The Battlefield Treasure

F. Bayford Harrison

Table of Contents

The Battlefield Treasure

F. Bayford Harrison

Chapter 1. OLD AND YOUNG.

It was late in the day, and the sun shone on the north side of Battlefield Church, having gone beyond the west window, in which now only a few panes shone golden with his lingering rays. The air was soft and warm; the small birds were twittering ere they went to rest, and the great rooks hovered, cawing loudly, over their homes in yonder high elms. There were not many other sounds disturbing that July evening calm; from a farm near came lowing of cows, and baaing of lambs, and moaning of pigeons; and from the fields occasional murmurs of human voices, mingled with laughter, and barking of dogs.

The old man who sat on a little mound, with his face towards Shrewsbury, was in keeping with the scene around him. He was over seventy years of age, to judge by his looks; for he was bent, and thin, and pale, with long white hair flowing down almost to his shoulders, and mingling with his long white beard. His features were regular and clear−cut, his skin pallid, his eyes of a deep blue. In his hand was a thin stick, with which he absently stirred the loose earth at his feet, as his thoughts wandered aimlessly through the long−ago past.

The voice of a boy and the bark of a dog came nearer; came through an opening in the hedge to the right of the old man, and then came close beside him.

The boy, after the manner of boys, would have passed shyly without looking at the old man, but the dog, after the manner of dogs, was at once interested in the stranger, and desirous to know why the stick was at work in the loose earth. Probably some idea of rats crossed the canine mind.

Poor dog! good dog! said a weak low voice; and a thin and white hand patted the head of the rough Scotch terrier.

Bonnie! cried the boy, with the full brisk tones of youth; here, come along!

But Bonnie did not obey his master; the old man was still an interesting object.

Is this your dog, young sir? inquired the old man.

The lad turned back and approached. Yes, sir, with a touch of his cap; he won't hurt you, he's quiet enough.

I am not afraid, rejoined the old man, smiling; perhaps your dog knows me. I am Roger Corbet, and I live at the white cottage with the magnolia−tree; I daresay Bonnie knows me.

I don't think he does, said the boy, because he lives close to the town. I don't often bring him this way.

When he comes this way he must pass my house; and you should often bring him this way, young sir.

Why should I?

Because this is one of the most interesting spots in all Shropshire, nay, in all England.

Oh, I know that, the boy replied loftily; of course I know about the battle fought here. They take care to teach us that at school.

You go to Shrewsbury Grammar School? asked the old gentleman, with a sudden flash of light in his eyes.

Yes. My father is Mr. Warren, the doctor; we live at Acton House.

I know; he is said to be a good man. Young Warren, I went to Shrewsbury Grammar School when I was your age.

I am fifteen, sir.

Mr. Corbet nodded. I went there until I was seventeen. Fifty−five years ago! Half a century ago!

After a pause, during which the old man's eyes grew dreamy, young Warren felt the silence becoming awkward, and said suddenly, I am a day−boy.

The blue eyes came back to the present time; I, too, was a day−boy. Half a century ago! But, my boy, four centuries and eighty years have passed since the great battle was fought on this ground.

It was in 1403, said young Warren, glancing round at the church; the date is there.

Yes, the date is there. Beneath that church were buried the slain. When we sit there on Sundays, praying and singing and listening to the sermon, and all is so cool and quiet, is it not strange to think of those who lie beneath us? Henry's men, and Hotspur's men, and Douglas's men, and Glendower's men; ay, and many of Jack Falstaff's ragged regiment, which was 'well−peppered' in that memorable fray.

My name is Jack, said the boy.

Mr. Corbet went on, Perhaps on this very spot where now I so idly sit, fat Jack Falstaff played that foolish trick of his, pretending that he had killed the gallant Hotspur. Perhaps where you stand, young Henry, Prince of Wales, fought his brave fight. Jack Warren, the prince was not fifteen years of age.

Younger than I am! exclaimed the lad.

Ay; it is not age that always does great deeds. No one is too young to do great deeds; no one too old. Boy, you are young now; I trust that half a century hence, if you live so long, you will not look back on a life utterly useless, utterly valueless nothing done in it, nothing done by it.

Mr. Corbet again pushed his stick into the earth and disturbed the roots of the grass. Bonnie had been sitting with his face turned towards Shrewsbury, one ear standing up stiffly, the other lying down.

A chilly breeze blew across the battlefield. It is time to go, said Mr. Corbet; kindly give me a hand.

Jack Warren assisted the old man to rise. The sky was full of a dull red glow, and from the ground was rising a slight mist; through a gap in the trees the spires of the Shrewsbury churches showed indistinct, only their tips clear, while a smoky murky grayness hid the town at their feet.

The old man, the boy, and the dog, stumbled across the broken ground, and so out into the fields, which were thick with corn turning from green to gold. They did not talk much. When they came to the stile Jack Warren helped his new friend to climb it, and they came out on the road between Shrewsbury and Hadnall.

Looking back as they walked, Mr. Corbet said, Hotspur came over Haughmond Hill. Douglas fled that way, and was taken.

Now, to tell the truth, Jack Warren thought it hardly fair of his new acquaintance to talk History of England. Jack drew a sharp distinction between school and everything else; all that was spoken of in school was to him lessons, and lessons should only be taught in school. He had not yet learnt to care for the History of England, and he could not understand why Mr. Corbet should care for it, or talk about it.

The old man and the boy walked together along the dusty high−road. They were a contrast; the one rosy−cheeked, dark−eyed, black−haired, life and strength in every limb, impatient, eager, careless, hopeful, a thorough boy; the other pale, dim−eyed, white−haired, feeble, pensive, and with a voice so strangely soft and weak that often it sounded far−away, and Jack could hardly hear the words it spoke.

Presently they came to the white cottage, of which the front was covered by the large glossy leaves of a magnolia−tree whose great creamy blossoms sent out a heavy yet delicious scent.

Will you come into my little house? said Mr. Corbet to his companion; my housekeeper, Mrs. Clive, will give you supper of home−made bread, raspberry jam, melon, and milk. I know we have these things in the house.

No, thank you, said Jack.

I like you, said Mr. Warren; I should like to talk to you. I want to tell you all about Battlefield and Hotspur.

No, thank Jack began quickly, but checked himself, wishing to act politely.

Master Warren, put your ear to my mouth.

Jack did so, half alarmed at the old man's mysterious manner.

Have you ever found anything? Have you ever come across Roman pottery, Saxon coins? Anything of that kind?

No, sir, Jack replied in a whisper.

Try and do something to distinguish yourself. Look at me, a failure! If I were to tell you the story of my life you would earnestly resolve not to be a failure as I have been. Other men have succeeded in many ways. Even ploughmen have discovered treasures. But not I. Yet I am a Corbet; yes, one of *the* Corbets. What profession do you think of, my boy?

I am going to be a doctor, said Jack, like my father.

Good. I am a barrister; bad. I should like to tell you the story of my life. I should like to write it, or get some one else to write it. It would be a warning to idle young men. If I could see my name in one of the glass cases in the museum I should be contented. But to die, to go into the open presence of the Creator, of Him Who has made all things, and Who does all things, and to have to say, 'I am a failure, I have done nothing,' boy, I am ashamed.

Jack was rather frightened, as much by Mr. Corbet's strange manner and subdued whisper as by his words.

Good night, sir, said Jack.

The door of the cottage was now opened by a stout elderly woman, who said, Time for you to come in, sir.

Yes, yes, replied Mr. Corbet in his usual voice. Master Jack Warren, will you come and dine with me to−morrow?

No, thank you, said Jack; to−morrow is Sunday.

I know it is. We could go to church together, and then you might dine with me. There will be cold roast beef, salad, and raspberry and currant tart.

No, thank you, said Jack.

Come in, Mr. Corbet, said the housekeeper crossly; you'll be catching cold. You've only got on your alpaca coat, and there's a heavy dew falling.

Well, I'm sorry, sighed Mr. Corbet. I wish you would come to dinner; I know so few young people.

I will ask my father, said Jack, just to satisfy the old man.

Ay, do; and if he gives you leave, come.

Yes, thank you; and away went Jack. A few paces from the gate Jack saw a big, loose−made, awkward, youngish working−man; the foolish face which surmounted this ungainly figure wore a stupid, yet cunning smile. There was nothing remarkable in this person; but there was with him another person who was remarkable in Jack's eyes. A man of very dark skin, with black hair, and singularly bright black eyes, and with white teeth, which positively shone when he opened the lips hidden among a thick black heard. As Jack passed these two, the commonplace man said to his companion, Ay, worth pounds and pounds.

The dark man said something which sounded like Hush! not so loud.

Having gone a few steps further Jack thought to himself, That is a queer gypsy−looking fellow, and turned his head to glance at him again. As he did so he just caught the gypsy in a similar action his head turned to gaze at Jack, his dirty thumb pointing at the boy, and one of his shiny black eyes winking at his companion.

The companion's face wore a broad grin, such as a stupid person assumes when he wishes to appear as if he understood the hints of another cleverer than himself. When the two men saw that they were noticed they walked off; the stupid one went into Mr. Corbet's gate, the dark one crossed the road and vaulted over a fence into a field.

Then Jack went to his home, a big house well filled by Mr. Warren, his wife, and their nine children. He went into the drawing−room, where his eldest sister was playing the piano, while Mr. Warren read the newspaper, and Mrs. Warren darned socks.

Where have you been? asked Mr. Warren.

To Battlefield. Father, do you know Mr. Roger Corbet?

A little. An eccentric man, living on a small private income. There is some sad story about his having failed at the bar. I don't know the whole of it.

May I go with him to Battlefield Church tomorrow, and dine with him afterwards?

Mrs. Warren looked up from her work. Has he invited you?

Yes, Mother.

How do you come to know him? inquired Mr. Warren, rather amused.

He was there just now, and we talked at least he did all a lot of old rubbish about Hotspur and fellows in the History of England; and he wants to talk to me about Roman coins and Saxon crockery oh!

I have heard, said Mr. Warren, that the old gentleman is a bit of an antiquarian, always haunting the museums. Well, you may go if you like.

I don't like, said Jack.

Elsie, stop playing, said Mrs. Warren. Don't you think, Jack, that perhaps you might please the old man by going to see him to−morrow?

Oh, yes, answered Jack; he would like it.

Then will you not go?

Jack reflected a minute. Yes, I'll go. Perhaps he won't talk History of England on Sundays.

History of the Jews, perhaps, instead, said Mr. Warren dryly.

Yes, I'll go, Jack yawned.

You had better go to bed, said Elsie; you are sleepy.

Not more sleepy than you are.

I am sleepy, said the girl. Good−night! Where is Bonnie?

He went to the kitchen for his supper. Goodnight! And the boy and the girl, having dutifully kissed their parents, went away to their rooms.

Mr. Warren laid down his newspaper. Poor old Roger Corbet! said he. Mr. Warren was a busy and successful man.

Is he married? asked Mrs. Warren.

No, he has never married. I believe he went to London as a young man, studied for the bar, made a fair start something quite uncommon, I have heard. Then he failed, I don't know how, came back to Shrewsbury, and has lived ever since on his little income in that cottage.

Poor old man! said Mrs. Warren.

While they were pitying him, Mr. Corbet sat in his tiny sitting−room with a large red−bound book open before him. It was the *History of Shrewsbury*, illustrated a very fine and noble work. As he turned the leaves he was thinking of his past life, and of how much of it he would tell the boy, whom he expected to see next day. When his eye fell on a page showing a large number of Saxon coins he forgot all about Jack Warren and gave himself up to the fancies which the engravings suggested.

But presently the Dutch clock in the kitchen struck ten, and Mrs. Clive came to the door, saying: Clive is tired and is going to bed, and I am tired; and if you are not tired, sir, you ought to be. If we shut up the house, can you turn out the lamp safely?

Oh, yes, said Mr. Corbet meekly.

Then good−night! To−morrow is Sunday.

Good−night, Mrs. Clive!

As soon as the door closed Mr. Corbet put *Shrewsbury* on a high shelf and took down a Bible; and half an hour later he turned out his lamp and went to his room, and all was rest and peace in Magnolia Cottage.

Chapter 2. SUNDAY.

Next morning John Warren walked out to Magnolia Cottage in no very pleasant humour. He felt that he was wasting this beautiful Sunday, spending it with a queer old man rather than with his parents and brothers and sisters.

I can't help myself, he grumbled, but I need never do it again; and if it amuses the lonely old fellow I suppose it is the right thing, and I must not regret it.

As he came near Mr. Corbet's house Jack perceived on the footpath before him a rather odd scene. A little girl of about seven years was trotting along beside Mr. Corbet, who was wheeling a perambulator containing two babies. Jack could hardly believe his eyes; he would have turned and fled over the Wrekin before he would have wheeled even one baby in a perambulator.

At the shocking sight he blushed for the old man; his cheeks became hot and red. He walked slowly so as not to pass the disgraceful group. But alas! they all turned round and came towards him, and he could not avoid meeting them.

My young friend! said Mr. Corbet, pulling up and taking off his wide straw−hat, and with it fanning his face; you are in good time quite early. I can give these infants another turn or two.

Jack was too much distressed to make reply.

This little girl, continued Mr. Corbet, looking down on the small sharp face, is really not strong enough to wheel these two fat babies; and I sometimes help her in her work. But she is very fond of her brothers. Are you not, Polly?

Very fond, chirped Polly, yes, I am very fond of children, but, with a deep sigh, they give me a deal of trouble!

By this time Jack had an inkling that the scene was more pathetic than ludicrous. He did not know what to say, but was relieved from his embarrassment by the church bells which began to ring out.

Mr. Corbet removed his hand from the back of the perambulator and Polly took up her wonted station.

There are seven of them, said Mr. Corbet; and Polly is the second mother to these twins. Yes, Jack Warren, and if the burden is heavy on her, is it not heavier on her mother, who has seven? Seven! and the mother delicate and the father

Polly smiled up at Mr. Corbet and pushed her brothers on.

Mr. Corbet finished his sentence drinks. I think nearly all the men here do drink. Jack, I must go in and change my hat.

They went inside Magnolia Cottage, of which the door stood open. A little square of old−fashioned flowers thrift, poppies, pinks, and nasturtiums chiefly lay between the house and the road. Jack saw, without noticing it, that the garden was rough and almost untended.

Indoors Mr. Corbet found his tall hat and a pair of black gloves, which he put on carefully. He wore a well−made suit of fine cloth clothes; but Jack felt that the old man was not arrayed quite like other people. The fact was that the garments, though excellent in quality and little worn, were of the cut in fashion ten years before.

I only wear these things on high days and holidays, said Mr. Corbet, drawing on his gloves.

As soon as he was ready he took down a large prayer−book from the shelf and tucked it under his right arm. Then he called out Mrs. Clive! and that personage appeared from the kitchen.

We are going now, Mrs. Clive; and we will dine punctually at half−past one. Lock the door as soon as we are gone.

Always do, replied Mrs. Clive.

Mr. Corbet and Jack went out. In the garden, backing into the hedge, stood an awkward, clownish figure, with a round head, a shock of red hair, bent legs, loose arms, huge hands, and clothed in a suit of black such as the British working−man delights in; while the neck−tie, which completed the costume, was of the most vivid apple−green. This was the man who had recently been in familiar conversation with the dark gypsy.

Mr. Corbet spoke to the ungainly creature. Coming to church, Clive?

Clive gave a grunt which implied assent.

As they passed out of the gate Jack said: Is that Mrs. Clive's son?

Her husband.

Oh, her husband! repeated Jack.

