THE BANNER OF BLUE.

The Coat of Many Colors.

By S. R. CROCKETT.

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CHAPTER XXXV.—(CONTINUED.)

My father sighed, but he did not ask any further questions. He knew well enough all he wanted from that one word—and more.

"Fairlie," he went on, "I want these documents put in the hands of Mr. John Glendonwyn. I cannot see him myself. My oath does not make that possible.

"But I am a just enough man to see that he had nothing to do with our tribulation. Also, he is being persecuted by the same ill-hearted father who has brought these things upon us.

"I am going to leave the neighborhood. I have had it on my mind to do so ever since Kate's home-coming. Only I delayed for her sake, fearing the effect upon her mind.

"But now when she is in such altered case as to her husband—why, I think the sooner we go the better. Now I had thought to sell the house and land for what they would fetch.

"Gregory Glendonwyn would certainly give a great price. They have long been anxious to him in the midst of his acreages. But I have seen a better way. It has been revealed to me.

"I am an old man. I have spent but little money all my days save on your behoving, Fairlie. There will be enough for Kate and you.

"The boys are better without any. Let them work with their hands as their father did—or with their heads if Heaven grant them wit."

Then he tapped my knee lightly with the papers in his hand.

"I want you to take these documents to John Glendonwyn. [I noted that he left out the Mr. that time.] I will tell you what they are. I have effected the transference of all my property here—that is, of the house and land—it is just five acres in all—to him in trust for his congregation.

"There is an excellent site for the kirk they are anxious to build at a place which I have designated upon the plan, at the great bend of the water, with access from the main road and a view of the river. Also, Gregory Glendonwyn will see it from nearly every window in his castle which adds greatly to its eligibility—"

"Oh, father," I cried, throwing myself on his neck, "you are so good and kind. You have forgiven John?"

He smiled a curious smile—a smile with a kind of sickly pallor in it.

"There is one thing for which I cannot ever forgive him," he said.

"And what is that?" I cried. "I am sure—sure that he is innocent!"

"Nay, he is guilty," said my father, sternly. "He was born his father's son; he cannot clear himself of that."

But he said it in such a way that I made sure in my heart that, though he could not give in, he was by no means as angry with John as he made out. Which partly excuses what comes after—or at least explains it.

CHAPTER XXXVI

A LION IN THE PATH.

I took all the night to think how I should convey the papers to John. Indeed, the problem required a great deal of thought. It seemed impossible that I should go to the herd's house at Bennangower—that is alone.

And yet I knew not how else to obey my father. I thought of Veronica, but it did not seem as if I would like to have her. For she had called once since our homecoming and Rupert's death, but of course, without seeing me.

And then everybody said that she was going to marry John. No, she was very kind, but I could not ask Veronica.

Then a thought came to me and I laughed—yes, for the first time for many months, as it seemed to me—I laughed aloud. I would go to Bennangower, but I would take little Johnny with me.

And as soon as I thought of it I sat down and wrote to Mrs. Colstoun, asking her to let Johnny come out to me for two or three days. I told her we were going away.

She already knew much of our troubles by letter—it was my only comfort—and she read them to her husband, and John called. Because, you know, I had promised to hold no communication with John without my father's knowing.

So I told her we were going quite away, and it would be a comfort to me to have Johnny for a little first. And I promised to hear him his lessons and to see that he did not eat too many gooseberries out of the garden.

And Mrs. Colstoun was so good and kind that she brought him out herself, and sat in the garden with me and talked a long time.

It was quite delightful to have little Johnny again. He was, if anything, fonder of Rupert than ever, and scampered all over the joiner's shop and cut his fingers on the tools, and was lost in the gooseberry garden, and fell off a tree, and did so many things all in one evening that I was afraid he would never last till I had need of him without going up Bennangower, I mean. At the same it was cheerful having him. I fancy my father owned that.

As for Kate she did not seem clearly to understand. Sometimes she talked to him as if he were her own Babe Rupert grown up, and then again she would stand over the cot, and look so puzzled, saying:

"This is my real baby—isn't it? I fear I have been talking foolishly."

So the next afternoon—it was June and warm—I went away up the burnside toward the Herd's House of Bennangower, with little Johnny sporting about me like a frolicsome puppy. I knew that I was likely to find the minister at home.

For Will had seen old Anton on the way down to the Post Office, and he told him that the minister had been out all the morning seeing some sick people over in the village, but would be home for what that Auld Duncan called lunch. "a daftlike word for your denner," the Cameronian elder thought.

I had the papers about Boatcroft in a little leather portfolio in which I used to carry the children's exercises to the academy of Kilgour. And when I got near the house, which shone out white and sunny on a little knoll, with the garden beneath it and the burn roaring through the Bennan Linn fifty yards to the west, I saw old Babby, John's nurse, coming to meet me, as it were, in a great hurry.

I asked Johnny to come and take my hand, and then in a minute there was Babby standing in front of me as if to block the way to the house. At another time I would have laughed. But then I only said with dignity:

"I wish to see Mr. John Glendonwyn. Is he within?"

