his bare fist, the millmaster held it to Bowie's nostrils. "Yes," he added, "there will be peace in Umphray Spurway's mill as long as that hand wags at the end of this right arm!"

And Bowie Fleemister, the color of tow, shrank still further between his own shoulders.

CHAPTER XIII.

The New Dominie.

But there was a sweeter, winsomer side to little Anna Mark than this. Where she got it from I know not—from her Maker, I expect. Nor, though I have known her all the years that have come and gone since those days in Umphray Spurway's millhouse, have I ever troubled my head on the subject.

Anna could not be called a very pretty child, perhaps. Her face was always browned by the sun, and till she was well into her teens an even tint of freckles was spread over her brow and cheeks, reaching well up on her brow and down behind her ears.

But no man could pass her on the road without turning to look. Most women, also, if only to say, "There is something not canny about that lassie-bairn!" But when Anna looked directly at you, it seemed that you saw a spark of fire kindled far down in her eyes. And when she smiled, why, it was suddenly summer outside, and a blue day. The herds on the hills would wait hours to have her company up the lonesome glens and out on the great flowes of heather. The grimy smiths in the "smiddy" in the villages, hammering at their horse "cackars," would drop rasp and pincers and run to the door at the words" "Here comes Anna!" And long after she was past they could be seen looking out after her, sheltering their eyes underneath grimy palms, as she tripped up the street with Umphray Spurway.

But mothers, jealous for their own children, would call them in ostentatiously, lest they should be englamored with the fascination of the witch-bairn's spell. Every douce well-born lassie in Moreham and New Milns was forbidden to play with little Anna Mark, and also encouraged to call names after her to keep her mindful of her condition. Usually, however, they only tried this once. Then on the following day their mothers would come in deputations to Umphray Spurway, praying him to send the little wildcat away.

But the Englishman, caring no more for women than for the idle clashes of the villages, drove them out of his presence without more ceremony than if his mill gates had been invaded by a tail-wagging, loud-clacking flock of geese from the common.

She had cast a glamour over him. That was evident. And the gossips took counsel together to rid him of this spell and themselves of a pest and possible rival of their own growing daughters.

I well remember the day of the prize-giving at Dominie Nathan Tawse's school.

I had begged so hard to be allowed to stay with Umphray, and the Englishman had used such arguments to my mother to make her consent, that I was allowed to bide through the week at the millhouse. But on Saturdays Umphray himself took me down the water to my mother's house in the town of Abercairn, where I stayed till Monday, on which morning Caleb Clickaberry convoyed me back halfway to the place called Hill o' the Cock, where William Bowman met us and relieved him of his charge.

When Umphray Spurway took me to my mother's he never stayed long, sitting only to drink a cup of tea and make his compliments on how well she was looking, his eyes mostly upon the floor the while, uplifted to my mother only when she was ordering the tea-bowls with her back to us or spooning the black China herb into the bottom of each.

I remember once saying to my mother: "Why does Umphray never look at you? Is he angry with you, or are you angry with him?"

Her cheek paled and then flushed again. I knew I was hurting her and yet I kept on.

"I do not know whether he is angry with me," she replied. "I am not angry with him!"

And immediately she sent me forth to play on the quay with the town lads of my own age. For she had a notion that I might grow maidenish by associating with little Anna Mark. How far this was from the truth I have already indicated in this history. I fought a good fight behind the butcher sheds with Allen Kemp, Mr. Smalltrash's 'prentice, and beat him by dodging blows as Anna Mark did mine, and then, in the nick of time, planting my left on the point of his chin, after a feint at his breast, a thing I had learned the trick of from her.

But when I was in Abercairn my mother thought that such ploys made me manly, and took no notice when I came home marked on Saturday night, though she did not let me wander far on the Sabbath days—except to visit at the minister's, Mr. Nicol Aitkin—with whose son Jock I have fought as many as seven rounds during service in the windowless corner by the side of the vestry, while his father was developing overhead his seventhly in the application of the "Gospel of Peace to the Christian Home."

So, unlike many Scottish bairns, I ever appreciated and enjoyed my Sabbath privileges—and specially where it was my lot to sit in the kirk.

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And now I come to that which sent me finally and without reprieve to the grammar school of Abercairn.

My Uncle John, the falcon-beaked Edinburgh lawyer, had for a little taken it sorely to heart, that his precious instrument being only of effect when, in case of my father's death, he had no control over me or over the estate. The latter, however, he managed in some sort to retain as well as the power at the Great house, by a well-devised system of subservience to the will of my grandmother, the old Lady Stansfield.

This, as he was not a man to squander, my uncle was permitted to retain by Umphray Spurway and John Bell, though they informed him that he must in no case consider himself as my curator bonis.