Well, yes. As you may have noticed, he is much younger than she is. He is also less clever.

He is my gardener. He does odd jobs for my neighbours, and sometimes has business in Shrewsbury. He is an honest fellow; and if I did not allow him to live in my house I really do not think he could manage to exist.

Is he much use to you? asked Jack.

Well, no, not much use. But how could he live if I did not help him? Jack, let us walk faster. I think we shall have a stranger to−day. Our own clergyman is away on his holiday, and I believe one of the curates from St. Mary's is to take the service.

It was so. Within the spacious church there was but a small congregation. Nearly every man and boy of the neighbourhood was in the choir. The singing was good, echoing through the lofty building, and each word of the Lessons rang through it clearly. Jack felt a little awed by the strangeness of the place. He was used to churches crowded and warm; and this nearly empty, cool, breezy place was something new. And he could not help thinking of the knights and men slain in battle five hundred years ago, and sleeping in dust beneath the church.

The young clergyman took for his text: So fight I, not as one that beateth the air. l Cor. ix. 26. Jack always found it difficult to listen to the whole of a sermon, but he heard a good deal that was said this day; for the preacher began by talking of that famous battle; of Henry the king, of Henry Prince of Wales, of Percy Hotspur, of Douglas, of Glendower. After telling the story of the battle he went on to say that there are similar battles fought every day. There come on the ground King Henries, usurpers, occupying thrones to which they have no right; Prince Henries who have wasted their time and strength in folly when they should have done good work with them; Hotspurs, proud and passionate, rushing to destruction for want of prudence; Douglases, always mistaken, always losing like the *tine−man*, as the Scotch people called the Douglas of Shrewsbury field; Owen Glendowers, full of superstition, fearful of men because not trustful of God. These commanders and the forces under them are ever meeting and fighting; fleeing from the shock, falling beneath it; losing, winning defeat and victory meeting them daily on other battlefields than this on the battlefields of human experience of the human heart.

This much Jack Warren heard; and then he began to speculate as to whether his heart would ever be the field of a great defeat or a great victory. Glancing up at Mr. Corbet, he suddenly knew that his old friend's heart had seen a great battle a great defeat.

When they came out into the hot open air Mr. Corbet led the way to a certain spot of the uneven ground whence one can see the two spires of Shrewsbury framed by boughs of trees, while the foreground is filled up with furze−bushes, tufted grass, great white flowers, rushes, and all sorts of wild, rough undergrowth.

Let us sit down, Jack. Do you mind if I talk?

No, sir, said Jack.

You see, old people always like to chatter about the past because they cannot chatter of the future they have so little earthly future before them; and of the heavenly future it is not well to talk: eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart imagined. If I tell you my past, Jack, it may perhaps show you how talents without perseverance can do nothing nothing good.

No, sir, said Jack, who at that moment was thinking of Clive's gypsy friend.

I was born in Shrewsbury. They are all dead now father, mother, sisters. I was the youngest child, the only boy. Well, I went to London and studied law. I passed a good examination. I was called to the bar. I had a brief given me by a solicitor friend. A lucky chance, as men call it, happened to me. My leader was not able to appear. I made a speech I never knew what I said; but I knew I had justice on my side, and I said all that was in my mind. After the trial the elder counsel congratulated me, the attorneys handed me retainers; I was on the high−road to fame and fortune.

The glow in the old man's eyes and the rush of words from his trembling lips aroused a sympathetic glow in the boy's heart. That was good! he cried.

Very good. And there was a young lady, a beautiful girl, who seemed to find pleasure in watching the success of the young man at least he thought so. And two or three years went over, during which he did so well that he asked her to be his wife; and she promised. But she was selfish. They were in a boat on the Thames. A shower of rain came on light, fine rain. She was wrapped in velvets and furs, but he had taken off his coat. She urged him to stay on the river, and he did so to please her. He caught cold and was very ill. He recovered with his life, but had lost his voice. He could not speak above a whisper. His career at the bar was at an end; and she would not marry a man who had failed. All was over.

The contrast was strong and strange between the agony which underlay Roger Corbet's story and the midday stillness of the summer landscape. *Battlefields,* did the preacher say? Truly every heart is a battlefield.

Jack ventured to say: Did you give up the bar?

I did. For many years I could only whisper; and of course as a speaker, a pleader, I could do nothing. And the heart was crushed within me by her cruelty. My friends told me that I might work in my chambers as one of those counsel who give opinions, but never speak in court. I might have done so, perhaps; but I cared for nothing now. The money I had made gave me a small income. I went on the Continent and led a wandering, useless life. When I returned to London my place knew me no more; it was filled by other and stronger men. I came home; my father died, and my mother soon followed; my sisters married and died childless. I took this little house, and here I have lived ever since. I gave myself up to a life of inaction of eating, drinking, and sleeping. God forgive me!

He put his hands over his face, and Jack only guessed at the pain which distorted his features. The boy, in the flush of youth, with energy brimming over in his mind and body, could not understand how a man of talent could have let himself slip into such uselessness. But older people know how, as years increase, some winding−up is constantly needful for the machinery of life; how we often have to fight against an inclination to take things easily, to sit in our arm−chair and let the busy world go by. The only key to wind up the failing powers of mind and body is that of God's will: Six days shalt thou labour; the Sunday rest tightens the spring for the other days of the week.

After all, said Mr. Corbet, putting down his hands and clasping them together, courage is the chief of virtues; it is at the root of all the others.

Virtus is the Latin for *courage,* said Jack.

You are right. And our word *valour* really means *worth.* The Romans thought courage the one virtue, the true worth. And even the Saxons had the word *nahtnesse,* which meant *cowardice.*

It sounds like *naughtiness,* said Jack, smiling.

And I think our *naughtiness* must come from it.

But still, said Jack, I don't see how all virtues have to do with courage.

In this way, said Mr. Corbet. If we have the courage to fight our sins we shall subdue them. We are naughty when we are cowardly, and then we are conquered. Do you see what I mean, my dear boy?

I think I see, Jack replied.

Of course I do not mean that we conquer in our own strength. But we must fight, or fail, or fall. His voice, always subdued and weak, died away in a whisper.

Then he roused himself and a bright smile came over his gentle face. This is grave talk for a Sunday. Jack Warren, we will go home and dine; and I will show you the curious closets built by 'Griffith the Miser,' who lived at Magnolia Cottage about a hundred years ago.

I never heard of him, said Jack.

I will tell you what I know. It will interest you. Another time I will bring out my 'Blakeway,' and we will go over this field, and see exactly how the battle was set, and how everything happened on the 20th July, 1403.

Will it be a lesson? asked Jack in alarm.

Oh, no not to me; and, I hope, not to you. But now, come home, come home. If we are late Mrs. Clive will be dear me! Mrs. Clive will be Come along!

Jack saw that Mr. Corbet was a good deal afraid of his housekeeper. The old man hurried homeward, Jack following; and fortunately they were in good time, and Mrs. Clive was in good humour.

After dinner Jack wanted to see the curious closets and to hear about Griffith the Miser. Of the man little was known. He had hoarded money in every kind of strange place, and after his death his relatives found rolls of guineas and packets of bank−notes in the stuffing of chairs, in the plaster of ceilings, under the paving−stones of the coal−house. He had made movable panels in the high wainscoting, and put up book−cases with false backs. There were secret drawers in the cornices of the doors, and odd little holes under the planks of the floors. His was a foolish life, said Mr. Corbet; more foolish than mine.

Jack inquired whether much money had been found in these hiding−places.

No great amount, I believe; under a thousand pounds. There are people who still think that some of his treasures may lie buried beneath this house or in this garden.

I should like to find it, said Jack.

Mr. Corbet's face lighted up with eagerness. I should like to find Roman or Saxon remains. Jack, will you help me? Will you help to search that battlefield for ancient relics? If I could find something fresh, something that might be placed in the museum of my native town, I should feel that I had not altogether failed that I had not

lived quite in vain.

Here again was something that Jack Warren did not understand, namely, antiquarian ardour. It would be very nice to find a handful of banknotes, with which one could buy a watch or a pony; but there was no sense in wishing to discover Roman coins, only fit to be stowed away in the musty museum.

I am afraid, said Jack, that I shall not have time.

These long summer evenings? pleaded the old man.

I have my preparation for next day.

When you have done that, or on half−holidays, or in the vacation?

You had better get somebody else, said Jack. Mr. Corbet shook his head. You would suit me exactly. You are young and can stoop; and you would be content to leave me the glory of the discovery.

Oh, yes, I would leave you the glory, said Jack, adding to himself, as long as I kept the money.

You will help me, Jack? said Mr. Corbet again.

Do you think we should find anything?

I think we should if we searched long enough.

Jack was not aware that Mr. Corbet had of late years become almost crazed on the subject of Roman and Saxon remains. He had heard of coins found near Boreaton, and of Athelstan's pennies, struck at Shrewsbury and bearing date between 924 and 940, and he had meditated on the matter until he had persuaded himself that with a strong young man to do the digging for him he would certainly succeed in what had long been the one mild ambition of his crippled mind he would pose before the world as a leader of antiquarian research.

Jack Warren naturally thought such ideas horrid rubbish. He could not quite say so to Mr. Corbet, and he could not quite refuse to enter into the plans of one who was really very kind to him. So he put the matter aside for the moment, saying: Well, I'll think about it. I don't know how much time I shall have, or whether my father will like me to come here again.

To his great relief a man walked into the house at this moment right into the sitting−room without asking leave; a big, stout, elderly, red−faced man, who burst out: I thank you, sir I thank you, sir!

To this gruff, loud voice Mr. Corbet's soft tones responded: Then it is all right?

All right thanks to you, sir. We settled it yesterday, not a penny has it cost us, not a hard word. We both knew that you knew what the lawyers and the judge would know, and we have settled it as you said. You see, sir, by putting the stile fifteen yards down the hedge and the plank seven yards up the stream but here's a young gentleman; Dr. Warren's young gentleman, I make bold to think.

Jack did not care about the farmer's dispute with his neighbour. He perceived that Mr. Corbet had used his legal knowledge to reconcile some difference, and now was a fitting moment for taking leave.

Good−day, said Jack to the farmer; Goodbye, Mr. Corbet, and away went Jack through the nasturtiums and pinks down to the gate, on which Mr. Clive was leaning with a stolid face, while Mrs. Clive, in gorgeous attire,

was evidently giving her husband some of her opinions, probably about himself.

Chapter 3. THE BATTLE OF SHREWSBURY.

Cricket and boating are very delightful employments on fine summer evenings, and he who does not love one or both is unworthy of the name of English man or boy. And the inhabitants of Shrewsbury should have special affection for the beautiful winding Severn which clasps their town in its embrace.

But, Mr. Warren said to Jack, however much you may enjoy boating and cricket, I do not wish you quite to desert poor old Mr. Corbet. There are reasons why I must insist upon your behaving to him with politeness and kindness.

What reasons? asked Jack rather sulkily.

You must not expect your elders always to tell you their reasons for their wishes. But in this case I will tell you, though you must never give any hint of them to Mr. Corbet. The lady who so wickedly gave up Mr. Corbet, when his brilliant career suddenly closed, afterwards married your mother's uncle, and when they were both dead some of their money came to her. You see, Roger Corbet's misfortune seems to have been of benefit to your mother, and consequently to you.

How very odd! said Jack; Mr. Corbet's young lady became mother's aunt!

The world is very small, replied Mr. Warren smiling, and it is always going round. Perhaps this fact may make Mr. Corbet take a special interest in you, as it seems that he does. My other reason for wishing you to be kind to him is that he is such a good man. Out of his small means he pays for poor patients whom he sends to me, and his legal knowledge is at the service of anyone who cannot pay for it.

Then he is a good man, said Jack.

I do not know a better.

He says he has failed in everything.

It may be so, returned Mr. Warren warmly; but there are those who will receive him into everlasting habitations. At least, I speak as I can judge; I may be mistaken. He is a singular man, perhaps a little crazed on some points. The end of it is, Jack, that I wish you sometimes to visit him.

I could go this evening, said Jack, with a melancholy emphasis on *could.*

Then, do. I have to drive to Astley about seven o'clock, and I will drop you at Magnolia Cottage.

Jack could not get out of this; and seven o'clock saw him deposited at the end of a lane which led into the high−road. Mr. Warren drove on to a farmhouse where his professional services were required, and Jack strolled along the lane, not being in any hurry to arrive at Mr. Corbet's house. The lane was in places overshadowed by elm−trees; and at one turn of it there grew an immense beech, with a great knotty bole. The hollow of the ditch which lay on the further side of the tree looked so inviting that Jack jumped down into it, and sat there in the shade for a few minutes.

Probably the shade which darkened the hollow rendered Jack quite invisible to persons out in the full sunshine; for there came along the ruts of the lane that same gypsy who had talked with Clive. He now seated himself on a

root of the beech on the side opposite to that where Jack was hidden. The gypsy, as Jack chose to consider him, though real gypsies are now scarce, began to talk to himself, and what he said was heard by the boy. If Jack had had time for thought he would have declared to himself that it was dishonourable to listen to words not meant for his hearing, even though the speaker was a gypsy and a man of evil aspect. But before he was able to weigh the pros and cons these remarks had fallen on his sharp ears:

Clive is such a precious fool that I can do anything with him. I must manage it when Mrs. Clive is out. She is too clever by half. Now, let me see. I'll find out when she is going to market. Shrewsbury market is on Wednesday. Then I'll get Clive to show me the things. I'll tell him that I am going to Monmouth. I'll be off to Hereford, and then get away to Gloucester or maybe to London. Clive and Corbet I can manage easy enough. It is Mrs. Clive and that young Warren that I don't like.

Hearing his own name Jack felt that he had a right to listen to anything more that might be said. The gypsy was hatching some plot, and these muttered words seemed to indicate something wrong to be done at Magnolia Cottage. In fact Jack felt sure that a robbery was contemplated.

He sat still, hardly daring to breathe, and nearly choking himself in smothering a cough; but only a few more words rewarded his patience.

I'll tell his fortune again. I'll promise him a rich relation come home from Australia on purpose to take him to London and give him a thousand pounds. I'll tell him that he shall eat off silver dishes and plates; that will lead up to old Corbet's spoons 'apostle's spoons,' indeed! We'll see about that! 'Prophet's spoons' they shall be, if the prophet Abacada gets hold of them!

With this declaration of his intended theft the gypsy stood up and shook himself, and looked at the sun now in the west and dazzling even the cunning, bright eye with his clear beams. Abacada's eyes were not so piercing as he supposed them to be, for he walked away without seeing Jack in the hollow.

As soon as he was gone a hundred thoughts chased each other through the boy's brain. Evidently a robbery was planned, Mr. Corbet's silver spoons to be the booty. Clive was to be the tool; Mrs. Clive got rid of. Abacada, as he called himself, seemed to be more afraid of an encounter with young Warren than with anyone else. And, as so often happens to wicked people, this would be thief had run himself into the very danger which he was most anxious to avoid. The problem now was how to prevent the robbery. Knowing Mr. Corbet's feeble body and nervous mind Jack feared to tell him the plot laid against him. It would be no use to warn Clive, who was infatuated with the gypsy and esteemed him a sage and a prophet. Mrs. Clive was the only person in the little household who could be relied on for vigorous action and prompt measures. To her Jack resolved to communicate what he had heard.

The gypsy was out of sight. Jack hurried along the lane into the high−road, and then shortly came in sight of Magnolia Cottage. He went between the rows of pinks and thrift and rapped on the green door of Mr. Corbet's house.