"This is his hour for seein' fowk—this," she retorted, with some acrimony. "na doubt. I wad like to ken whaur the sermons wad come frae, gin the minister had nocht to do but waste his time wi' idle vagrants and run-the-countries!"

I could not help smiling as I answered the old lady, who had hitherto always been kind to me. But I did not know how greatly of late she had been accustomed to be caa'ed some gye queer names.

"Oh, Babby," I said, smiling, "I do hope that you do not mean me!"

"Dinna 'Babby' me, Mistress Fairlie Glendinnin," she cried with a toss of her head, "fowk that are sae lang awa' frae hame an' nae reason gi'en, may expec' to be caa'ed queer names. Aye, they maun that!"

"Well, Babby," I began—but got no further.

"Did I no tell ye no to 'Babby' me," she cried, "Miss Barbara, if ye please!—aye, and it may be something else afore lang. For I hae been kenned and refuted a decent well-doing woman a' my days, that played nae pliskies, but gaed ilk day to the kirk and bode the ither the kitchen—never missing a lawfu' day—me and my faithers afore me!"

"Well, Miss Barbara," I struck in, as soon as I could get a word, "I am obliged for what you tell me. But I must see Mr. Glendonwyn at once, as I cannot stay—and my business is important."

"Stay," she cried, catching at the word, "stay—na, it will be a short day and a lang ere ony like ye are asked to stay in a minister's house.

"Did ye no hear, young woman, that I hae already telled ye in sae mony words o' the English language (maybe it is no taught in schules noadays, like mony ither things that were thocht respectable in my youth—no that I am an auld woman either, certes, no! that ye canna see the Rev. John Glendonwyn, B. A., minister o' the Free Presbyterian Kirk this day—"

How long this torrent of scarcely a filled asperities would have continued to flow I cannot tell, but the course of events was changed by the initiative of little Johnny Colstoun.

Quite unseen to me and probably by my doughty antagonist he had detached himself from my hand and made off in the direction of the herd's house. After that, he disappeared entirely for some minutes and his movements from that point can only be made out by inference from circumstantial evidence.

As far as I saw, however, there issued presently several things from the Herd's House of Bennangower. Imprimis, one wild, sustained and savage yell indicative of pain, anger, affliction, persecution, the torture of the boot, the Inquisition, and all the worst pictures in Fox's "Book of Martyrs."

Item, one rapidly moving small boy in stained blue blouse and twinkling knickerbockers, his mouth open and squared with anguish, his face stained with some red unguent, a jam pot in one hand and the debris of some pastry in the other.

Item (still in order) a gray-headed oldish man active on his legs, bare-headed and without a coat, with his shirt sleeves rolled up to his elbow. He had a stick in his hand and his intentions were evidently to overtake the small boy—probably for purposes of political argument.

But still no John. I began to think he could not be at home.

At sight of me, however, standing at bay, as it were, with Babby giving tongue in front of me, her elbows akimbo, and her head continually tossed in the ascendant, the gray-headed old man dropped his avenging rod, abandoned the chase of Lil' Johnny, and dived back into the house with a ludicrous suggestion of a rabbit into its hole.

He was out again in a moment, however, and descended the little rough road with a step of strange dignity. He had attired himself in a black swallowtail coat with brass buttons, and his white tie was square and formidable as Babby's elbows. I think this apparition, appearing without any warning from the Herd's House of Bennangower, came nearer to sending me down the hill than all the baying of Babby's drums of war.

So little, at first sight, do we know our best friends.

CHAPTER XXXVII

LITTLE JOHNNY TO THE RESCUE.

It chanced that the man came down the pathway behind Babby, who was in the full flow of her oration. He caught the astonished dame by the arm, ordering her in stern tones to be gone to the house or he would acquaint Mr. John with her outrageous behaviour.

Then something in the tone of the man's voice told me that I had seen him before.

Indeed, more than once. It was Grierson, the old Castle Gower butler, who had brought the message to the trysting place that Rupert Glendonwyn had hurt his foot—the same who, on a later occasion had delivered the letter at the schoolhouse on the night of our going to Inch Jonet.

"Wha are ye, Duncan Grierson," cried the indignant Babby, "to inform Maister John again what it seems guid to me to do?"

"Babby, mind you," retorted Duncan Grierson, with dark and mysterious significance.

And Babby evidently minded. For she stood aside, still, however, muttering under her breath.

"A promise is a promise!" she said. "And I hae Maister John for a witness to the fact."

"Mind, Babby," said Duncan, with an air of legal wisdom, "the promise was a condeetional promise merely. There is to be nae word o't till Maister John is settled."

And he bent down and whispered in her ear. I could not hear what he said. But Babby's reply is, however, worthy of recording, inasmuch as it caused me many conjectures at the time.

"I never thocht o' looking aneath his pillow when he was sleepin'!" she said.

With a very courteous bow the old butler asked my pardon for keeping me waiting, and then apologized frankly for the mistake made by Babby.