It happened that about this time when I was shooting up into a great lump of a lad and Anna Mark growing ever lighter, straighter, winsomer, that the old dominie of Moreham died one bitter March day. He was observed to lean long against the wall of his little school, but as that was his ordinary position in the act of prayer, none took any notice till he had been more than an hour in that posture. Then one John Dallas, a smith, went and clapped him kindly on the shoulder to tell him that the bairns were waiting for their scripture. But he found the old man dead on his feet, with his forehead against the cold whinstone of the gable end.

It became necessary to fill his place, and as Mr. John Stansfield was now so forward in matters of the kirk, and so great with my grandmother and Mr. Bell also, it chanced that the choosing of who should succeed the dead man was left in his hands. And late one night he brought one from Edinburgh to be the new dominie.

He was a man far beneath the country standard of height, and as he stood at the master's desk, a small, lean, swarthy man, his eyes very close together, and his hands corded and hairy on the backs, he looked quite unable to cope with the urchins of the ordinary classes, and when the folk remembered the burly plow lads and young fighting cocks of farmers' sons who would be there in the winter, they smiled with significance and said: "God help him."

But in the meanwhile he did well enough. Bernard Ringrose was his name, and he entered on all the offices and emoluments of the old dominie without opposition or comment. He had store of Latin that was without cavil, and to a "humanity man," as he was called, the folk of a Scottish parish would forgive almost anything. Mr. Bell had examined the new dominie, it was said, and found him wondrously well equipped. Now, this is what happened, as I had long after from Mr. John Bell himself, when he had risen to be regent of the college, and a great man.

The minister had a physician's prescription, writ by a learned man whom he had known at the college of Edinburgh. It was made out in the English tongue, so that the unlearned could understand it, but of late Mr. Bell had found no benefit from using it. So he was sending it, with a letter, to one Samuel Paterson, in the Lawnmarket of Edinburgh, who was the main poticary and herb doctor in the city. With this paper in his hand the minister one day entered the school of Mr. Ringrose, in a kind of maze.

"Dominie Ringrose, I have a sore trouble on me," he said. "I am even like St. Paul. The thorn in the flesh doth sore wound me. What think you of this prescription, which the learned Dr. Conradius, of Upsala, gave me?"

The new dominie took the paper in the shaking hand which made many think him weak—whenever the weather was moist and warm with a south or west wind, his hands were wont to shake so that he could not hold a book to read it aright. At first this was set down to drink, but after, when it was seen what a temperate man was Mr. Bernard Ringrose, it was discovered to be an intermitting or tertian ague, gotten from his life in strange lands. So now his hand shook as he took the paper from Mr. Bell, very careless like, and glanced at it.

"You have not been able to have this made up to your mind, minister?" he said, very high and clear.

"No," said Mr. Bell, "seemingly the virtue is gone out of it. I am worse troubled than ever."

"These are vulgar names, sir," said the dominie, "and when such are used oftentimes commoner growths are foisted on the unwary. Permit me to write the prescription in the Latin tongue, with the proper signs and quantities, and you will find that the virtue will quickly return."

So he took a pen in hand, and wrote rapidly, muttering to himself:

"Instead of tutsane I will write agnus castus; instead of house leek, a common misnomer, I will write singrene."

And so in a trice, with a quick dash of learned signs scattered athwart the paper, he handed the prescription back to the minister, who was so greatly impressed, that if the dominie had told him to eat the paper it would have benefited him as greatly. At least, when the medicine was brought back from the apothecary in Edinburgh, Mr. Bell went everywhere telling of the great skill and prowess of the new dominie in the Latin tongue.

Likewise, the people of Moreham need not have troubled about his ability to cope with any offenders in his school. It came speedily to a crisis. Allan Allison it was who refused one day to leave his place, and being a great fellow of well-nigh 20 years and a known fighter, told the master to come and take him out of the bench if he wished and was able. Whereat, without a waste of a word, the dominie made a spring, sudden and fierce as that of a cat after a bird. He used no entreaties. He made no apology. He simply flew at Allan Allison's throat, and the next moment Allan was lying on the floor with the dominie erect over him, his shod heel uplifted above the rebel's face and threatening to stamp the life out of him.

Verily, there was order in the schoolhouse of Moreham all the days of Bernard Ringrose, which, however, were not to be many.

For about this time the noise of terrible breakings of houses and bloody murders done upon their owners (it was said by smugglers) ran with a mighty bruit through all Scotland south of the Tay. Strong men went in fear, women shrieked at the cry of a bird, and bairns swarfed if left alone, just as in the days when Philip Stansfield was first lost in the woods.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Eyes Behind the Gauze.