The old man opened it himself. His eyes beamed when he saw who was his visitor. My dear boy! he cried, this is good, I am obliged to you.

Said Jack abruptly, Where is Mrs. Clive?

She is busy; especially busy, answered Mr. Corbet. Never mind about her. We don't want her.

I want to speak to her, said Jack.

So you shall by and by. But we have much to do this evening on the battlefield, and you are rather late. But it is all right now that you are come. Yet, before we start, Jack, I want to ask you just one little foolish question. Tell me, are you considered very like your mother?

I don't know, said Jack gruffly.

Or your aunt?

No, said Jack. But he was thinking, Where does he keep the apostle−spoons?

I don't mean your aunt, I mean your mother's aunt, her uncle's wife. I fancy something about the upper part of the face, the forehead. But then, she was no relation; it could not be. We old people often fancy we see likenesses to those who are dead and gone. Living people are so like ghosts.

Ghosts! repeated Jack, feeling uncomfortable. Do you believe in ghosts?

Memories are ghosts, the only ghosts I know; you are too young to have memories. You will see them when you grow old; they come at night. Well, well!

My father has gone to Astley, said Jack abruptly, to bring the conversation back to what he considered a sensible level.

And you have come here. Shall we go out and study the plan of the battle? You see 'Owen and Blakeway' give it here, and Mr. Corbet opened the large red book at the place where there was a regular plan of the country round Battlefield. We will take it with us, and sit at the west end of the church, and then we shall see exactly how the land lay at that time.

Mr. Corbet put on his straw−hat, and, with the precious volume under his arm, led the way through the fields to the church.

When they had arrived at the west end of the church, Mr. Corbet opened his book and showed Jack the plan. Then, turning the pages, he read out such passages as he thought would interest his young friend.

You must remember that Henry IV. was not the lawful ruler of England. I cannot go into that now. Owen Glendower claimed to be ruler of Wales. Henry marched against him. On the 7th September the weather was fine, but early in the night a sudden tempest rose; Henry's tent was laid prostrate, his lance fixed in the ground within his tent fell down and pierced his armour, which lay near it. All this was supposed to be the result of magic.

Whose magic?

Glendower's. Everyone then believed in magic. Glendower believed himself to have supernatural powers. You must read his strange weird speeches in Shakespeare. The monks of St. Francis, too, assisted him.

I daresay they did more than the magic, Jack observed.

We think so. But in studying the past we must throw ourselves back into the spirit of the past, and realize how people then thought and felt.

In the following year, 1403, on the 19th July, Henry marched out from Shrewsbury with his troops, and took up his position here. As he spoke, Mr. Corbet paced away southward. And Hotspur's troops placed themselves to the north. Mr. Corbet went round to the other side of the church.

How did Hotspur get here? asked Jack, interested in spite of himself.

That does not seem clearly known. He came from Northumberland, two hundred and fifty miles; no railways, no roads even. He came over Haughmond Hill; 'blue are the trees' but you don't care for verses. Henry had arrived at Shrewsbury only a few hours before Hotspur.

Did they fight with muskets or pistols? asked Jack.

Neither. There were few weapons but bows and arrows. Hotspur had with him 14,000 chosen archers, Henry had 40,000.

That was a great difference.

Enormous. Henry marched out on the Hadnall Road; the same road that you have come by to−day. But then a road was not much more than a footpath. It was not made; it was mire or dust, or rock, or bramble, or anything that happened to be there, or to grow there. Hotspur came in such haste that he forgot to bring his sword. He was always in a furious hurry.

Did this land belong to anyone? inquired Jack.

No doubt it did; at all events it was tilled. Hotspur's position was in a field of peas, nearly ripe.

Oh! said Jack.

The ground was not divided by hedges. The field where Hotspur stood was then called Hateleys; and it is still so called. And the field to the east of the church look at it, boy, is to this day known as 'the king's croft.' There were drawn up most of Henry's troops.

Jack looked about him as the old man pointed out each famous locality. The scene seemed growing real; Henry and Hotspur were living men, not merely historical names, and the Prince of Wales, afterwards the heroic Henry V., was, on this day of Shrewsbury battle, only a boy of Jack's own age.

Now comes forward Thomas Prestbury, Abbot of Salop, with offers of pardon to the rebels; and Hotspur sends his uncle, Lord Worcester, to negotiate peace. But Worcester was unwilling to make terms. The king says, 'I counsel you to put yourself on my grace;' and Worcester replies, 'I trust not in your grace.' And as *grace* was a title given to the king as we say your *majesty* now, it seems to me that Worcester meant a play upon the word. He did not trust the king, nor the king's grace. 'I pray God,' rejoined the king, 'that thou mayest answer for the blood to be shed here to−day, and not I. March on, standard−bearer.' And the battle was set.

Then they began to fight! said Jack, rather glad that the story had arrived at that point.

Both parties flew to their arms; the air was rent with the opposing war−cries: 'St. George!' being the king's, and 'Espérance, Percy!' being Hotspur's.

What was Glendower doing?

He seems to have been cautious; he was at Shelton, on the opposite bank of the river; and it is said that he climbed to the top of an oak to watch how the battle was going. They still show 'Glendower's oak' at Shelton. It may be the same.

Who began the fight?

Who do you think?

You say Hotspur was always in a hurry.

Right, said Mr. Corbet; hence his name. Yes, Hotspur began the battle, or his archers did. The king's bowmen returned the charge. Hotspur and Douglas rushed at the king. Now, it is said that Henry had several men dressed like himself in order to deceive his enemies; Shakespeare endorsed this story, but it is by no means certain. The trick was not uncommon in those days.

It would be a cowardly trick, said Jack.

So it seems to us; but the king's life was always a sacred thing, even from the time of David. Henry was thrice unhorsed by Douglas, and each time rescued by his own men. His standard−bearer was slain, his banner beaten down; the Earl of Stafford, who guarded it, was killed, and also Sir Walter Blount. The Prince of Wales was wounded in the face by an arrow. It was thought that the king had fallen, and the rebels cried, 'Henry Percy, king!' but it was Percy himself who fell in this battle.

Jack asked, Who killed him?

That is not known; an unknown hand. Perhaps by a 'bow drawn at a venture.' Then the king shouted 'Henry Percy is dead!' And hearing that their leader was slain the rebels turned and fled.

Did Douglas run away?

Yes, even Douglas. He broke through the ranks and fled towards Haughmond Hill. Stand here and you can see Haughmond sharply rising from the plain. There he was closely pursued; and leaping, or falling from a crag there are crags there now from which you might leap he was taken prisoner.

I am sorry! cried Jack. Douglas was a fine fellow.

So Henry thought, and restored him to liberty; he was about thirty at this time. In 1421 he joined Charles VII. of France in his wars against the English, and was victorious at the battle of Baugé but in 1425 he and his sons were killed at Verneuil, and the English remained possessors of that town.

Had Douglas no Christian name? inquired Jack; he seems always spoken of by his surname.

Oh yes, he had a Christian name; it was Archibald. Talking of names, do you know the meaning of *Haughmond?*

Jack rubbed his forehead and tried to bring up some ideas. Then he put his hands into his pockets, which were nearly as empty at this moment as his mind. It might be from *haw*, those red berries, you know, on hawthorn trees; and there are heaps of hawthorns everywhere about. And then *mond* might be *mound*, because a hill is a big mound.

Mr. Corbet smiled. Not bad for a fancy derivation; but my experience shows me that the obvious derivation is never the true one. *Haut mont*, the *high hill*, is the true one in this case; but I suppose *mound* also comes from *mont.*

Mound and *mount* are very much alike, said Jack.

Right. You are an apt pupil. Jack, do you think your father will be returning about this time?

He said he should not be more than about an hour and a half.

Would you like me to give you any more instruction?

No, thank you, sir, said Jack.

'Then would you like to go into my house and search some of the hiding−places of Griffith the miser?

Yes, answered Jack; I should like that much better.

You shall do it, my dear boy; and any treasure that you find shall be your own.

Chapter 4. COINS IN THE CUPBOARD.

A gleam of cheerfulness spread itself over the lad's face. He had been interested in the story of the battle, but he felt that it was quite possible to have too much history; a hunt through the holes and crannies made by Griffith would be much more exciting, and Jack's imagination already saw piles of gold and silver, which he, like Tom Tiddler's invaders, need only pick up.

But Mr. Corbet did not yet release him from more serious thoughts. Hotspur was buried, he said after a reference to his red book, by his kinsman, Lord Furnival. But afterwards Henry had the corpse taken up and placed between two millstones in the public street, near the pillory. Then it was beheaded, and quartered, and portions of it sent to various towns. That part of the story is worse than the battle. Gallant Hotspur!

Mr. Corbet became thoughtful and silent; so did Jack Warren. The boy broke the silence by asking, Was he *very* rich?

Well, riches were differently accounted of in those days from what they are now. Sheep, oxen, and swine were a form of riches; and timber; and the number of men whom he could command. He had 14,000 men dependent on him.

I should not think fourteen could live in that little house.

Little house! exclaimed Mr. Corbet; why, they lived in castles when they were at home, and in tents when they were out.

I meant Griffith, said Jack.

I beg your pardon, I was still thinking of Hotspur. As to Griffith he was not so rich as people thought; few of us are so rich or so poor, so wise or so foolish, so good or so bad, as others suppose. But I think it quite possible that you may find a few odd coins in some of the hiding places.

Have you ever found any? Jack inquired, growing quite lively at this new turn of the conversation.

Not I. But Jack and the old man's voice sank lower and became tremulous as he spoke, will you if you are successful in finding coins in my house will you some day help me in my search for coins on the battlefield?

Oh yes, I'll help you, Jack replied carelessly.

As soon as they entered Magnolia Cottage, Mrs. Clive ordered her master into the sitting−room, and there gave him a history of what had occurred during his absence. Someone had left a bundle of papers for Mr. Corbet to look over; someone else had come for his weekly shilling; Polly had applied for the arrowroot. This history fell unheeded on Jack's ears; he was lifting the planks in the larder and the bricks in the kitchen floor, but no treasure rewarded him.

He was still kneeling, red−faced from the exertion, on the floor of the kitchen when Mrs. Clive returned from her interview with Mr. Corbet, and quickly dismissed Jack from her presence. I don't want boys in my kitchen; off with you! Pulling up bricks, indeed; I never saw such a thing; when I have made Clive fit them and beat them down as tightly as ever he could. Stamp on it, young man, lay it flat; I'm ashamed of Mr. Corbet putting you up to such tricks, go and play in his cupboards in his room if you like, but never show your face again in my kitchen!

And she put her heavy hand on Jack's shoulder and pushed him into the passage, from which, looking rather abashed, he slowly lounged into the sitting−room. There Mr. Corbet was untying the bundle of papers, and glancing at a shelf on which leather−bound law−books were ranged; he looked round at Jack and said, I think that closet in the corner is a likely hiding−place, and relapsed into the papers.

The closet was about as big as a sentry−box; it was lined with deal, and in places these boards did not fit closely; they had either shrunk, or had been pulled out and replaced. Jack seized one and it came away from the wall which was rough behind it, he saw nothing but coarse brick and dirty plaster. Pushing the board into its place again he perceived that another piece, about a foot long, was temptingly loose. No great effort was needed to dislodge it. Behind it had been hidden a folded sheet of brown paper; this Jack seized.

With trembling fingers, rather dirty by this time, he opened it; within was some whitey−brown paper, within that again some writing paper. Jack drew in his breath with a subdued whistle.

There was certainly something inside the white paper.

Yes, some round things silver things coins. One was undoubtedly a form; another a shilling; a third, sixpence. Jack backed into the room.

Mr. Corbet, you said I might keep what I found!

I say so still, replied the old man with a twinkle in his eye, which was not observed by the boy.

Well, I have found some coins.

Really; let me look at them. I'll put on my spectacles. Yes; silver coins, I perceive. They are yours, Jack; are you glad to have found them?

Oh yes, sir.

Then perhaps you can understand how glad I should be if I could find such coins as I seek. You will come again and help me, Jack?

Yes, said Jack, and in the twilight Mr. Corbet did not see how the boy's countenance fell; I'll come again. May I bring my dog next time? For Jack thought that Bonnie might enliven the next afternoon on the battlefield.

And then, some day, I'll go with you to Scrobbesbyrig, and we will inspect the castle and the Templars' tombs.

A brilliant idea struck Jack. Please, sir, may my sister go with you to Scrob the word was so long and so awkward that Jack stuck in it; he intended to finish thus: besbyrig, instead of me?

But Mr. Corbet interposed with: Yes, certainly, my dear boy. She may come with you. I shall be very glad to take you both, and to tell you all I know.

Jack suppressed a groan; but there was comfort in the thought that he would have a companion in misfortune.

I shall not be able to go for a long time to come, said Jack, fingering the coins which now were in his pocket; Elsie has more time than I have.

I could not take one without the other; that would not be fair. And Mr. Corbet smiled benignantly.

Jack also smiled when Mrs. Clive brought in a tray on which were a large slice of home−made cake and a tumbler of home−made lemonade. Your supper, she said to Jack; and to her master, I'll bring yours as soon as this youngster is gone.

As she left the room Mr. Corbet said, Thank you, Mrs. Clive, thank you. Eat your cake, my boy; I think I hear wheels in the distance.

They came nearer, and stopped while Jack was yet eating. Mr. Corbet went out, followed by the boy with his mouth full.

Here is your boy, Mr. Warren, and a very good, nice boy very patient with a prosy old man like me. I hope you will let me see him very often.

Certainly; the oftener the better for Jack.

And would you, Mr. Warren, be good enough from time to time to look in on those people in Prospect Row; I mean the woman with seven children? One of the twins is very delicate.

I will, replied Mr. Warren; anything more?

Not to−night. Good−bye, Jack.

Good−bye, sir, responded Jack with alacrity, and climbed into the dog−cart.

Mr. Corbet looked after them. Glad to get away from me. 'Crabbed age and youth cannot dwell together.' I am a crabbed old man; and it is very, very good of the dear boy to spend so much of his time with me. I am deeply indebted to him.

When Jack had quite emptied his mouth he told his father the story of the closet and the coins, which he showed with much pride.

How do you suppose they came in the closet?

Griffith the miser hid them there.

Ah! When did Griffith live and die?

About a hundred years ago, they say.

Who was king at that time?

More history, thought poor Jack; and he said, I suppose George the Third.

Yes, rejoined the father. Can you see whose portraits are on those coins?

Jack's young eyes made out: On the shilling, George IV.; on the sixpence, William IV.; and on the florin, Victoria.

Well, said Mr. Warren, could Griffith have put those coins in the closet?

Jack reflected and calculated, and said, No, of course not.

Well? said his father again.

A light dawned on the boy's mind. Mr. Corbet put them there on purpose for me to find. How kind of him! I wish he could find some Saxon coins to reward him!

Mr. Warren did not reply to this last remark; he was thinking of the sick persons whom he had just seen at Astley. It often struck him as strange when, in some quiet village of perhaps twenty houses, he met with disease, vice, misery, equal to that in great towns. And he felt very painfully how little his skill and knowledge could do against such foes. Of these grave matters Jack was almost ignorant. His mind ran on much lighter subjects.

Father, he said, presently; and his father came out of a solemn reverie with such a start that he jerked the reins and set the old horse off at a sharp trot. Father, Mr. Corbet wants Elsie and me to go with him some day to Scrob−bes−by−rig.

It is a very interesting place, Mr. Warren observed.

Where is it?

Mr. Warren pointed with his whip over the horse's head.

Is it far off?

No great distance.