"She is a woman weel stricken in years, mem," he said, "ye'll just need to excuse Babby."

"'Deed, an' I'm no near sae stricken in years as your ain sel', Duncan Grier—" cried the indignant lady, "na no, by a guid half-dizzen o' years! Hear ye that?"

But Duncan waved her away with calm superiority, conducting me up the rugged path with the height of dignified empressment.

"Babby, gang ye into the hoose and get a dish o' tea ready," he cried. "Dinna spare the leaves! And abune a' see that the water is boiling afore ye poor it in.

"Indeed, mem, Mr. John would have been maist disappointed if he had missed your veesit. (Come oot o' that, ye illset wee bastie!) I beg pardon, Miss, but I am afraid your young gentleman will break his neck if he persists in crawling on the roof! There, what did I tell ye, ye camsteery hule o' a redeecious callant?"

Little Johnny had indeed fallen through the thatched and rotten roof of one of the seldom-used sheds in the rear of the farmstanding, and was presently rescued, howling lustily, by a single leg which appeared waving among the débris.

Duncan held him in the air as he might have done a kicking rabbit, and dusted him vigorously. Indeed, I fear that he performed the operation with so heavy a hand that in more than one sense it might be called a dressing down.

I think the blood must have risen quickly to my face, for I could feel myself turning red all over.

So intent was I on the fate of my ally that I did not notice that John Glendonwyn himself was standing, with a strange expression of wonder on his face, in the doorway of his cot. He was, I saw at once, much paler than he had been—indeed, thinner altogether—but with a determined, masterful and manly expression such as I had never seen on his face before.

And in the next moment I was holding his hand, while he was asking concerning my father, my sister and the others—doubtless wondering what in the world had brought me to the Herd's house in the Bennangower.

By this time Duncan Grierson had completed little Johnny's toilet and set that enterprising infant on his feet. Johnny was crying, if one may use the expression of such a darling child, most viciously.

And the old butler had much difficulty in conducting himself reputably before his young master, owing to the fact that in the midst of his explanations he would suddenly find himself spun around by the frantic lunges of Johnny, who, having set down poor old Duncan, as the cause of his misfortunes, was now trying furiously to reach his black-stockinged shins with his little iron-shod boots.

Whereupon I pounced upon Johnny and bade him be a good boy or I would despatch him back to his mother that same night.

"Shan't go," exclaimed the hopeful son of the house of Colstoun. "I doesn't mind mother much, but I hate school. Yes, I does! New teatzer is so ugly!"

"O Johnny," I said reproachfully, "but if she is good, what does it matter whether she is pretty or not?"

"Does though," said Johnny, struggling to be free, "he finks so" [here he pointed to John Glendonwyn]—"doesn't tum to our school now, not since new teatzer tummed. Mother—she thaid so only last night!"

"Would you like some lumps of sugar, Johnny?" said John, hastily, from the doorway. "I am afraid there are no brandy balls up here. You should have sent me word you were coming."

"Let's—thee—thugar!" said Johnny (which, being interpreted, meant that Johnny desired to be introduced to the aforesaid lumps of sugar).

"Come away in!" said John. "I have but one room, but the good people make me both comfortable and happy—that is, as far as I can be—without."

He stopped and looked very curiously at me. It was certainly a beautifully neat little room, with no appearance of a bed in it that I could see, except that there was a screen in the corner which had evidently served and probably did so yet upon occasion as a clothershore.

After he had brought us into his room John Glendonwyn stood before me scarce knowing what to say, waiting, I think, till I had opened my mission. But I knew better than to attempt anything of the kind with parley.

"Will you give Johnny some sugar?" I said. "That will keep him quiet till it is done!"

John went out quickly, instantly followed by Johnny, who flung himself off the seat on which I had just arranged him, and plunged after his most through the door, shouting:

"Me tummin' to see you get it mineself!"

"Think I will not give you enough?" said John. "Have the loaf!"

"Fanks, I will!" said the literal Johnny, and appeared forthwith in the tiny "ben-the-house" with a scarce-broken white cone of lump sugar under his arm.

"Johnny, dear," I remonstrated, "you will make yourself ill. Give it to me and I will break you off a bit."

"No, saint!" said the obedient little man; "have eated free—O, ever so much bigger nor that! 'Tis all right, teatzer, dear!"

Then I began to tell John Glendonwyn the message my father had sent me to deliver, and when he heard of the gift of the house and five acres of freehold, he rose from his chair excitedly.

"Oh," he cried, "it is like new life to me to even hear of the possibility of such a thing. But we cannot take the property as a gift. That is not to be thought of—we will give your father any rent—we will pay any price—"

"John," I said, "you ought to know my father by this time. What he does he will do his own way, if at all. All is completed. There are the title deeds."

While John stood stricken dumb by the wonder of the news, the door was opened without noise and Duncan Grierson entered, carrying a tray of tea with little biscuits and cakes arranged cunningly among watercress and green leaves.