That which I am now going to tell happened at the November term, when Umphray Spurway, as was his wont, had given permission to most of his folk to go visit their friends, where they would, and he himself had gone with a sufficient number to carry to the seaport of Abercairn all the tweeds and webs of broadcloth he had manufactured during the past six months. He departed on Monday with the first gray light. On Friday night he was to return with all his money, and one or two riding with him in company. The rest, with a month's wage burning a hole in their pockets, abode in the town itself or tailed off at various change houses along the way.

In the Miln house abode only Will Bowman, little Anna Mark and myself. There was no weaving done all that day, and in the great sheds with the huge bolted doors and barricaded windows, we three played at "tig" and "hi spy" and other games to while away the time. For when his master was absent, Will Bowman was every whit at boyish and bairnly as we.

The twilight fell early, bringing a light, sifting snow with it, which, however, hardly whitened the roads. It was bitter cold notwithstanding, and in the miln house we built up the fires, and in the great weaving sheds also, Will Bowman built up a pile of boughs and roots on the dogs of the firegrate, chiefly that we might see to play with pleasant crackle and dance of the licking flames. So we raced and shouted, little Anna the wildest and quickest of the three.

But Umphray Spurway delayed his coming so that it was pretty dark, or rather well into the gray dusk, when we heard the sound of wheels without, and, as it were, the shuffling of feet, as of men moving a heavy weight.

Will Bowman ran out, and a voice from the horse's head bade him open the doors of the mill, for here was a case of fine foreign yarns, which Umphray Spurway had sent them from Abercairn to deliver.

"I open the doors at no man's bidding," said Will, "till I see my master's hand of write." Then the leader of the carriers thrust a paper under his nose.

"There, then," he said, "If you can read; I can't."

"Well," said Will, after considering the paper, "wait till I get some of the weaver lads to help in with the case." And so at the word he ran to the back of the house door and blew three blasts upon the horn. Now it chanced that some of the weavers had slept all day, and were only now arousing themselves to wash and make ready to go again to the changehouse. So a dozen or more came drowsily enough at the summons. Then the great doors were unclosed and the huge pack brought in.

It had a foreign appearance, but nothing much out of the common in Umphray Spurway's mill, being done up in sacking, with curious marks stamped upon it in tar or some sticky kind of ink. It was not particularly heavy, for four of the weavers carried it in between them.

"It can sit there till our master returns," said Will Bowman, eager to get rid of the intruders, for the road carters had no good name.

"Content," said the chief of the Abercairn carriers; "then do you give us our discharge, a glass of spirit apiece and let us be going, for we have far to travel tonight, while you bide safe by the fireside."

So Will bade the weavers wait till he had written a receipt, specifying the marks upon the case. In the meanwhile he ordered Anna to supply a glass of raw country spirit to each of the men, which they took with a muttered salutation. They were tall men, and so soon as the weavers appeared they utterly refused to come within the lighted weaving shed, urging that they could not leave their horses. So Anna carried the spirit out upon the highway.

In a little Will Bowman heard the rattle of their horses' feet on the hard-beaten road, and, looking out, we saw the cart rumbling away into the frost-bitten air of night, through a kind of cloud, which was the steam of the horses.

The weavers dispersed quickly, mostly to sneak away to the changehouse at the hamlets of New Milns and Moreham, some of the younger to court their joes in byres and barn ends, one or two merely to go back to sleep.

So we three were left alone in the great Miln house, with the newly arrived packing-case. It stood in the corner across the angle of the weaving shed, with its plain broad side to the blinking fire. Will Bowman replenished the dogs with a new load of wood, and we went on with our game. But somehow the spirit seemed gone out of the hide-and-seek. For as we ran and hid, a dodging shadow, to our imaginations seemed to run beside us, overleaping the looms and evading the eye, as it were, by a bare inch, when we looked over our shoulders. Once Anna, to deceive us, hid in the little dusky triangle behind the packing-case.

We two were going about to find her, for I had already captured Will Bowman, when all of a sudden she gave a wild scream, and came running to us, crying that the case was alive.

"Nonsense, little one," cried out Will, greatly amused. "Some yarn is alive enough when it comes here—both with 'high-jumpers' and 'slowbellie.' But this is the finest Spanish wool, write as milk, fine as a wisp of silk, and very expensive."

But Anna only clutched my arm and panted: "Philip, I heard something move within. I heard it."

"Tush!" said Will Bowman; "let us go to supper. Forget it, Anna. You hae been running too fast, and you heard your own heart beating. So have I, many a time."

"Nay, I heard that, too! I was not mistaken," she made answer, earnestly. And so, to convince her, Will got a lanthorn and, walking hand in hand, with little Anna in the midst, we aproached the packig-case, which, being set on end, towered above my head, though tall Will Bowman could see on to the top of it.