He also wants me to go with him digging to try if we can find any old coins.

I should think you would prefer new ones, said Mr. Warren, smiling. Well, you had better yield to the old gentleman's fancies; they are very innocent.

It is such a bother, grumbled Jack.

He has been very kind to you.

Yes, so he has.

Nothing more was said about Mr Corbet and his fancies, for they were now passing the first lamp of the town, and however light the evening may be, the moment we find gas burning we perceive that it is dark. The doctor and his son alighted at their door, where the man−servant was waiting to take charge of the horse and trap, and where

Bonnie came flying out with noisy greetings of his young master.

Chapter 5. ABACADA.

The coins which he had found had for the moment made Jack forget the spoons which Mr. Corbet was likely to lose. Abacada had faded from the lad's mind, until, as he was undressing, he remembered what he had heard beside the beech−tree. For a moment he felt a pang of conscience. What if the spoons are already stolen? But he consoled himself by the further thought that the gypsy had said that he should not attempt to put his plan in execution unless Mrs. Clive were out of the way. And as Mrs. Clive was in Magnolia Cottage this evening and this night, the spoons, so far, were safe.

Next morning Jack rose with the feeling which we all know so well, of something hanging heavy on the mind. By the time that he had brushed his hair he had recalled the soliloquy of Abacada, and by the time that he had finally washed his hands he had resolved to tell the matter to his parents and ask their advice. He waited until after breakfast in order to obtain the undivided attention of his father and mother.

Father, he began, I had a strange adventure after you left me yesterday evening.

Indeed! said Mr. Warren; you can tell me about it this evening when I am putting in those winter vegetables, as I hope to do.

I must tell you now, cried Jack eagerly; it is most important.

Well, go ahead.

There's a gypsy called Abacada, he is a prophet

Come, come, said Mr. Warren, smiling, I am too old to listen to fairy tales.

But it is true! cried Jack in desperation, and you must give me your advice or he will carry off the apostles

Mr. Warren had not the least idea of what Jack was coming to, but thought he was concocting some story out of his own head. The narrative was cut short by a servant coming in hastily to say that a poor man had crushed his finger in some machinery, and was waiting for the doctor. Away went Mr. Warren, ready and anxious to help his fellow−creatures in their misfortunes, and Jack was left alone in his perplexities.

He then sought his mother and gave her this information: Mrs. Clive is going to market today, and Clive will have his fortune told about a rich relation and a thousand pounds, and Abacada will take the apostle−spoons to Hereford, and no one be able to find him.

My dear boy, do take breath! what a dreadful rigmarole! I cannot make head or tale of it. What is Abacada, and who is the Apostle, and why should he go to Hereford?

Oh, don't you see, Mother, it is a plot to steal Mr. Corbet's plate?

This Mrs. Warren could not see without further explanation, and when she did understand Jack's view of the subject, she still thought that he was making some mistake.

No, Mother, I have made no mistake, I assure you; and to prove to you how certain I am of what I say, I will go, if I may, this afternoon to Magnolia Cottage and defend Mr. Corbet against the gypsy and the gardener.

Certainly you may go. I am glad that you are so much reconciled to Mr. Corbet and his stories of battles.

Thus encouraged Jack started immediately after dinner on his detective expedition. He had gone but a little way from home when he met Mrs. Clive in her Sunday bonnet, with a parcel in her arms. Jack stopped her:

Are you going to market?

Mrs. Clive stared at him and said, Pray, young sir, what is that to you?

Because, if your husband is at home

She gave a sort of sniff. If he is, he can take care of himself.

There are the spoons, you know; and I should be very sorry indeed that Mr. Corbet should be robbed.

I assure you, Mr. John Warren, that Alexander Clive can take care of his master's spoons without your advice and assistance. And what's more, to show you how I can trust my Alexander's looking after the house, I will tell you that I am now on my way to the railway−station, where I shall take a train to Rednal, where I am going to spend the day and night with my sister.

Saying these words, intended to be very crushing, Mrs. Clive tossed her head and walked on.

Jack felt that her absence from home was the very opportunity for which Abacada was watching, and if the robbery was to be prevented no time must be lost. Notwithstanding the heat he tore along the road, and arrived tired and breathless at Mr. Corbet's house.

The door stood ajar; Jack walked right through the cottage and out into the garden. No living creature was within the walls. At the back, on a gravel path, sat the tabby cat blinking in the sun, and drowsily keeping one eye on the poultry, which crowded into the shadiest corner of their premises. In the furthest and shadiest corner of the garden Mr. Corbet was ensconced in a big chair, with a book on his knees and a pipe in his mouth. He was enjoying the heat by doing nothing hardly even thinking. But as soon as he saw Jack Warren he roused himself.

Ha, this is pleasant; you are an excellent boy to come to see me so soon again.

Jack was fidgetty, glancing round for the gypsy, expecting to see that dark person crouched under a hedge, or hidden, like Charles the Second, in a tree. But no such intruder could be detected. All was entirely calm and sleepy. Mr Corbet blinked like the cat; Jack held himself motionless like the poultry. This midday sultriness was overpowering.

Mr Corbct asked, Are your parents well?

Jack replied, Quite well, thank you.

Presently Mr. Corbet said, Very warm weather.

Awfully hot, responded the boy.

Then there was a long interval of silence, at the end of which the regular cadences which issued from Mr. Corbet's lips and nose were sufficient evidence that he was asleep.

Soon after this Jack began to listen for suspicious noises. Nothing did he hear but children's voices in the distance ringing shrill, and the rumble of an occasional cart, and the soft cooing of pigeons not far off. But through these was another sound; footsteps coming nearer and nearer. It seemed that they paused, then crunched on the gravel, then were muffled, then again were louder and with them mingled low, deep voices. These voices certainly were in Mr Corbet's house.

Jack was wide−awake now; but Mr. Corbet slumbered peacefully.

There was turf from the place where they were sitting almost to the back door of the cottage. To the edge of it Jack stepped lightly. The voices now came assuredly through the high window of the scullery. Jack's ears were strained to listen.

Yes, said the deeper voice of the two in conversation; you have a rich relation. Is it not so?

Ah! said another voice, that of Clive.

I knew it. Our magic teaches us many things. Do you know when he is coming home?

No, said Clive, I don't know when he is coming home. It is a long way to come all over the sea from Australia.

So it is. But, mark my words, he will come sooner than you expect. Ay, much sooner. And the day that he arrives will be a lucky day for you, Alexander Clive.

A lucky day! Well, I never! But how can it be lucky to me?

He will see you, he will love you, you his nephew

No, no, I ain't his nephew, he ain't much older than I am.

I should have said his cousin. He will make much of you; he will give you money; a thousand pounds I see in the future.'

A thousand pounds, oh! I could enjoy myself with a thousand pounds!

You could indeed, and what is more, you will wear a black coat every day, and you will have a gold watch. Your wife will be dressed in silks

Never mind about her, said Clive, impatiently.

And, as sure as my name is Abacada, you will get up to be as high as the Lord Mayor of London, and dine off plate every day of your life.

That's nothing, Clive interrupted, I have a plate every day with my dinner on it.

I should have said, 'dine off silver.' Silver plates and dishes, Alexander; silver spoons and forks, and a silver teapot. What do you say to that?

I say that would be grand. Why, Master himself has not got silver plates, or dishes, or teapot. There are only those spoons that are real silver, all the rest are plated goods.

Jack detected a different tone in the gypsy's next words. I should like to see those spoons of your master's. I could make you understand the difference between good ones and bad ones. We who are prophets know many wonderful things. Now, are those spoons white or black?

Why, said Clive, they are more white than black, I should say.

Have they a lion or a unicorn?

I don't know; they have got St. Peter, and St. John, and St. Andrew, and St. Matthew, St. Philip, St. James, and that one with the long name, Bar something

Only seven of them?

Yes, some of the set have got lost, I believe.

Well, said the gypsy, I could show you in a minute how to know good ones from bad; and that's a thing you ought to know, because very soon you will have to choose silver spoons for yourself.

There's no need for you to see Mr. Corbet's spoons, said Clive in a voice rather sulky and suspicious.

No need at all, the gypsy returned; but if a person is rude to me and refuses a civil request, then I'd have you to know, Alexander Clive, that there are those of my tribe who can overlook such a person, can bewitch him, can keep all his good luck from him.

Clive made no audible reply to these threats. There are still weak−minded people who believe in witchcraft; he was one of them.

Jack heard the click of a key in a lock, and the opening of a creaking drawer. He knew that Clive had yielded to the gypsy, and was showing the apostle−spoons. No time was to be lost. Jack made two steps across the gravel path, disturbing the cat as he did so, and then he was in the passage close to the door of the scullery, but unseen by the two men, who were so intent on the business in hand that they had not heard the slight noise that he made.

Very pretty, the gypsy was saying. Yes, here you may see the lion, which means that they are true, good silver. Hush! what was that? I heard old Corbet groaning.

No, replied Clive; he's not groaning, only snoring. You see this one has a figure of St. John for a handle, and this has St. Andrew. I shall have a set just like them when I get my thousand pounds from Cousin Timothy.

Hark! said Abacada in an awe−struck voice; what a terrible cry!

True enough there was a terrible cry heard; it was the voice of an old donkey, but to an excited guilty ear it might have seemed human or ghostly.

It is your Master! shouted the gypsy; he is in a fit! he is dying! let us go to him! help! help! And he stretched up towards the little high window. Can we get through the window? which is the way out? Quick, help!

Alarmed by the gypsy's cries, Clive rushed out to assure himself that Mr. Corbet was not ill. In the passage he stumbled over Jack Warren, but rushed past him into the garden.

Abacada, with the spoons in his hands got as far as the door of the scullery, and was intent on departing by the front door; but Jack boldly confronted him in the passage.

Put down those spoons! roared Jack.

The thief, thus suddenly stopped, was taken at a disadvantage. He paused a moment in his surprise; Jack struck a blow at his great dirty hand, the spoons fell clattering on the brick floor.

You young ruffian! said the gypsy, giving Jack a tremendous blow on the ear.

All these noises brought Clive in from the garden. He dimly understood the scene. Abacada was stooping and clutching at the silver.

Stop, thief! shouted Jack.

Hullo, mates! said Clive, both of you, let them spoons alone!

The figure of Mr. Corbet appeared at the back door. Abacada thought three to one to be too great odds. He pushed Clive on one side and Jack on the other, and shot through the house, through the thrift and the pinks, and got clear off, but without the booty.

Then explanations followed. Mr. Corbet could hardly take in what was the matter; that anyone should rob him of his few little treasures was a possibility that had never struck him. Clive, too, could scarcely bring himself to believe that Abacada, who had been so friendly, and had prophesied such good luck, should turn out an impostor and a thief. Jack had the surest evidence of what had taken place, for his cheek was red and his ear sore from the heavy blow which he had received.

Oh, thank you, thank you, said Mr. Corbet over and over again; you have saved my spoons. How can I thank you enough?

Jack did not want thanks. All his anxiety now was to get away from Magnolia Cottage and hear no more of the adventure. Yes, he said, gruffly; I am glad I saved them for you. I heard that gypsy fellow telling himself that he should get hold of them the first day that Mrs. Clive went out; and knowing that, all the rest was easy to me. Good−night, Mr. Corbet, I must go home.

As soon as Jack was gone, Mr. Corbet lectured Clive severely on his folly in making acquaintance with strangers of whom he knew nothing. Clive was so much ashamed of himself that he was by this time in very bad spirits and quite meek. He rubbed his eyes with his cuffs, and sighed deeply; and as soon as Mr. Corbet ceased speaking the penitent young man locked and bolted and barred every door and window of the house, and announced his intention of sitting up all night to watch the spoons lest the gypsy should return to steal them.

You need not do that, said Mr. Corbet; I will keep them in my pocket.

Please, sir, said Clive, will you sleep in your clothes, then?

No, no. When I go to bed I will put them under my pillow.

Very good, sir, but I don't feel comfortable about them; so when you go to bed I will sit in the hall and watch the front door.

This Mr. Corbet would not hear of. You shall go to bed as usual, he said, and you can lie awake with your head on your pillow, and then you will hear if anyone comes near the house.

Clive went to bed, and lay awake for nearly five minutes.

As for Mr. Corbet, he really was worried by what had happened. He sat up far into the night thinking of his father and grandfather, to whom the spoons had belonged in days long past, and trying to make up his mind to sell them before they were stolen, or any further annoyance was caused by their being in his house. His last thought was That lad Jack Warren is a fine, plucky young fellow.

Chapter 6. THE ASSAULT.

Having done a deed worth doing, Jack, like a true English boy, did not wish to talk about it. If his eleven had won a match, or his side had kicked a goal, he would have discoursed on cricket or football, as the case might be, until all his family were weary of the subject. But his adventure with the gypsy, in which he had brought into play all his acuteness, all his decision, his determination, his courage, his endurance this he hardly spoke of; for while pride and vanity may mingle with small excellencies, modesty is the almost invariable companion of true merit.

Of course Jack did give an account of the attempted robbery to his parents, but in such terms that they thought little of it.

Oh, that gypsy fellow came to Mr. Corbet's house and got hold of the apostle−spoons; but I saw what he was after, and I knocked them out of his hand, and then he went away.

I don't suppose that he really wanted to steal them, said Mrs. Warren.

I think he did, Mother; but I was there, and Clive and Mr. Corbet, and so he had no chance.

Not against three of you, poor fellow. But why do you rub your ear, Jack? is it aching?

A little; it is rather sore.

Let me look at it, said the mother, alarmed.

Oh no, and Jack coloured; it is only that the gypsy gave me a box on the ear.

Mr. and Mrs. Warren looked at each other; they guessed that the struggle about the spoons had been more serious than the boy had told them.

At that moment a letter was brought in. Mr. Warren read it and put it in his pocket. After lunch he called his wife out of the room, and took her into the study that she too might read the letter. It was from Mr. Corbet, giving an account of Jack's conduct as far as the old gentleman had been able to gather it from Clive, and speaking in terms of admiration and affection of your noble boy. Later in the day Jack wondered why his mother's eyes filled with tears when she looked at him.

Jack's meetings with Abacada were not yet at an end. That evening the whole Warren family agreed to go out on the river. The father and mother, with the younger children, were to walk to Pengwerne boat−house, and there Jack was to meet them, His father gave him a note to leave at a house; and he wished to spend part of his three and sixpence on sweeties for his brothers and sisters to eat in the boat. This was rather a childish way of spending money, but in years Jack Warren was not much more than a child.

He came out of the little sweetie−shop, and was walking quickly along Wyle Cop. The sun was low, and in the narrow streets the shadows were gathering. Here and there passages and courts led out of Wyle Cop, which itself is in places narrow and old−fashioned. As he was passing the end of one of these passages a hand from behind clutched him by the collar and dragged him up into a dark court.

For the first few moments Jack was so utterly astonished that he made no resistance. While one great hand dragged and pushed him along, another great hand was cuffing him on his cheeks, first the right and then the left.

Hi! stop don't! let me go! spluttered Jack with difficulty, and then he beat with his arms and kicked with his feet, but to little purpose, for his assailant was a big strong man.

Not one word did this assailant say; but he got Jack into the angle of two walls, and there held him prisoner. These two walls were those of a manufactory; neither door nor window opened into them. The third side of the court consisted of small houses occupied by working−men. Very little noise was made by either Jack or the man, but two or three women came out of their doors to look on at the scuffle, and one by one several men looked out.

Jack was imprisoned in the corner. The man had a slouchy hat pulled over his face, and though his general appearance was like that of the gypsy Abacada, yet Jack could not have said for certain that it was he.