"Cream or leemon, maiam?" he asked in a low, confidential voice, adding in a yet lower tone, "I wad advise the leemon, mam, as the milk was boiled afore ye cam up the brae."

After he had served his master he went steadily to the door, and then, turning, remarked at large, as if imparting a piece of general information to whomsoever it might concern:

"There's some nice cream tarts in the kitchen wi' raspberry jam, five have strawberry! They'll sune be done!"

Like an arrow from the bow little Johnny sprang from his perch with the loaf of sugar in his hand, from which he had been endeavoring to break pieces with the fire-irons.

"Na, na," added Duncan, disembarrassing him of the remains of the core, "gin Babby were to see ye, there wad be nae leevin' wi' her for a month!"

John and I were left alone for the first time since he had helped me to roll up the maps in the old infant department of Kilgour Academy, the day he went to college for the last time. Had he forgotten?

He had come over to where I was sitting. He was kneeling before me. He had taken my hands. No, he had not forgotten.

And as for me—I shall never forget.

But it was necessary that I should tell him that we were all to go away from the neighborhood, and take up a new life elsewhere. I could see his face pale and change at the news.

"Why should you go away from me, Fairlie?" he was saying. "I have just found you again. Your father's anger against me cannot be very bitter. I cannot think that he would visit upon my head the sins of my father and brother. Else would he have sent you to me with this message of peace?"

There was something in what he urged. Indeed, I had been thinking of it with a certain gladness all the past night and all that day. But what of Kate and her babe, Rupert? That, at least, was unanswerable.

So I only shook my head sadly enough.

"We must wait, John," I said, "you have waited a long time without knowing, you must be good and wait a little while patiently now, that you know—that which you do know."

"I think it will be harder than ever now!" he groaned.

I suggested the penny post, as a new invention likely to aid persons in our condition and circumstances, and pulled out my purse with some of the famous black stamps stuck in the flap.

I suggested that there was the building of his new church to attend to. But I will not mention the fraction of his thoughts which, he declared, that erewhile all-important subjects now occupied. For the which rash words I knew that he would be sorry in the morning.

When I went away Johnny appeared from the kitchen laden with delicacies, ready but not willing to accompany me. Indeed, he only consented to leave the sugar cone on the distinct understanding that it was to be sent after him early on the morrow.

And as I went through the door I heard Duncan Grierson say in his two diverse voices:

"At what hour will your honor please to dine? At 8? Thank you, sir. Ye donnert auld deevil, gin ye dinna gang into the house and keep your tongue within your teeth about what's nane o' your business. I swear by the Pooers Abune that I'll never mairry ye on this side o' Jordan's swelling flood! Hear ye that, ye cantankerous besom?"

And I think that John heard, too, for he hurried me down the little loaning and out upon the vast encompassing heather.

"Duncan is a faithful servant," he said in his simple, earnest way. "We must see to it that his latter end is peace."

I did not answer, but in my heart I judged that it would be, seeing how well he knew how to rule his own house.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

FATE RIDES BEFORE.

That night John and I were treading close upon the heels of fate. Fatality strolled behind us and before, yet we saw him not, nor so much as heard his garments rustle.

Little Johnny gambolled in front running races with himself, and then stretching back to tell us who had won.

But in spite of these frequent appearances, boldly, unashamedly, John held my hand. The day of Lil' Dzonny's power was well-nigh over.

Blackmail or whitemail are only good so long as there is a secret to be kept. All the world was free to know ours.

And when we reached the dark aisles of the Gower woods, which we must perforce cross, John stopped, and suddenly taking me in his arms bade me promise that nothing in the world should ever come between us two—neither father, nor sister, nor brother (though goodness knows the poor boys never tried), nor the whole world.

And since I would not promise so many things all at once, he took such sweet blackmail that—in justice to myself I had to put off giving the final promise for quite a while.

But at any rate I did promise at last, and John was so grateful that before we knew, there stood Lil' Dzonny before us, with uplifted finger imminent as fate.

"What makes 'oo want to kiss yike that?" he demanded, truculently.

"Come here, Johnny, and I'll kiss you, too!" I cried.

But the young man, being perhaps not a little jealous, would none of me.

"I doan 'ants to be kissed!" he said, with great emphasis on the first pronoun personal, which it is to be hoped came home to John Glendonwyn.

But instead he only laughed.

"You don't know what is good for you, Johnny," he said. "You'll change your mind some day!"

"Knows what I 'ants, though!" said Lil' Dzonny, calmly, "I yikes thugar, peattles, toffee, minthe pies and stawbewwy dzam—kisses not much!"

He added the last phrase in a tone and with a curl of the lip which were actual triumphs of contempt.

"Course you wants to kiss—you're a girl," he said, "but 'im—he's dot a mumstash and whishers—what does him want to do it for?"

"Well, it sometimes happens so," said John, "some day you'll find out."

"No, I shan't!" said Johnny, very positively, "me and Jimmy Ogilvy has sweared as sure as death, that if a girl kisses us we hope to die if we doesn't hat her over the head—hard!"