We examined the thing minutely, back and side, and front. It was evidently of some light wood, and well packed, for when tilted and let down violently on the floor the contents made no noise. Will Bowman tapped it all about with a hammer, and found it all of wood on every side, with many bored air holes and in front a square of a common yellowish gauze, wide-meshed, and coarse, covered a larger hole. That was done, Will said, for ventilation, and was common in all their foreign consighments.

After all was carefully gone over, Will bade us hold our breath and listen. We did so, but save for the stirrings within us and the crackling of the logs on the hearth, all was silent, inanimate, dead.

"Well, are you content, little woman?" said Will, patting Anna on the head. But she went out, with her face turned over her shoulder, looking back at the thing which had affrighted her.

In the house place of the private dwelling there was a sense of comfort and safety which even I felt strongly. It was good to be rid of the case in the dusky corner of the weaving-room, yet I could not get little Anna's shriek out of my mind. It was so sudden and so unlike her.

"I thought I heard my father whisper," she explained more than once in an awed voice, "so I cried out."

And in spite of the foolishness of it, the saying stuck to me. We had supper, beef cold, cut thin, on wooden platters, wheaten bread and plenty of home-brewed ale. That is, Umphray only allowed us one mug apiece when he was at home, and to that we now confined ourselves. Only Will and I treated ourselves to a somewhat larger size in tankards.

So in a little the home-brewed gave me courage and it came into my head that I was in good case to go alone into the weaving-room, where the box stood—to show Anna that I cared nothing about the matter, and that I was as brave as any Will Bowman could be, though he had marched with Umphray Spurway's militia.

So I betook me alone into the great shed, and my spirit revived when I thought what Anna would think of me. The case stood in the corner, still and plain sheeted, like many another that had come to the mills of Umphray Spurway.

I threw some logs on the fire, and stirred the others with my toe so that a bright flame sprang up. More and more I threw on in sheer idleness till I could no longer bear the heat. Then I looked about for something to shield my face, but saw nothing on the mantel board save some tallow dips and a little cracked handglass, before which the mill lasses were wont to order their snoods and part their hair at the hour of noon.

This, without thought, I took in hand and held between me and the fire. The pine branches burnt clear and high, and all the great shadowy place of beams and cross-threads, carders and spindles, glinted light. The flames danced on the floor and glittered upon the walls, losing themselves among the evasive shadows between the crossbeams and the dusky roof.

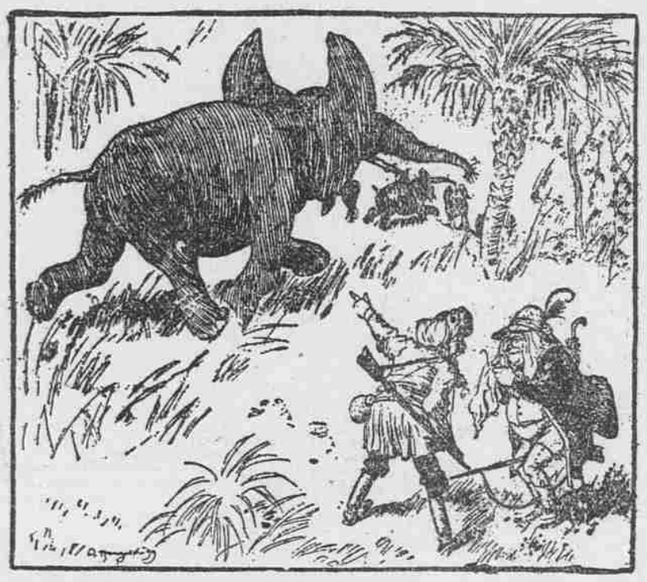
I felt curiously at ease, and it was with a kind of exaltation that I bethought me of Will, in the lighted parlor, talking to Anna Mark. I was no more than a boy, as Will often said. Yet I was not afraid to sit there in the dusk, with that great ghostly case staring at my back out of the dusk.

Involuntarily I happened to look at the reflection of it in the hand mirror. My heart fluttered like a bird which has dreamed itself free brought suddenly up against the wires of a cage.

I saw in the strong firelight the leaping flames gleam red on a pair of eyes that watched me steadily through the thick yellow gauze on the front of the packing case.

(To be continued.)

"IN THE SWEET BY AND BY."



Native Hunter to Professor—Hurry and shoot! The elephant's running away!
Herr Professor—Yah, right away, right away! Yusht as soon as I can clean mine shpectacles!—Philadelphia Inquirer.

What's the Use?

Men are apt to fret and worry,
But what's the use?
When too late they always hurry,
But what's the use?
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Even argue with a woman,
But what's the use?

—Chicago News.

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‖7:30 A. M	Corvallis passenger.	‖5:50 P. M.
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