Let me pass, said Jack.

The man made no reply.

Jack stooped to escape under the man's arm, but it was flung out and barred the way.

Jack tried the other side, but with no better success.

Then he put down his head and butted. The man gave a cough, but did not move.

I say, began Jack, what do you want with me? I think you've made some mistake.

For answer came a heavy blow on Jack's right ear.

A woman's voice gave a scream. Don't hit the young 'un, gypsy!

Better let the kid go, growled a male voice.

The gypsy's right hand then fell on Jack's left ear. You young viper! said the man, speaking for the first time, I was not able to pay you out last time, so I'll do it now. And the alternate blows fell quick and thick on the boy's ears and shoulders.

Then Jack saw that he must fight his way out. He struck the gypsy full on his chest, but made little impression. He caught one of Abacada's hands and held it so firmly that only the other was able to work. Half−blind and half−dazed the boy made a brave fight, but would have soon been seriously injured had not an odd thing happened. In his wild jumpings and plungings he jumped upon one of the man's feet. Abacada uttered a howl of pain.

My toe! my sore toe! You young imp! and Jack could not help laughing to see the gypsy hopping about and yelling with agony.

At this moment one of the women rushed at Jack, seized him by the arm, pulled him into her house, and closed and locked the door.

Oh, the brute! Oh, you poor boy! Sit ye down; get your breath. Here's a cup of tea for you.

Jack was indeed glad to sit down. A few minutes more of this unequal contest would have been too much for him. His face and shoulders and arms were bruised and sore, the collar of his jacket torn, and his linen collar gone. But he felt that no bones were broken, and not even skin much injured.

Thank you, he said to the kind woman; as soon as I have got my breath I shall be all right.

The woman went to the window and looked out. There's my husband and Bill Shipton talking to the gypsy. Whatever did he hit you for, my boy?

Before Jack could reply to this question the voice of Bill Shipton, a gigantic coal−heaver, was heard speaking in the court.

I say, you should hit one of your own size. You've no call to go hitting boys. Come and hit me.

The gypsy replied, I suppose I may hit my own son, eh?

Your own son, repeated a bystander.

Ah, said Bill Shipton, you may hit your own son, but you may not assault your own son.

And now, look ye here, if I see you hit your son again, I'll hit you; and if you don't clear out of this here court, me and Bob Withers will put you out in Wyle Cop, and there's a couple of peelers there will take charge of you for the night. D'ye hear?

I hear, returned the gipsy, and I'd fight you all round as soon as look at you only I can do something better. I'll tell them that has the power to send the evil eye upon you, and your flesh will shrivel from your bones, and your money will turn into dead leaves, and your food will choke you

Shut up! roared Bill Shipton.

Take your hook, said Bob Withers, who was calm.

I'll go with my son, said Abacada, and not without him.

Bill Shipton laughed. If the kid's your son, he's a precious sight better looking than his father! Come now, mister, no more talk, out you goes from these here premises.

Abacada was afraid of Bill and Bob; he swaggered down the court, bullying and blustering as he went, and escorted by half the population. They escorted him into Wyle Cop, and some distance along it until they saw a couple of stalwart policemen exchanging ideas at a corner, and then they dropped off one by one, and the gipsy was left to his own devices.

Meanwhile Jack had been pitied and admired by the women, a cup of cold tea had been pressed on his acceptance, and finally he, too, had been escorted, but by a sympathizing crowd, into Wyle Cop, and been watched until out of sight in the direction of the river.

As he went, tingling and aching in both body and mind, he debated with himself how much of this last encounter with Abacada he should tell to his parents. He feared that his mother's sensitive heart would be shocked by the story; and he also feared to have the appearance of making himself a hero. He must, of course, account for being late at his appointment, but he would do so in as few words as possible.

When he reached the boat−house everyone, except Mr. Warren, was seated in the boat. A chorus arose of Where have you been? What have you been doing? What has kept you so long?

He replied, I met that gypsy fellow again, and we had a tussle.

So it seems, said Mr. Warren; and he got the better of your jacket.

Dear, dear! sighed Mrs. Warren, you are all torn and dirty.

And your cheeks are red, and one ear has been bleeding! cried Elsie. Why, Jack, you must have had a fight!

Only a small one! cried Jack cheerfully. Where are the oars? Are you going to pull, father, or shall I take the sculls? And is the boat−hook in? got a cushion, Mother? turn the boat, Elsie, off we go.

And in the soft sunset and the lingering summer twilight they had a beautiful quiet row. Jack was more bruised and hurt than he was willing to confess; and as they walked home under the stars he dropped behind with his father and told him more in detail of the gypsy's assault. Mr. Warren looked grave at the story.

You are sure that it was the same man?

Quite sure?

Could you swear to him?

Well hardly I did not see his face.

Then we cannot summon him for assault, but I will call at the police station and ask the police to keep an eye on him. And you, Jack, be cautious when you are out lest he should pounce on you again.

Jack was never again troubled by Abacada; for a few days later the man was arrested for telling fortunes, robbing his victims, and assaulting one of them in a neighbouring village, and was sent to penal servitude for five years, he being an old offender who had already undergone many shorter sentences.

It is very probable that Mr. Warren called on Mr. Corbet, or wrote to him, to make him acquainted with Jack's conduct all through this affair, which arose in the first instance entirely from the boy's courageous defence of the old gentleman's property. Like many other boys, Jack Warren had more physical than moral courage; it was often more difficult for him to speak the truth than to take a thrashing, and he could more easily resist a ruffian like the gypsy than a forbidden pleasure. His moral weakness soon afterwards led him into serious trouble, as we shall see; but just at present he was, and had reason to be, very well satisfied with himself. He allowed the subject of the gypsy to drop altogether, and hardly ever alluded to it when talking with Mr. Corbet. And he never spoke of it to Clive, who had a very downcast manner for a long time.

As for Mrs. Clive, she ruled her husband and her master more tyrannically than ever. In her absence they could not even take care of the spoons!

Chapter 7. NEITHER RABBIT, RAT, NOR COIN.

During the following days, which passed without any mention of Mr. Roger Corbet, that old gentleman held no place in John Warren's thought. It was truly out of sight, out of mind, with the boy; and he even forgot to tell his sister of the treat which was in store for her. Work in school, and cricket, and boating went on as usual, but as they do not concern us just now we need not say much about them. Jack could not fail to remember his old friend when he spent the remainder of his three and sixpence. How he spent it would be difficult to say. A basket of strawberries, a box of chocolate, and some tarts, accounted for part; a thimble for Elsie, and a top for his little brother absorbed another portion; and Jack might have confessed, though he did not, that sixpence went into the offertory at St. Giles' Church.

Though Jack well−nigh forgot Mr. Corbet, we may be sure that Mr. Corbet did not forget Jack, and in his lonely hours often wished for the society of the young lad. Proof came that he remembered his boy−friend, proof in the shape of a post−card on which was written in a very small, neat hand:

The memories of Henry IV., Hotspur, and Douglas,
request the pleasure of
the company of Mr. Jack Warren and Bonnie,
at Battlefield,
on 20th July, the anniversary of the Battle
of Shrewsbury.
R.S.V.P.
Magnolia Cottage,
18th July.

Jack threw down the card on the table in the hall. Must I go? He looked at his father, who was about to set out on his rounds.

Certainly, if you can.

Of course I can, said Jack; but I had made up my mind to go on Saturday evening to the top of Lord Hill's column, and look all over the neighbourhood. I was going to ask Syd Bellett to come with me.

Do whichever you think is best, said Mr. Warren.

Oh, I know which is best, but

You would rather do what is worse. Mr. Warren shrugged his shoulders.

I'll go to old Corbet, then, I don't care! and Jack stamped his foot on the tiled floor.

Mr. Warren laid his hand on the boy's shoulder: 'God loveth a cheerful giver.'

The hall door opened and closed; Jack was alone. He spoke a few murmured words which no human ear could hear, and then he was cheerful and willing to give up his Saturday evening to Mr. Corbet. He replied on a post−card, thus:

Jack Warren and Bonnie will come to Magnolia Cottage on Saturday evening, thank you. In haste, yours truly, J.W.

And the scrawl made Roger Corbet cheerful too.

The Saturday evening was dull and chilly. Mr. Corbet had on a cloth greatcoat, and Mrs. Clive insisted that he should take with him a woollen scarf in case he should feel cold after sunset. The cloudy sky and the low−lying mist reconciled Jack to his employment; for he would have been able to see little of the distant country even from the top of the column erected in memory of the gallant Lord Hill.

As he walked out to Magnolia Cottage Jack debated with himself whether he should thank Mr. Corbet for the tip, or keep up the fiction of the coins being some concealed by Griffith the miser. In such a case as this it is always easier to say nothing than to burst out in sudden thanks, and finally Jack came to the conclusion that he would not allude to the money unless Mr Corbet did so. And he felt nearly sure that Mr. Corbet would not refer to his own kindness. In this Jack was not mistaken; nothing was said on either side about the three and sixpence.

But as they went towards Battlefield Mr. Corbet said, swinging his staff round him, Who knows but treasures may lie beneath any foot of earth between us and the horizon?

How do treasures come in the earth? asked Jack; I suppose someone puts them there.

Mr. Corbet pointed towards the Wrekin. Over there, at Uriconium, the town was destroyed by fire, and the burnt bricks and materials covered what there was of value, until 1827, when a fiend appeared to an enchanter and showed him where lay buried urns, and a ship, and a house, with an immense quantity of gold.

Really, asked Jack.

I don't know about *really*, that is the legend. A little later some men went treasure−hunting at Wroxeter, which is on the site of the Roman Uriconium, and they would have been severely punished by the lord of the manor, but that they did not find the treasure which they sought.

Has nothing ever been found there?

Yes many Roman coins and clay moulds for making them, and bones of animals, and pieces of glass, and earthenware jars, and *fibulae* or brooches, and finger−rings.

Have you ever found anything there? Jack inquired.

No. The ground has been so deeply ploughed and dug, and so thoroughly searched that nothing can possibly have escaped detection. If ever I discover relics or remains it will be unexpectedly, in some spot not hitherto explored.

In your own garden, perhaps.

That has been explored many a time and nothing discovered. But what is your dog doing?

Bonnie was sitting up in a begging attitude facing a gate, not barking or uttering a sound, but all his faculties intent on something which his companions could not see. They walked on quickly but silently, wondering what had so arrested the dog's attention. He did not stir; the ears, which stood up erect, never twitched, nor did his forepaws move a claw he was like a statue of a dog.

As Mr. Corbet and Jack came in full sight of the gate, they saw advancing to it from the other side a cavalcade of children. Polly, with one of the twins in her arms, a boy of three years dragging at her skirts, and half a dozen other boys and girls; some brothers and sisters of hers, some friends, but all, it seemed, in charge of Polly, herself

a tiny child. No wonder Bonnie sat amazed at such a strange sight.

Polly curtseyed and smiled.

Been for a walk, my children? said Mr. Corbet.

Please, sir, we have been getting flowers. And each child had a bunch of meadow−sweet, or clover, or dandelion, or some other field−flower; except Polly, whose arms were so full of her baby brother, that she could not gather or carry flowers.

Another little girl came forward with a handful of dandelions and buttercups which she thrust up into Mr. Corbet's face. He particularly disliked anything yellow, but took the present and sniffed at it, and put on a face of admiration and enjoyment.

Thank you, my dear, thank you. Now, children, as you go home call at my house, and tell Mrs. Clive that she is to give each of you one of those nice little cakes which she made this afternoon.

This was enough to get rid of the children; they scampered away, esteeming cakes more highly than wild flowers. Jack was glad when they disappeared.

We will survey the battlefield, said Mr. Corbet; I have often thought that these ups and downs, these heaps and hollows, may hide unknown treasures. See here, Jack, I will poke my stick into this bank.

He pushed in his stick as far as it would go, and twisted it about, and when it came out it left a hole. From this hole fell loose pebbles and sand.

Do you see anything like coins or pottery? Mr. Corbet asked of Jack, who was kneeling and handling the loose stones.

Nothing like coins, but here is pottery; and he took up some broken bits of red earthenware.

The colour deepened on the old man's cheeks; he held out his open palm for the pieces, but disappointment overspread his face. A bit of modern tile! Jack Warren, do not be so foolish. Twice you have done bravely for my sake, and now I hope you will do wisely for my sake and for your own too.

I did not know, said Jack; besides, how could coins or anything valuable come to be in a field? He thought that Mr. Corbet was the foolish person.

In this way, replied Mr Corbet, leaning on his staff. In times of civil war, in times of pestilence, the country people who had no bankers were accustomed to bury their money and anything which they thought valuable, in the ground, where neither tax−gatherer, nor rapacious soldier, nor grasping monk would be likely to find it. If war or pestilence carried off the owner of the treasure his secret died with him, and his treasure remained for future ages to bring to light; perhaps, Jack, for you or me!

While Mr. Corbet had been speaking and Jack listening, little Bonnie had been amusing himself by scratching at the loosened earth, and enlarging the hole. He put his nose into it and tore away with his forepaws, so that within a few minutes he had made a place large enough to contain half his body. No rabbit or rat rewarded him for his toil; but when he sneezed his face was covered with sand, and his eyes blinded with it. Then he sat up and begged in his silent way. Jack took out his handkerchief and rubbed some of the dust from Bonnie's eyes; but apparently he rubbed a good deal in, and the dog ran away to doctor his eyes with his own paws.

Said Mr. Corbet, Bonnie is a more thoroughgoing explorer than you or I, Jack Warren. See how he has brought out stones and bits of brick, and this piece of coloured glass. It is, I fear, only a morsel of an old bottle thrown here, and covered by sand and weed; but if it were Roman, or Saxon, or early English, a scrap of stained glass from a window of yonder church, what a prize it would be!

Like most of us, Roger Corbet built up a theory of how things would be if only circumstances were entirely changed. And yet the doings of Bonnie, and what he had unearthed, seemed to rouse hopes in him, stronger than before, that here, even here at Battlefield, strange and precious fragments might underlie the rough gravel, the coarse grass, the weeds, and the furze−bushes.

Bonnie had recovered his eyesight and returned to the business in hand, or in paw, as he would have said. He and his human companions disturbed the earth of this mound on which they had fixed their attention, but nothing rewarded their labours. The light was waning, and the air growing very cold, while heavy clouds threatened rain.

Two farm labourers approached and looked on, smoking their pipes. Your dog found a rabbit, sir? asked one of them.

More likely a mole, said the other.

We have found nothing, replied Mr. Corbet. As he spoke he began to kick back the disturbed earth, and to tread down the tufts of grass which had been torn up. In this Jack helped him, as did the two men. In a few minutes the place looked much as it did before, perhaps a little more wild and barren.

Good night, sir, said the men, moving away. One of them returned and said in a low tone, I've been trying to copy them words as you wrote for me; but I'll never be able to write like you, if I try ever so.

Perhaps you will write better than I do; persevere. Good night.

Jack looked up with wonder at Mr. Corbet. Is that man not able to write? Why, he must be fifty!

Forty, said Mr. Corbet; if he were younger he would have come under better teaching, and would know more. As it is, I think it wonderfully good of him to try and learn at his time of life.

It is good of you to teach him, said Jack.

I am glad of anything that fills up my useless, aimless days. But where is my nosegay? and he looked about the ground.

Nosegay? repeated Jack; I did not know you had one.

Oh yes; the flowers that child gave me.

Oh! said Jack, turning up his nose, those horrid yellow things. Do you like them?