"Oh, Johnny!" I cried, "won't you let even me kiss you?"

"Yes," said the youth, with the tolerant indifference of one making immense concessions, "I said—kept you and mother!"

"Well," said John, who would have given away the half of his kingdom that night, "there's half a crown—only you must promise not to say anything about—about—"

And here he stopped. It was difficult to put into words.

"About minithster kissin' Teatzer! Course I won't!"

"But say, 'as sure as death and double death.' Isn't that the regular thing?" pursued John, who had had certain experiences as to the wisdom of bribing Johnny without putting him on his oath. Even with the result, was more than doubtful.

"Let's thee the half a crown first," demanded Johnny, the future Successful Merchant.

The coin was handed over, duly inspected, smelt, and finally the young man of business satisfied himself of its entire genuineness by setting a particularly fine set of teeth into it.

"All right," said Johnny cheerfully, "shan't tell. But I wouldn't again, you know. Somebodiy growed-up might see you next time."

The advice was good, and indeed there was scant opportunity.

We stepped into the road and walked across to the little woodland glade which led to the Flower Cot.

"Fairlie," said John Glendonwyn, with a sudden break into solemnity, "your father will not let me thank him in person. Do it for me. Tell him what he has done for me and for our poor folks. You can put it better than I. And tell him also that other, which has brought yet greater happiness into my life to-night."

"What, all of it?" I said. And then, thinking of Johnny, I added: "What will you give me not to?"

"Yes, all," said John, with a firmness and magnanimity for which I could not but admire him, even though I knew he did not mean it.

But the next moment I caught the gleam of humor in his eye.

"You had better," he said, "for if you don't, that perjured mercenary little beast will do it for you. It will be well to get in ahead of him."

* * * * * * *

But as we paused to say good night beside the gate of Boatcroft, the lilac once more in blossom, white and purple as of yore, scent-laden in the gleaming dews, we heard the far-off galloping of a horse.

A man passed us going rapidly in the direction from which we had come. But as he went he looked back over his shoulder—then, suddenly checking his beast, he turned and approached the place where we stood in shadow.

"Is that you, Mr. John?" he said.

"Yes, Greg—what is the matter?"

"You are to come at once to Castle Gower," said the man, without touching his hat; "your father has had a shock, and Surgeon Warner says he cannot live many hours!"

That was Fate's touch on the shoulder for us two.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

WE RIDE AFTER.

Instantly John bade the man dismount, and with a single pressure of the hand to me, I saw him throw himself into the saddle and ride off furiously in the direction of Castle Gower.

I stood a while dazed with the suddenness of the leave-taking. I knew that, if the news proved to be true, the fat would be in the fire indeed.

My father, so I found from Will, who met me at the door as I was entering, had departed that afternoon soon after I had set out with little Johnny Colstoun.

His declared intention had been to go to Drumfern in order to arrange for taking us all thither on the way to the haven of rest he had been preparing to receive us.

And whom when I did enter should I see sitting comfortably at the fireside but Veronica Cassar. I know that the blood sprang unbidden into my cheeks as she rose up with her usual swift impulsiveness and kissed me.

She had been talking to Kate, who was still busied about her black dress. And I could see that Veronica had been helping her, for the skirt had assumed quite a different aspect. In fact, it neared completion.

I do not know what I said, or Veronica, either, except that she seemed to be scolding me for being out so late, and I was all on pins and needles lest Master Johnny's uncertain tongue should reveal certain secrets of the fir woods of Gower. But he did nothing except wipe off Veronica's kiss in a disgusted manner with his handkerchief, and begin to play obtrusively with his new half-crown.

"You small reptile," cried Veronica, "you are a decent boy clean spoilt! That's what's the matter with you. It would be telling you if I had you for a week over at the manse with my scamps. I would take a frill or two out of your tucker, young man!"

"Well, 'oo shan't!" said Johnny, tranquilly. "I don't love 'oo—oo's nasty!"

"Frank!" said Vera, laughing. "Sweet child! Speaks so prettily, too; no wonder you pet him, Fairlie. Well, I know somebody who wouldn't, that's all!"

She regarded him with a look of manifest disfavor.

"Who gave you that new half-crown, Johnny Colstoun?" Vera demanded, eying it as the owner fitted it alternately into either eye or held it somewhat perilously between his teeth.

"Tisn't 'oor bissness!" responded Johnny with simple directness.

"Johnny mustn't speak that way to a lady," I said sternly, "or Johnny will be punished."

He turned upon me quickly.

"Does 'oo want Lil' Dzonny to tell the lady fings?" he asked, quick as the darting sting of a wasp.

Duty and prudence, discipline and valor's better part never were in more direct conflict. So I said nothing.

"You have had a nice walk?" asked Veronica, stitching a broad lace collar on Kate's completed dress.