No, I do not like them. But I must find them. If the little creature should come this way tomorrow and see her bunch of flowers lying here, she would think that I had thrown them away, and that would wound her kind heart. Here they are. Now, let us be going. I will set them up in a tumbler and put it in my window, that the child may see how her gift is valued. Children have such tender hearts; not like our tough, weather−beaten things.

Jack said no more; his heart was not tough, it was touched.

At the cottage there were cakes for Jack and Bonnie, and then Mr. Corbet bade them go home quickly, for already a fine rain was falling. And, Jack, you must put on my mackintosh.

A stern voice broke in. And pray, sir, what are you to wear to−morrow in the rain if you lend your mackintosh to this young master?

Never mind, Mrs. Clive, I can stay indoors tomorrow. It will be better for me. And Master Warren will send or bring back the coat very soon, I am sure.

And in the meantime you will catch your death of cold. I know your ways, sir. And if ever there was a wilful man it is you, sir; and what would become of you without me to look after your interests, I don't dare to think! Just now there came a crowd of dirty children clamouring for cakes; cakes which I had made with my own hands for your own eating, sir!

They were made to be eaten, Mrs. Clive, said her master soothingly.

Not by brats! was the retort as the housekeeper flung her portly person out of the room.

Now be off, dear boy, said Mr. Corbet in a tone of relief. I hope you will reach home safely; and some day soon I will call for you and take you and your sister to Scrobbesbyrig. And I daresay you will come again, and bring Bonnie, and then we can examine another portion of the battlefield.

The boy and the dog departed, and were at home about twenty minutes later; and Mr. Corbet sat down and busied himself in some intricate papers concerning the partnership of two quarrelsome brothers. But ever and anon he laid them down and thought of the lad whom he really loved for his fine manly qualities, and who yet was such a contradiction in many ways; courageous yet indifferent, grateful yet impatient. I, too, am a contradiction, muttered Mr. Corbet to himself, and then went on with his work as peacemaker.

Chapter 8. SCROBBESBYRIG.

The ears of Jack Warren were as long and as sharp as those of a boy ought to be, but they were not long enough or sharp enough to identify a soft voice which was speaking in the hall of his father's house. Mr. Warren had opened the hall−door in response to a gentle knock, and the knocker had walked in (not an iron ring in the shape of a wreath of laurel, but an old man).

Jack and Elsie were on an upper flight of stairs, and they bent their heads over the banisters in their endeavour to see who had entered. Jack's chimney−pot hat, which was lying loosely on his head, lost its balance and fell plump into the square hall. Bonnie flew down after it, barking madly. Mr. Warren and his visitor burst out laughing. Mrs. Warren and two maid servants opened doors and said, Dear, dear, dear! Elsie and the younger children screamed with amused delight.

You stupid boy! called out Mr. Warren, come and pick up the pieces of your hat before Bonnie worries it into a rag.

Thus commanded Jack came clattering down the oak stairs, and found himself face to face with Mr. Corbet.

How do you do, Jack? said the old man; you did not expect me to−day, I suppose.

Not on a Sunday, replied Jack ruefully.

I thought, perhaps, you would like to come with me to church at Scrobbesbyrig.

Well, there's no cricket on Sunday; perhaps it will be a good day for you to talk to me.

Jack, said his father reprovingly.

I mean, said Jack, correcting and explaining himself, that as I am going to church somewhere, I may as well go with Mr. Corbet to Scrob−bes−by−rig as anywhere else.

And me too! cried Elsie, jumping the lowest three steps.

As many as like to come, said Mr. Corbet gladly.

At this time Mrs. Warren was inviting the visitor into the drawing−room, where she briefly explained to him, that as she had been to church before breakfast, she intended now to stay at home and look after the younger children, while the nurse went to morning service. But my husband will be delighted to go with you, and Jack and Elsie. In fact Mr. Warren is just preparing to go.

Is it a long way? asked Elsie.

Not very far. But if you prefer it we will go to Careg Hydwyth or Pengwerne.

'Oh! said Elsie, delighted at knowing something, you must mean the Pengwerne boathouse.

Mr. Corbet did not hear her. He was examining some old miniatures which hung on the wall. Family portraits, madam? he inquired of Mrs. Warren.

Yes, chiefly uncles and aunts.

She noticed how he paused before one of a fair girl, with golden hair and blue eyes, her gown draped with blue silk and gold embroidery. But Mrs. Warren made no remark, and her guest returned to a chair.

You will join our early dinner, will you not? she said presently.

Thank you, but my own will be ready. Still, as you are so kind, I will

Jack looked up with horror. What will Mrs. Clive say?

She must say what she likes. I think we ought to start.

I am ready, said Mr. Warren's voice at the door; and then the expedition started.

Mr. Corbet and Mr. Warren went side by side, Jack keeping by his father, and Elsie sliding her hand into that of the old man. They passed the castle and the museum, and turning out of Castle Street came on a passage with a smooth cement roadway, which the children knew led to St. Mary's Church.

How far is it to Scrob ? said Elsie.

We are there now, replied Mr. Corbet.

But this is Shrewsbury!

It is, my dear. It is also Careg Hydwyth, the *rock covered with shrubs,* and Pengwerne, the *hill of elderbushes;* and Scrobbesbyrig, the *eminence overgrown with shrub.* All these ancient names mean much the same.

Scrubs! said Jack disdainfully.

Scrubbing brushes! said Elsie laughing. Well, yes; scrub and shrub meant much the same. Near London there is a bushy place called Wormwood Scrubs. And again *brush,* you know; we still say *brush−wood.*

Perhaps, ventured Elsie, once on a time, long ago, bushes were used for brushes.

Very likely, probably; I daresay the broom, the plant I mean, was used to sweep floors.

This really interested Elsie. She said, I like derivations.

And Jack asked, What does *byrig* mean?

It meant an eminence or raised place. You see *scrobbes* has become, through various changes, *shrews,* and *byrig* has become *bury.*

We bury people under mounds, observed Jack.

True, said Mr. Warren approvingly.

I thought though, Jack objected, that *bury* came from the German *burg,* a castle or fortress.

Oh no; *burg* makes *burgh* or *borough.*

They were now at St. Mary's Church, and went in quickly and took their places, and were none too early, for almost immediately afterwards the service began.

Often during the prayers and hymns the children glanced up at the venerable face beside them; the white locks mingling with the white beard, the clear, healthy complexion, the steady eyes, the wide forehead. They could not fail to see the entire absorption of the old man in the service going on; they thought that his mind never wandered. They heard his softly uttered responses; but neither in psalm nor hymn could he take any audible part. The voice which spoke so feebly had not the power to sing.

Then during the sermon Roger Corbet sat and listened like a child; no, not like an impatient child, like a wise man willing to learn. And if Jack and Elsie did not learn much from the sermon, they learnt much from the demeanour of their old friend.

When all was ended, the clergy and choir gone, and the congregation dispersed, Mr. Corbet took Elsie's hand in his and led her to the effigy of the cross−legged knight. This, said he, was formerly supposed to be the tomb of Hotspur; but I do not think that Percy was in any Crusade, and therefore his statue would not have the legs crossed. It is now thought to be the tomb of one of the Leybournes; and it used to be in the south chapel, called of old the Leybourne Chapel.

It must be very old! said Elsie.

Five or six hundred years. It probably dates from the very beginning of the fourteenth century.

They went around the interior of the church, but the children did not understand its architectural beauties, and there were not many monuments of interest to them. Outside they looked up at the steeple, and their father told them the sad story of Robert Cadman, who undertook, on 24th January, 1739−40, to fly from the steeple of St. Mary's Church to the meadows on the other side of the river, firing off pistols in his descent.

Jack was all eagerness to hear this story, but Elsie was a little frightened.

Cadman had been employed to take the weather−cock down. I suppose it needed repair, as weather−cocks often do, being so much exposed to wind and weather. For such repairs a man is called in who goes by the name of a steeple−jack. No offence to you, Jack.

Go on, please, said the boy.

This Cadman had been up and down with success, and had shown his skill in various exploits. On the day fixed, which was during a very severe frost, a rope was fastened to the upper windows, within a few feet of the top of the spire, and brought down to the Gay meadow on the far side of the river. It is said that just before he set out on his downward career Cadman found the rope rather too tight, and gave a signal that it should be slackened, but the persons in charge of it mistook his meaning and tightened it. Consequently, as he was passing over St. Mary Friars it snapped, and he fell to the ground. The ground was so hard that the body, after reaching the earth, rebounded upwards several feet.

Elsie's face showed horror, and Jack gave a sigh.

It was a sad and useless death, said Mr. Corbet. Even had he succeeded nothing would have been achieved. He would have shown considerable nerve, but nerve wasted.

They were walking towards St. Julian's and St. Alkmond's Churches, but Mr. Warren pulled out his watch and said: I think we must go home to dinner.

Jack was glad to hear this suggestion; he was generally ready for his dinner.

The room in which they dined was a large, long one, with a balcony on to which opened three wide windows. Beneath it was a strip of grass, beyond that a gravel path, at one end of which was a gate opening into a lane that led out to the country. From this balcony the view was very pleasant, the ground sloping down into a hollow filled by roofs and chimneys at which one need not look, but beyond them was seen the square tower of the Abbey Church, the pulpit, Lord Hill's column, and then fields and hills.

Mr. Corbet's eyes wandered lovingly over the scene. The inhabitants of a large city such as London or Manchester hardly know how much those who dwell in small and ancient towns love their homes; how proud they are of belonging to Salisbury, to York, to Shrewsbury, as the case may be. And Mr. Corbet, whose family was one of the oldest and most honoured in the county of Salop, felt an absolute affection for Shrewsbury.

May we stay on this balcony? he asked of Mrs. Warren.

Yes, if you like it. The sun has gone round; we shall find it pleasantly cool here. The view is fine.

Beautiful! said the old man. An ancient town like this mingles very strangely the old and the new. The monks who read from the pulpit would be astonished to see it now in the yard of a railway−station.

It was not the pulpit of the church? said Jack.

Oh, no; it was in the refectory of the Abbey. When monks dine they do not talk politics as we do; they listen to some good book read by one of their number from a pulpit in the refectory or dining−room.

That one had to wait for his dinner, then? said Jack.

Yes; perhaps the waiting and reading sharpened his appetite. I believe certain of the monks took the duty in turn.

Mr. Corbet, said Elsie, I think you are a very learned man.

No, my dear no, said Mr. Corbet hastily, looking shocked, I am not at all learned. You don't know what real learning is if you think me learned, I am very superficial, I just know a few surface facts. Living nearly all my life in a neighbourhood which I really love, I have, of course, picked up odds and ends of local knowledge ay, and other knowledge, too, but as to learning, that is a much deeper and wider thing.

The younger children were playing on the grass below the balcony, and their games and laughter sounded pleasantly to those who sat and listened. Presently a shower of pink and white things fell among the little ones, who found the grass dotted with sugar−plums. Mr. Corbet had come provided with a bag of sweeties. Jack and Elsie accepted some of them, and even Mrs. Warren was tempted to eat one with an almond inside it.

She said to her guest: You are one of *the* Corbets, I know. Are you connected with the baronet's family, the Corbets of Moreton Corbet?

I am, he replied, a distant connection, a poor relation. The Corbets are a very old family. You know *corbeau* is the French for a raven. We are Ravens.

There is a Raven Hotel in the town, said Jack.

There has always been a Raven Inn in Shrewsbury, replied Mr. Corbet; at least 'the memory of man runneth not to the contrary.' Have you ever been to Moreton Corbet Castle?

No, replied Jack and Elsie.

It is quite modern sixteenth century; when castles were built for habitation, not for defence as of old. It is a ruin now. You go through Astley and Shawbury to it. There is a curious story of one of the owners of Moreton Corbet.

Tell us the story, said Elsie.

Well, if I tell you the story I must go away directly afterwards, because the afternoon is passing over.

At this moment Mr. Warren came on the balcony. He had been to see a patient since dinner, but had now returned, and was as willing as his children to hear the story.

Chapter 9. A LEGEND OF MORETON CORBET.

The manor of Moreton Corbet was held at the time of the Domesday Survey (finished in 1086), by Turold, and Hunnit and his brother held the manor of Turold. These two were freemen. At that time the value of it was sixteen shillings yearly; formerly it had been ten shillings. My young friends must remember that a thousand years ago the purchasing power of money was very much greater than it is now. When there came about the tremendous

changes of social order consequent on the Norman Conquest Hunnit and his brother lost their estates, but another Saxon, more fortunate than they, one Toret, received them. In his *Antiquities of Shropshire* Eyton says: Whatever were the misfortunes of Hunnit and his brother Uniet it is certain that the descendants of their contemporary and compatriot Toret succeeded to some of their estates; and it is also certain that a lineal descendant of the said Toret is at this day lord of Moreton Corbet. These are terms in which very few Shropshire estates can be spoken of.

That lineal descendant is a distant relative of mine. My branch of the family diverged at the Commonwealth, they quarrelled with the head of the house and separated themselves from their kin. I do not know that they were any the worse for their lives of greater independence and harder work than those they might have led in the ancestral home.

To come to the legend which the young people are expecting.

Once upon a time yes, once upon a time, the heir of Moreton Corbet went to the Holy Land. I am afraid I cannot precisely fix which Crusade he joined, or name the year, but we can imagine how the enthusiastic young man took the cross, as it was called, and set off with others, traversing the sea in some great wooden ship, and having no thought but that he would return within a year or two victorious and covered with glory. In Geoffrey de Vinsauf's *Itinerary of Richard I.* you will find a very full and interesting account of the Third Crusade, and, if we wish to do so, we are at liberty to suppose that this was the expedition in which my ancestor had part.

We will say that he took the cross in 1189 and joined Richard the Lionheart, who was then the guest of Baldwin, Archbishop of Canterbury. On the Festival of St. John Baptist, 24th June, Richard of England and Philip Augustus of France met at Vezelay, a town about a hundred miles south of Paris.

When the two armies came to the banks of the Rhone they found the great river to be very wide and very deep, and the bridge too narrow for the immense procession to pass over. Suddenly the bridge gave way with a crash, and a hundred men fell into the river; yet, wonderful to say, only two were drowned. All the rest escaped.

Next my relative had a brush with the Griffons at Messina, in Sicily. These Griffons were of mixed Sicilian and Saracen blood. The English got on very badly with them.

After Easter, in the year 1191, the Crusaders went on to Rhodes, and next were shipwrecked on the coast of Cyprus. But after some fighting they took Limozin (now called Limasol), the chief town of the island. They proceeded further, and came in sight at last of the Holy Land. Then Acre was besieged, and the city surrendered. At last they arrived at Capernaum, which had been razed to the ground by Saladin, the Saracen king. Nothing could they see but ruins, and as for the ancient village the Lord's own city they could discover no vestige of it. In these days even the site of it is uncertain.

Have you ever read how every night a herald used to go out into the midst of the camp, uttering a strange and plaintive cry? Help! help! for the Holy Sepulchre! This was his burden; and as he cried the people would fall on their knees and respond with sobs and tears.

At Easter, 1192, some few English had arrived at Jerusalem. At this time the heir of Moreton Corbet was in captivity to the Saracens; and the prisoners had the great advantage of seeing the *sacred fire*, which it was said came down from heaven on Easter Eve and lighted an extinguished lamp. This trick is still played on the same day by the priests of the Greek Church.

Well, as you are aware, the post−office arrangements in the reign of Richard I. were not what they are now. Only by private hand could a letter be carried; and very few persons, except the monks, knew how to read and write. During all these three years not a word had come home from the Crusader to his family, and as time went on they

could not but think that he was dead.