I cannot but think that she had some suspicion or at least some curiosity as to where I had been. Besides, I learned afterward that in my absence Kate had been talking to her about her husband and Babe Rupert. Yet so clever was she that from her manner you would never have suspected that she knew anything.

"Oh, yes," I answered, "Johnny and I were out on the moor. It was a fine night, and we came through the wood, stopping once or twice to gather flowers."

"Stopped free times!" said Johnny, accurately.

"Did you bring any flowers back?" said Kate, lifting her head for the first time. "I would like to take them up to Babe Rupert. He likes them. When he is awake he crows and chuckles over them just wonderfully. He is growing such a clever child, and so dear—but, ah—how could he be otherwise?"

"Ah, how indeed!" sighed Veronica, with the least trace of ironic intention.

"I will go out and get the flowers," I said, "I will take them up to baby myself. I should like to see him."

"I will tum and help 'oo gather them!" said Johnny.

And hoping to cover the verb which he had used, and fearful of other revelations, I took him with me gladly. I went into the garden and picked what of cornflowers and bluebells, bell heather and wild thyme could be found there. Then I went up to Master Rupert and put the flowers into a glass by his bedside.

Veronica staid a long time after that, but though I was in the room most of the time, except when I was getting a little supper ready, the name of John Glendonwyn did not once pass her lips. And Vera is usually so frank.

But all the time a curious sense of something impending, weighed on me, so that I got hold of Will, and, after binding him to secrecy, I told him of the sudden illness of Mr. Glendonwyn, and that I had promised to marry John.

"Does father know?" said Will, looking at me very strangely.

I told him I did not know whether he did or not, adding, however, that John had told him long ago, when he went to Edinburgh indeed, that he loved me and meant to ask me to marry him as soon as he could. Also, that my father sent me this afternoon with a message to the herd's house of Bennangower.

"Oh!" said Will, thoughtful, then after a pause he added: "I think he wants to give in, and can't bring his pride to let him!"

Which as I now judge was pretty near the truth.

Yet it were a fact that he had gone away in order to give us a clear field (for the sake of my happiness—because I had been fretting and growing pale). I think my father would have staid still where he was had he foreseen what things were to happen that night.

I told Will that he had better entice Harry and Dick early into the house that night and keep them there reading or playing draughts. They could have something nice for supper, I said—anything, indeed, to bribe them to stay.

"Oh," said Will calmly, "I'll entice them—I'll bribe them! I will just tell them that I will hammer the life out of them if they don't. That will be all right!"

And believing that he knew best, I left him to make his arrangements. But when they were needed, Harry and Dick were certainly in the kitchen. I asked no questions, and none of the three volunteered any information.

* * * * * * *

It was, I think, about 8 o'clock and still quite light when Veronica announced that she must go back to the Manse. Will and I prepared to convoy her. Little Johnny was also to go home with us, unwilling in body, but consoled by the thought that if we hurried we would get to Miss Emily Parton's before the maid lady's shop closed for the night.

"Will," I said, "when I go to the door you might ask Harry and Dick not to go out till I get back."

"Right," he said, and went over to them as I followed Veronica out.

"Take care of Babe Rupert till I get back," I said to Kate, "don't let him stray."

Kate laughed a quick, little scornful laugh more like her old self, as Veronica stooped and kissed the boy in his cot. I forgot to say that by this time we were all three upstairs in our room, where Veronica had gone to put on her hat and things. Then she picked up the little glass of blossoms which I had hastily picked in the garden.

"These are pretty wild flowers, are they not?" she said, looking across at me.

"You would not have thought that Veronica could have been so spiteful, would you? But I don't think she had properly forgiven me for letting her think it was Rupert I cared for that day when I had the headache and she was so kind to me. She did afterward, though, so it came all right.

"Well, we had come downstairs, and I was standing at the blue palings looking out along the road toward Gower Castle (for I somehow felt that something must happen that night), when the same servant who had spoken to John came forward quickly from under the lilac tree at the corner. He had apparently been standing there waiting.

He had a letter in his hand, and I thought that I saw Veronica draw herself up at the sight of the Castle Gower liveries.

"I think I shall walk on. Good night, Fairlie and Will!" she said, rather shortly.

But the coldness of her tone made the tears come into my eyes.

"Don't, Veronica," I cried, "please don't! You don't know in what trouble we are. And you are the only friend we have!" I meant girl friend, of course.

And while she stood irresolute what to do I tore the note open and read these words:

CASTLE GOWER, Tuesday Evening.

Please come at once with Greg bring Kate and the baby. What we talked of must be done to-night, if at all. We are expecting you here. Carriage will be at corner of road. Bring father or Will with you if they are at home, but for God's sake do not fail to bring Kate and the child. JOHN.

To Be Continued.

WAS BEHANZIN A VICTIM?

The Exiled King of Dahomey Probably Perished Among the Ruins of St. Pierre.