Alas! alas! the old father would say to his younger son, thy brother is dead, I am certain. We heard that he was taken, but no pilgrim who has come to our gate for a manchet and a cup of ale has brought any news of him.

The younger son tried to make his father more hopeful.

My brother will return some day, I doubt not. He will inherit this ancestral castle, he will be the lord of Moreton Corbet, and when he dies his effigy will lie with crossed legs in yonder town of Sirobsbury.

Never, never! groaned the father.

And then after a month or so the old man began to hint to the young man that as the elder son must be dead and gone the junior must now be the heir. After much demur the son assented to this proposition.

Another step was taken when the father brought the son to see that the heir to Morton Corbet ought to marry a charming wife, who should be the Lady Bountiful of the neighbourhood, and become the mother of a long line of future Corbets.

Then the youth went to seek a wife, and succeeded in winning the affections of some lovely Matilda, or Margaret, or Bertha; and at length the wedding−day was fixed, the wedding−feast provided, the wedding−guests invited.

Oh, the rejoicings and junketings on that great day! The castle gates not the present castle, my children, but a much more ancient one were thrown open to all corners; and all the retainers trooped in, and monks from the abbeys of Grey Friars and Black Friars, and beggars by the score, and pilgrims, and fine ladies on palfreys, and fine gentlemen on coursers, and bishops and priests, and boys and girls, and I daresay a good many dogs looking out for stray bones.

They must have been a motley company; and the bridegroom gazing down the long tables must have felt a surprise at seeing so many assembled to do him honour, and he must have heaved a secret sigh because one was absent, the Crusader lying dead in the eastern country.

And then, behold, near the foot of one of the tables, a bent and silent pilgrim rises from his seat and asks in hollow tones if he may speak a few words. They all expect that he will make some pretty speech to the fair bride, or utter some good wish for the noble bridegroom, or else address a short sermon to the merry guests. But lo! he throws back his hood, he flings away his scallop shell, he tears off his sandals. To some eyes his face seems familiar, though it is worn and haggard.

And then he speaks:

Friends, some of you more than friends, do you know me? You have come at the bidding of the heir of Moreton Corbet as you think; but it is not so. The heir has not invited you; this is not his wedding−day. Do you not know me?

And the pilgrim threw up his head in the way he used to do as a lad, and every one, looking upon him, perceived that he was the long−absent elder brother the pilgrim, the Crusader. His father fell upon his neck and wept, his brother came down from the high seat and bowed before him. And though the people had rejoiced greatly for the wedding of the one, they rejoiced much more for the return of the other.

Next day the bridegroom had a long conference with the real heir, desiring to retire from the position which he had held while under a mistake, and anxious to yield up all the land and wealth which had been looked upon as

his. But this the pilgrim would not allow.

Nay, said he; I, a pilgrim from the Holy Land, I have had other thoughts these many years than home and hearth, and wealth and acreage.

But thou shalt take thy rights, said the other.

No man can make me take my rights, and I will not, was the pilgrim's rejoinder; take thou all the land save this castle and that which immediately surrounds it, and leave me to spend my days in solitude and peace.

The younger brother was compelled to do as the elder wished.

But in course of time, when the old man was gathered to his fathers, the pilgrim found that he did not love solitude so much as of old; and there came another day of rejoicing and junketing; and the bridegroom was the pilgrim, and the bride another beautiful Matilda, Margaret, or Bertha.

And in course of time the castle turrets rang with children's laughter, and the courtyard resounded with the clang of armour, and silk rustled in the ladies' bower, and several bridal processions went in and out of the chapel. And the lord of Moreton Corbet saw his children's children around him, and went down to his grave full of years and honours.

In the south aisle of our church are two fine monuments, each bearing the recumbent effigy of a knight and his lady. I do not say, because I do not know, that these are the effigies of the pilgrim and his brother and their respective wives.

From the pilgrim are descended the Corbets of Moreton the baronet and myself, equally. We bear one raven as our armorial cognizance, and that proves us to be of the elder branch of the family. The younger branches bear two or three ravens.

Chapter 10. TREASURE−TROVE.

When his story was told, his pockets emptied, and his macintosh restored to him, Mr. Corbet took his leave. Not without a suppressed sigh did he turn from the door which shut in that large and happy family; and not without a sigh did he enter his own lonely abode, where the stupid Clive and the sharp−tongued Mrs. Clive were the only inmates besides the old master. Sometimes he thought that the quietness of his little house was pleasanter than the bustle of a big one filled with lively young people; but at other times he knew only too well that to be alone is to be sad and dreary.

Perhaps if Jack had understood all that was in the mind and heart of Roger Corbet he would have been more willing to talk with him and amuse him. As it was the lad scarcely remembered his kind old friend during the weeks following that Sunday.

The summer holidays came, and the river was a great delight to all the boys who lived in Shrewsbury. The young Warrens would spend the whole day on the Severn, taking with them a basket of provisions.

A cousin came down from London to enjoy some fresh air, and to share in Jack's amusements. These two boys went together to Ross, where they looked upon the beautiful Wye, winding about below the town; and where they went into the church and saw the tomb of the Man of Ross, whose memory lives and speaks, though two hundred years have passed since his work was doing, and whose name is borne by the benevolent persons who call themselves the Kyrle Society.

Another day Jack and his cousin went to Hereford and saw the cathedral. Then they visited the sights nearer home Haughmond Hill and Abbey, the Wrekin, and lastly, the Museum at Shrewsbury.

The cousin, whose name was Arthur, found more pleasure in antiquities than did Jack. He was much interested in the old charters, which are plain and legible now, though six hundred years have somewhat paled the ink in which they were written; and he liked making out the dates and inscriptions on the coins.

These are worth no end of money! exclaimed Arthur; if one could only find such things one could be rich.

I suppose the museum would buy them, said Jack.

Yes, any museum would. This one, or the British Museum. But if I found any coins I should keep them and only show them to friends. I might, perhaps, write to the *Times* and tell them what I had found.

Tell whom? asked Jack.

Everybody, answered Arthur; all the people who read the *Times.*

I would not keep them, said Jack. Old coins would be no use to me. I would sell them and buy a watch with the money which I got.

And he looked enviously at the gold chain which hung across his cousin's waistcoat.

A watch is all very well and useful too, replied Arthur, assuming a careless air while he fingered his chain; but the honour of possessing a cabinet of old coins would be worth more than a ticker.

As he spoke he pulled out his watch, a demi−hunter, and a pretty thing.

My grandmother gave it to me, said he.

I wish I had a grandmother, remarked Jack mournfully; and I wish I had some coins.

His eyes glanced from Arthur's watch to the case of relics; and he reflected that he was four months older than Arthur, and it was very hard that one so much younger should possess more than one so much older. This troubled him, and he thought about it, and it rankled in his heart, and even after Arthur had left Shrewsbury Jack still dwelt on the subject of the watch, and cast about for some means of obtaining money with which to buy one. Mr. Warren had given him a silver watch on his fourteenth birthday, but this had been so many times injured and repaired that at last Jack had grown tired of it, and had exchanged it with another boy for a cricket bat.

A few days after the departure of Arthur Warren, and while Jack was yet musing over the subject of the watch, Mr. Warren said to him:

You have quite neglected Mr. Corbet during your cousin's visit. I really think you ought to go and see him to−day.

Very well, replied Jack with unusual alacrity, I will.

And away he went, Bonnie at his heels.

Jack sauntered in at the gate and went through the flowers, which grew so thickly together that they nearly met each other across the narrow path; but he saw no one. The hall door stood open as usual, and he walked into the

house; but still he saw and heard no one, not even Mrs. Clive. He came out again and went round the cottage, and so into the kitchen−garden, and there he beheld Mr. Corbet in a cherry−tree, dropping down the dark red fruit into the apron of a very poor−looking old woman, while Mrs. Clive stood near and glared upon them.

Never, no, never, did I see such a thing, never did I know such a gentleman! giving away his own beautiful cherries, and then when he wants some for tarts or preserving he will have to pay sixpenee a pound for them. Why, I have known that man to sell his new−laid eggs at a penny each, just to accommodate his neighbours, and an hour afterwards he will buy half−addled things from some other neighbour at twopence each!

Mrs. Clive's bitter tone, as well as her rueful countenance, were only noticed by Jack; she did not see him, for her apron was thrown over her face to shade it from the sun, Mr. Corbet was intent on throwing down the cherries, and the old woman on catching them, and so Jack had stood a few moments, with scarlet−runners on one side of him and currant bushes on the other, before anyone perceived his presence. And then it was Bonnie's bark which betrayed him.

My young friend! Mr. Corbet called out from the middle of the tree, I am just coming down, as soon as this good woman has as many cherries as she can carry. Her husband is very ailing, and thinks he would like some fruit.

And a very foolish man, too! groaned Mrs. Clive, he could not take a worse thing than fruit. And if you don't come down this very minute, sir, you will be so stiff that you will not be able to move again for a month. I never had anyone so troublesome to manage as you. Clive is a trifle to you!

The old woman, having curtsied twenty times and muttered a volume of thanks, went away with her cherries; Mrs. Clive disappeared into the house; Mr. Corbet came down, resumed his straw hat, and rubbed off his clothes some of the green dust which they had caught up from the old tree. Then he got into his coat, and held out his hand to Jack.

It is only dusty, you may safely shake it. Are you well? All your people well? That is right. Come to spend the day with me?

I thought, said Jack, that we might go to the battlefield and dig for coins.

The old man's face lighted up. Good! my dear boy, thank you! Yes, we will take a spade and open up the ground. I read only yesterday in the paper about some Saxon coins found the other day in Essex by a ploughman. I would give anything to be that ploughman.

Would you really? said Jack. But ploughing is quite a different trade from that of a barrister.

Quite; I only meant on the one occasion. I should not care to be permanently a ploughman. Now, shall we start?

He went to a shed, and from it brought out a small spade and a small rake, with which he was wont to work in the flower garden. The one he handed to Jack, the other he himself carried. The three (which number included Bonnie) then went off to Battlefield.

Mr. Corbet was not the man to begin exploring at a venture. He would not look at places which had recently been disturbed, nor at smooth flat places; he sought for something of a mound or rise, which might have been raised to cover hidden treasure.

Up and down the battlefield he went before he hit upon a spot to suit him. At last he found a mound about a yard in diameter, and a foot high, overgrown with bent grass, and shadowed by a big furze−bush.

This is the sort of thing, he said, rubbing his hands with glee. I should not wonder at all if we find some relics here. You must dig, Jack, I have not the strength to do so; and go carefully to work lest you overlook the treasure. Stop!

Mr. Corbet put his hands together on the top of the handle of the rake, and looked into the young face which gazed up to his with mixed surprise and awe.

John Warren there never was a more foolish old man than I am. In my heart I am perfectly certain that I shall find no relics, and yet I nurse an absurd delusive hope that something will reward our search. So it has been all my life; when I was young and strong only disappointment came to me, and yet I fancy now that in my weakness and old age I shall have what I desire.

Jack did not quite understand what the old man meant, but he felt that it was something serious and sad. He was a little alarmed when Mr. Corbet began to recite verses:

The rose hath blushed away her red,
And faded into white;
Excess of light the stars have shed,
And trembled out of sight;
The birds of night have sung and fled
To silence infinite.

My ruddy youth lies cold and still
Upon a waveless shore;
No hope of good, no fear of ill,
Can stir it, husk or core;
Star, flower, and bird, unseen, unheard,
Are hid for evermore.

Dreading lest Mr. Corbet might require him to explain these verses, Jack drove his spade into the earth; instantly the old man grew intent on the operation, and bending down looked closely into the first shovelful turned over. He scraped it about with his rake, and examined every stone. But nothing more valuable than stones appeared there.

Jack turned over another spadeful, Mr. Corbet raked it; no result. A third venture; no result. A loose furze−bush fell to one side, and the digging continued. This had gone on for some minutes, when an old woman appeared upon the scene. She was close to the excavators before they saw her.

When Mr. Corbet looked up, he said, How do you do, Mrs. Jones? Are you pretty well?

Yes, sir, thanks to your liniment, I am a great deal better. What might you be doing here, Mr. Corbet?

Well, he replied, I want to try if I can find anything buried here by Saxon, Celt, Roman, Norman, Plantagenet, Tudor, or Stuart.

Oh! she said blankly, my granny used to say there were all sorts of things hidden underground here, and when my father was a boy he used to dig here; but he never found ought but some rusty nails. I wish ye good luck, gentlemen, and with that good wish she walked on.

Very encouraging! exclaimed Mr. Corbet; her grandmother had heard stories of buried relics, be it ours to find them! To work again, my young friend.

Jack dug again with a will. He said nothing; but he had already resolved that if he found anything he would not present it to the old man, but keep it himself. There were jewellers and curiosity−dealers in Shrewsbury who would gladly buy any relics and treasures, and with the money thus obtained he would purchase a gold watch not inferior to that worn by his Cousin Arthur.

Mr. Corbet had one object in his search, Jack had another, Bonnie had a third. The dog was not idle; he scratched with his paws and rubbed with his nose all the time that the others were digging and raking.

Jack had brought out a large spadeful of earth, and laid it down for Mr. Corbet to examine, while he himself looked closely into the hollow whence he had taken it. Bonnie was working hard with his nose and feet in the hole.

So eager and excited was the dog that Jack let him scrape for a few minutes by himself; a very vigorous scoop of his paws brought out a box; yes, a tin box it seemed to be, about four inches square by three high, very rusty, very dusty, but possibly containing something.

My prize said Jack to himself, and he snatched it up, and put it into the pocket inside his jacket. The box was too large to go into it, and it stuck up and stuck out, and was very much in Jack's way: but he was resolved not to say a word about it until he knew what it contained. Bonnie being aware that he had found something, jumped up and down, and barked wildly, then returned to the hole, then sprang up at Jack, then scratched again at the earth.

Mr. Corbet had his back to the boy and the dog, and was carefully raking the loose earth.

Nothing, nothing, he was saying, I hardly expected anything, and yet I hoped. That dog is very troublesome; I should prefer, another time, that he should not come with us. He is a very nice dog, and I like him much, but when one is on such a quest as this I think an animal is rather in the way.

He shall not come again, said Jack, pushing down the box which threatened to fall out of his pocket, and then holding out a great clod of earth.

Nothing more appeared, not even another tin box; and having a treasure in his pocket which he longed to examine, the boy was weary of his task.

There is no use digging any longer, he said, as he threw down the spade.

No; we shall never find anything. Let us just put back the loose earth, and then we will go. You are tired, Jack, by this fruitless search.

Jack saw that the old man was tired of a fruitless search, and it crossed his mind that as he had been working by Mr. Corbet's orders whatever he found ought really to belong to Mr. Corbet. For a moment he felt inclined to put the tin box into his friend's hands, and then a rush of thoughts came treasures in the box sold for ten pounds a gold watch bought with the money! Besides, it was Jack who had found the box, and in common parlance, finding is keeping. And yet the old man would have been so pleased if he had found it!

All these thoughts passed through Jack's mind rapidly as he pushed the loose earth back into its place. His heart at this time was a battlefield. *Selfishness* heading an army of other bad qualities; on the other side *generosity* all alone trying to make head against avarice, envy, pride, vanity.

When they were ready to go Mr. Corbet looked around him, at the flowers and bushes, and at the noble church, and said half aloud, No doubt this battlefield has been searched over and over again, and whatever was once hidden here has long since been carried away. It was a foolish idea of mine to trouble you, Jack; and I am very greatly obliged to you for your goodness in taking so much pains to gratify the whim of an old man.