For eight years past the young King of Dahomey, Behanzin, who was toppled off his throne by Col. Dodds, at the head of his victorious army in the fall of 1892, has been a discontented exile on the island of Martinique. Only a few weeks before the destruction of St. Pierre, he was reported to be living in that city. The ex-autocrat of Dahomey appears to have been forgotten in the terrible excitement of the past few weeks, but it seems entirely probable that he was numbered among the victims. Probably the people of Martinique did not care what became of him, for he was not a popular resident of their island. This may be the reason why nothing has been said of the former king as lost, missing or safe, in any of the despatches that have come from Martinique. One of the British newspapers has reported him as probably dead.

Unlike his brother in distress, King Prempeh of Ashanti, Behanzin did not take kindly to exile. Prempeh, who got into trouble with the British because he persisted in the view that he had a right to sacrifice slaves and to invade British territory in order to get victims for his executioners, is now nominally a Presbyterian at Freetown, Sierra Leone, where he was taken for safe keeping. He leads comfortable life, maintains a semblance of royal dignity on a small allowance and sturdily asserts that the British are masters of the world or they could not have conquered so great a king as himself.

But Behanzin never became resigned to his reverse of fortune. He has steadily represented in Martinique that he felt himself much abused for being compelled to live in a little island that might easily be lost if set down in the great domain of which he was once master. He has refused at all times to speak a word of French, though he understood it well enough. He felt insulted unless dressed as a King, and as no one would humor him so far, he consoled himself snubbed by the entire population. He made things generally unpleasant for himself and probably did not have a friend on the island outside the few natives who were brought from Africa with him.

But Behanzin should have his due, whether or not he has perished miserably or left not a friend to mourn his untimely end if he is one of the victims of Mont Pelée's outburst. He was one of the bravest blacks who ever confronted a civilized foe. Col. Dodds, who conquered him, paid the highest tribute to his courage and tactical skill in the face of trained soldiers, whom he could not beat, but against whom he fought with desperate courage.

Before the campaign of 1892 was well advanced Behanzin knew that he had made a terrible blunder but he would not give up as long as he had a man or woman to fight with him. He was in his twenties and had been on the throne which his fathers had occupied for two centuries, less than three years. He was the victim of an erroneous idea of his own importance and power. He had made a treaty with the French promising to recognize their right to the port of Kotonu and to stop raiding into their territory for slaves. But he changed his mind in spite of the subsidy the French were paying him, declared that the French had no business in the country anyhow and he would drive them into the sea. The sea of troubles that then arose submerged the throne of Dahomey instead of the French and the French flag has ever since floated over the land.

In the report that Col. Dodds wrote of the war he accounted for the terrible mortality among the Europeans in the fighting by the fact that Behanzin posted his best marksmen in the trees and ordered them to shoot only at white men as long as any whites were in sight. In proportion to numbers the mortality was far greater among the white troops than among their native allies. Col. Dodds said that Behanzin carried on the war with an energy and a fury he had never seen equalled by the blacks of the Soudan further north.

When at last the young King had been driven back inch by inch to the gates of his capital he made a most desperate effort to save Abomey from falling into the hands of his enemies. In person, he led 10,000 soldiers out against the encircling French. His troops included the Amazon regiments, the famous women fighters of Dahomey. The King was in the van and thick of the fight through it all. The French drew in their forces that had practically surrounded the city and formed a square with artillery on every side. Behanzin threw his forces upon this square, determined to shatter it if there was physical force enough in his poorly armed regiments to break a way through.

Time and again the warriors and Amazons charged furiously upon the square. Many of them were killed within thirty feet of the guns. Neither canon, mitrailleuse nor volleys of quick firing rifles dismayed them. Many of them died on the bayonets of the invader. Col. Dodds wrote that he never saw a barbarous foe exhibit such wonderful courage. The avalanche of frenzied men and women soldiers made four of these terrible charges upon the French square. It was no use. Science was too much for mere brute courage. After three hours fighting all that were left of the Dahomeyans scattered in every direction. About half their number were dead or wounded on the field.

This ended the war. Behanzin left his capital town a smoking ruin and fled to the north. The battle made Col. Dodds a Brigadier-General, and King Behanzin a skulking fugitive, flitting for two years from one hiding place to another till at last the French captured him. They dared not leave him in Africa but took him beyond the seas.

For a short season Behanzin had great and kingly power as Africans estimate go, and even when stripped of the last vestige of his power he retained to the last breath he drew, if he has really perished, the old spirit that made his Amazons the most devilish of fighters and him the fit leader of them.

MAKING WILLS.

Considerations Which May Deter Persons From Trying Their Own Hands at It.

From the Buffalo Courier.

"Oh, yes," said Judge Marcus of the Surrogate's Court yesterday, "there are wills and wills, and, of course, as my court has to do principally with wills, being known as 'the dead man's court,' we see many peculiarly drawn documents in the course of a year. There are numerous questions which suggest themselves when a will is found. Of course, it must be determined whether or not the apparent will was made, and the following list of suggestions may be found useful:

"May not the supposed will be a forgery?

"Was it executed by the deceased while of unsound mind?

"Was it the result of undue influence practised upon the deceased?

"Was it the result of fraud?

"Was it subscribed by the testator at the end thereof?

"Was it subscribed by two witnesses at the end thereof?

"Did the testator request each witness to subscribe as such?

"Did the testator subscribe or acknowledge his subscription in the presence of each witness?

"Did the testator declare to each witness at the time of subscribing or acknowledging the subscription that the instrument was his last will and testament?

"If the will is a will of real estate, was it made by a person 21 years of age or over?

"If the will is a will of personal estate and made by a minor, was he of the age of 18 years or upward; or, if by a female, was she of the age of 16 or upward?

"Has the will been revoked by a subsequent will or writing executed with the same formalities as a will; by a testator in presenting, burning, tearing, cancelling, obliterating or destroying his will with the intent and for the purpose of revoking it, or was it done by another person in the testator's presence and by his direction?

"Has it been revoked by a subsequent marriage by the subsequent marriage of a man and the birth of issue before or after the testator's death, where the wife or issue survive, and the will disposed of the whole of testator's estate without provision being made for the issue by some settlement in the will, and with his mentioning the issue in the will in such a way as to show the intent not to make such a provision?

"Where the will fails wholly, or in part, by reason of being void for uncertainty, was any part of the will revoked? For illegally suspending the power of alienation, directing illegal accumulation of income, gifts being made to subscribing witness whose testimony is necessary to prove a will, too large a portion of the estate being given to charitable, literary or religious associations, where the testator leaves a husband, wife, child or relative, gifts being made to literary, charitable and religious associations in a will not executed two months before a testator's death, the death of a legatee or devisee before the death of a testator, the gift being made conditionally and the condition having failed, the legatee or devisee being a corporation which has not been expressly authorized by law to take under a will, or which has exhausted the estimate allowed by law, the subsequent birth of a child.

"These are all these and many other questions which may be raised concerning the validity of wills," said Judge Marcus.

"Wherever the will is set aside for any of the reasons I have mentioned, the party intending to make a valid will is declared to have died intestate, and his property, instead of being disposed of by will, as he intended, takes it course under the statute of distribution, commonly known as the intestate succession.

"The law of this State allows a person to dispose of his property in any way, shape or manner that he sees fit. The disposition may follow the bent of a mind which is capricious, unfair, fantastic, whimsical, humorous, full of wandering thoughts, always conditioned, however, that the person is of sound mind, with testamentary capacity, and free from fraud and undue influence, and in general it may be said that no particular form of words is necessary to constitute a will.

"With the exception of soldiers and sailors, whom the law allows to make wills orally, there must be a written statement of the testator's wish, signed by him or already outlined, no case does a will have any operation until the testator's death. It may be made upon condition so that it will not take effect except under the circumstances specified.

"It is very common to commence wills with a formal statement reciting the testator's capacity to make a will, and the feelings which move him to act. These phrases are not, however, of any legal force and may be inserted or not, at pleasure."

No Mystery.

From the Chicago Tribune.

"By the way," remarked the man from the east, "it seems to me I have heard that my old neighbor, Jake Billings, who came out here some years ago, disappeared completely and mysteriously not long after his arrival."

"He disappeared completely 'nough," replied Rattlesnake Bill, "but not mysteriously. Stranger, he was ridin' on a dynamite wagon when the hind axle broke."

NIGNI, THE DWARF, TELLS TALES.

The Adventures of an Interesting Little Man, as Written by Himself.

NO. 7—HE MEETS THE QUEEN AND FIGHTS BRITONS.

We opened for business in London in the largest hall that could be obtained, and the attendance on the first day and evening was more than 20,000 people. Thousands who desired to enter were turned away.

I was not the first dwarf ever exhibited in England by any manner of means, but certainly I was the smallest. Everybody said I was also the smartest, but I am not going to boast about that.

What made the people so anxious to see me was the fact that I had appeared before Queen Victoria and pleased her, and also because twelve of the most famous doctors in London had looked me over and given it as their opinion that I was the smallest human being of my age in the whole world.

I will tell you first about my visit to the Queen. Mr. Yeddo took me to Windsor Castle in a carriage, and we were received by an official in magnificent dress.

Before conducting us into the presence of the Queen he instructed us how to bow and what to say, and he was quite friendly. There were two ladies with the Queen, who, I at once saw, was quite an old lady with a motherly look, and I had only made my bow when she said:

"Don't be afraid, little man, but come and sit on this chair and talk to me. I am told that you speak English."

"English I do speak, O Queen of England," I said in reply as I sat down.

I felt very bashful at first and wondered if I could not run away, but in a few minutes my courage came back and I found myself talking as if to any other person. Her Majesty asked me many questions about Japan and my father and mother, and at the end of half an hour she presented me a gold chain for my neck and was pleased to say that I entertained her greatly.

As to the doctors, some of them seemed to think at first that I was an idiot, and others were of the opinion that I was a freak, but I soon proved to them that I was all right. They asked many questions of me and of Mr. Yeddo, and they felt of my head,