For a moment Jack felt an impulse to give the box to Mr. Corbet; and then he hugged it tighter beneath his jacket. He could not give it up until he had at least seen what it contained. So the two walked along side by side, as even more intimate friends walk side by side through the world, each entirely unknowing of the things which form the real life of the other.

At the cottage Mr. Corbet begged Jack to go in and take some refreshments, and the boy could not refuse, though he was all anxiety to inspect his treasure.

Chapter 11. FINDING IS KEEPING.

As they had walked back to Magnolia Cottage they had both been very silent; but indoors Mr. Corbet began to talk. On the table Mrs. Clive had laid out a little meal cakes and jams, cherries and gooseberries, potted ham and cold chicken; and as soon as she heard steps and voices she came into the sitting−room carrying tea and boiled eggs. The sight of this pretty though simple banquet gave Jack an appetite, though he longed to be alone with his box. Mr. Corbet urged him to eat, and he did so; but not with the leisurely enjoyment which Mr. Corbet expected. Jack hurried over the small quantity which he did eat, and two or three times muttered that it was growing late and he must go home.

A dreadful thing happened. Jack dropped his handkerchief; as he stooped to pick it up the box fell from his pocket, and rattled on the floor. Jack grew very red.

What is it? asked Mr. Corbet, smiling; anything breakable?

No, sir, said Jack, in a husky voice; perhaps you would like The rest of the sentence remained unsaid; he had almost finished with, perhaps you would like to see it.

Eh? said the old man; like, like what, my boy?

Like me to go home now.

Well, if you ask what I actually prefer, I should say that I prefer for you to remain here some time longer; but I see that after the manner of young people you are impatient to be moving. So, if you have had all that you care to have, and wish to go, you may go.

Jack knew that he appeared ungrateful, and in fact was ungrateful; but the rebels in his heart were winning the battle. He buttoned his jacket across the box, of which Mr. Corbet had only caught a glimpse, and which he supposed to be a toy of some kind. Good−bye, Mr. Corbet.

Good−bye, Jack; when will you come again?

I don't know. I can't say; some day soon. And Jack was off at last.

As soon as he was gone Mr. Corbet fell into a gloomy reverie. He felt, as old people must feel at times, how empty and dull and unsatisfactory is everything in life. Hopes fail, pleasures fatigue, affection grows cold; only the hopes and pleasures and affections of heavenly things do not fail and fatigue and grow cold. He felt a chill

creep over him as he gazed back on his spoilt youth, his empty manhood, his lonely old age; and said within himself that he had but cumbered the earth, and had not served his generation, and now was not worthy even to be the companion of a lad like Jack Warren.

His reflections were interrupted by the child Polly, who came stumbling and crying up the flower−grown path. Mr. Corbet, please come, sir, quick! Father has come home so tipsy! We are all frightened; please come and say something to him!

While Mr. Corbet was quieting the drunken man and soothing the terrified children, Jack Warren walked briskly along the road to Shrewsbury, until he came to a stile into a field. Over this he vaulted, and turning up beside the hedge, sat down to inspect his treasure.

It was a box, apparently tin, or perhaps iron, very much rusted by age and damp, and so in−crusted with earth that for some time Jack could not make out how to open it. When he shook it he heard a rattling noise; certainly it contained something. He took out his knife, and with the large blade scraped away a good deal of the earth which clung to it. He found that it had an overlapping lid, to lift which would take some time. To work he went with his knife, cleaning the line of the lid, and pushing the blade up under it; then he pushed the blade all along the front of the lid, then all along each side, and then at the back he could not push it, and so he discovered the two hinges.

Still it was not open; to lift the lid seemed almost an impossibility, so tightly was it held down by rust. But at last, after an hour's hard work, it began to yield, and rose about a hair's breadth. Jack's fingers were sore and even bleeding from pulling at the sharp edges, and he was growing weary of the work, when the lid yielded a little bit more, and a little bit more, and finally stood up so much that he could see the interior of the box.

Dirty and dusty and unpleasant was the interior, and containing some scraps of brown rag. These Jack managed to pull out, and though they were not nice to touch he shook them, and found that they contained nothing; but below them and on another layer of rags lay some black round things about the size of sovereigns.

He shook them out into his left hand. Coins! treasures! Four of them; doubtless ancient coins, worth ten pounds each very likely. Here was a find! They must go to the curator at the museum who would buy them for the collection, and give Jack forty pounds for them, which he would spend on a splendid gold watch and chain, and so put Arthur's jewellery quite in the shade!

Some people now appeared coming along the path towards the stile, and Jack had no wish for anyone to see his treasure. He feared that he might be robbed, or that they might tell Mr. Corbet, who might suppose that he had some claim on it; and in his heart Jack had a sort of dim notion that Mr. Corbet had some claim on it.

He put the coins back in the box, wrapped the box in his handkerchief, crammed the whole parcel into his pocket, and as soon as the other people had gone on he slowly got over the stile and went homewards. As he went he wondered whether Mr. Corbet had any claim on the coins. Certainly if Mr Corbet had not asked Jack to dig at Battlefield the coins would never have been found by Jack. It might be right and kind to give one of them to Mr. Corbet; the other three sold for thirty pounds would buy a very good watch and chain. But then, if Mr Corbet had a claim on one coin he had a claim on them all. Or again, had he a claim on any? Could Jack offer him one, and not the four? Could the coins be placed in the museum with Mr. Corbet's name attached to one as the finder, and Jack's name to the other three? What view would Mr. Warren take of the whole affair? It was a very puzzling affair altogether. Jack wanted to do what was right, and what was also expedient, and like most people who strive to reconcile duty and interests he found that he had a hard task in hand.

And what were these coins? Gold, silver, or copper? Suppose they were only farthings, then all the castles in the air of a gold watch and chain, of a case in the museum, of a present to Mr. Corbet, all, all would fall to the ground. The very first thing to do was to ascertain what the coins were, and what they were worth. Having come to this

conclusion Jack hurried along, and soon entered his father's house.

No one was in the hall or on the stairs, but Jack heard voices in various directions. Already his secret was making him deceitful. He crept softly up the wide shallow steps, along the passage to his room, a room which he shared with his brother Percy. He quietly shut the door and locked it.

Then he sat down by the window, for the light was waning, took out the box, and shook the coins on the toilet−table. There they lay, four dirty, black discs. The first thing to do was to clean them. For this purpose Jack had nothing handy but his handkerchief, so it was used; and with such effect that in a few minutes one side of one coin was tolerably clean, and was yellow!

Gold! said Jack in a hoarse whisper.

He rubbed another disc; it too was yellow. But he could not make out to his satisfaction what these coins really were. They were not sovereigns, yet the general appearance of them gave him the impression that they were English. They were much worn, as if they had been long in circulation, and a good deal defaced as if they had passed through the hands of many boys. Scratches, indentation, round hollows, various marks were upon them, and thus the dates were hidden, and also the names of the kings, whose portraits Jack fancied he could trace faintly on the metal.

The daylight had faded; there was no candle in the room. Jack rolled the coins in his handkerchief, which had been rubbed into rags, and stuffed the whole parcel into the box. Now, what should be his next step? He was half inclined to show his treasure to his parents and hear their opinion; but he had a notion that they would not consider it as his sole property. They might insist on his giving it up to Mr. Corbet, or they might present it to the museum and ask no price. In fact there was an uneasy sensation within him that he was not quite justified in retaining sole possession of it, and an undefined fear of any other eye than his own beholding it.

While he was thus hesitating, two impulses contending upon the battlefield of his heart, there came a hand upon the door outside. This was fatal. Jack thrust the box under his shirts in the drawer, and took down a book from the shelf, and laid it open on the window−ledge.

Another knock.

Come in, said Jack.

The handle was turned, but the door did not open. It is locked, said Mrs. Warren's voice.

Jack unlocked and opened the door.

I was wondering, said his mother, whether you had come in, and what had happened to you. How long have you been here?

Not very long, replied Jack.

Reading! said his mother, as her eye fell on the book; and seeing the headings of the open pages she added, sitting here all alone in the dusk to read that book! For it was one which had been given him to study in preparation for his confirmation.

Jack had not the moral courage to say that he had not been reading the book; yet his mother's praise and approval were very galling to him. He snatched up the book and put it back on the shelf. Mrs. Warren thought to herself that boys are always shy about their feelings, especially religious feelings. She laid her lips upon Jack's forehead,

and said, Come down and have some supper.

I had lots of things at Mr. Corbet's, said Jack.

What kind of things? and Mrs. Warren led the way downstairs.

Oh, cakes and cherries and things.

Well, if you don't want supper you can come and tell us what was Mr. Corbet's news.

Yes, Jack, said Mr. Warren, at the supper−table, what is that excellent old man doing?

Nothing, answered Jack, who did not want to be dragged back to Battlefields.

No kindness to his fellow−creatures? No good deeds?

He gave some cherries to an old woman; I don't know whether that was a good deed.

Cherries are a wholesome fruit; it was probably a good deed. But was that all he did?

We walked about, and I dug the ground and he raked it.

Gardening operations, said Mr. Warren, without noticing the worried and wearied manner of the boy.

But the careful eye of the mother noted it, and she said, Jack is very tired, I can see. He had better go to bed.

With a biscuit in his hand Jack went. By this time Percy was in the room and undressed; as soon as the little boy was safely within his bed, Jack softly drew out the box from its hiding−place and put it beneath his own pillow. There it lay unseen and unknown by anyone save Jack himself; but the fact that it was there lay heavy on his mind, and he had nightmares, and dreams that he was shut within the box, and that the faces on the coins were those of Mr. Corbet frowning at him, and that Hotspur and Falstaff claimed the treasure as their own, and said that they must have it in order to buy each a pound of cherries.

When he roused himself from these foolish dreams he was still pursued by annoying fancies a dread that someone would see his treasure and take it from him, and a dread that the time would come when he would regret having taken possession of it. He had been working under Mr. Corbet's orders when he chanced upon it, and perhaps it was, by rights, Mr. Corbet's own. At all events, it would have been gracious and generous to let the old man have the honour and pleasure of the discovery. But then, a gold watch would comfort anyone for any amount of unpleasant sensations. But suppose that his parents required to know how he came by the watch, then he would have to tell the whole story, and who could say what the consequences would be? Or suppose that the coins should prove not worth the price of the watch?

It is no use for me to worry myself like this, said Jack, as he brushed his hair with furious vigour; the first thing to do is to ascertain the value of the coins.

A bell rang; little Percy had already gone down. Jack rushed from his room with the box in his pocket. When he entered the breakfast−room he found everyone seated in silence, and his father waiting to begin prayers. Jack joined heartily in the prayers, stifling all remorse and all scruples, and saying to himself, I have done nothing wrong; 'finding is keeping.' I might have done better, but that does not matter.

At breakfast his mother said quite suddenly, Jack, I really wish you would not put such quantities of things into your pockets; you spoil the set of your jacket.

Jack ate his bread and butter very fast, and choked over it; his thoughts reverted to the gypsy Abacada, who had tried to steal Mr. Corbet's spoons. He likened himself to the gypsy.

What have you got there? asked Mr. Warren, laughing; tops, string, knives, marbles, cricket balls?

The boy only held his arm tighter over his pocket, and choked again. He rose from table at the first opportunity.

There were no lessons during the holidays except such as the children chose to set themselves. Jack was free to go out, or to occupy himself at home. He waited until his father had gone on his rounds and then went out, closing the door after him so softly that no one heard him go.

His plan was to show the coins to a jeweller and obtain an offer for them; either money down or a watch in exchange. For this business he would not go to a shop where he was known, but would go to one in another part of the town. The secrecy which he had begun to employ seemed to grow more and more necessary; he now felt that the great point was to get the watch, and after that events must shape themselves as they would.

All up Castle Street he went, and then all round St. Mary's Church, and into the post−office for two penny stamps, and past St. Julian's, and past St. Alkmond's, and up and down the passages, and up and down the steps to Wyle Cop, before he could make up his mind to the plunge. At last he said to himself that this was very foolish; he was determined to transact the affair, and there was no use in putting it off. He picked out a poor−looking shop in Wyle Cop, one with rows of silver watches and gilt chains hanging in the windows; with a case of cheap spectacles, and with squares of carpet fluttering beside the door. In at this door he went, it proved to be that of the shop, not that through which the pawnbroker did his less creditable business.

As the lad entered, two sharp eyes glanced over a curtain which divided a glass door communicating with the other part of the premises. Then the rest of the man who belonged to the eyes came behind the counter, and Jack saw the whole of him a keen, suspicious, shabby, smoky little man.

And what may you want, young gentleman?

I suppose aw you buy aw curiosities? said Jack with trepidation which might have been mistaken for impertinence.

I do; it all depends.

I have aw some coins to dispose of. And Jack fumbled in his pocket and produced the box.

While he disentangled the handkerchief and tumbled the four coins two black and two tolerably bright on the counter, the man looked on with an air of mixed amusement and contempt, which changed to one of interest as the coins rang upon the counter.

Do you want to sell these? asked the man.

Yes, said Jack, rather red, and looking anxiously at the face, which betrayed more suspicion than anything else.

What price do you want for them?

I don't know. What would you give?

I would give what they are worth. You are rather young to possess such things as these.

I found them, said Jack.

So I suppose. Have you offered them to anyone else?

No; you are the first person who has seen them.

Oh, indeed; and, may I ask, where did you find them?

Jack did not want to answer this question. I was out in the country, poking about in the ground, and I came upon them in this old box.

The man nodded. I am not much judge of such things, but my wife knows all about them. If you will just sit down, I will call her, and when she has given her opinion we can soon settle the matter.

He went through the glass door, and Jack heard his voice speaking with that of a woman. In a few minutes the wife entered. If Abacada had succeeded in stealing the apostle−spoons, and had brought them to pawn at this shop, his feelings would hardly have been more painful than were Jack's at the present moment probably not so painful, for the gypsy was a hardened sinner, while Jack, we may thankfully allow, was not accustomed to any form of dishonesty.

Chapter 12. POLICE!

So you have some coins to sell, young man, said the woman, in a very sharp voice, which grated on Jack's ears; let me see them.

They were lying on the counter. She took up the bright ones, bit them, stared at them, and laid them back again; the black ones she threw down to make them ring, but did not bite them.

You say you found them in the street?

Oh, no, cried Jack; not in the street, in the country.

Out beyond Kingsland, I suppose.

No, not that way at all.

Well, no matter. As likely as not you found them at Battlefield.

Jack grew hot all over, and nervously gathered up the coins into his hand.

You may as well let them lie there, said the woman, until we have settled our business with you. My husband will soon be back.

By this time Jack felt that he did not like these people at all, and he wished to be out of their shop again. But as he was anxious to sell the coins he waited to hear what would be offered for them. Five minutes passed, and the man had not returned. The waiting and silence became awkward. Jack said, to fill up the pause, Do you know what these coins are? He still held them tight.

Oh yes, replied the woman, we know well enough what they are.

You have seen such things before?

Often, she replied, in a contemptuous tone. When they were restoring Battlefield Church two workmen found armour and coins, and kept them and sold them; but if those men had had their deserts they would have been put in the lock−up.

Such a malignant expression came on the woman's face that the whole truth flashed upon Jack's mind: these people thought that he had come by the coins in some improper manner, and the man had gone to fetch a policeman, in order to give Jack in charge.

For one moment he thought he would stand his ground; then the horror and shame of what threatened quite overcame him, and he yielded to his impulse and dashed out of the shop door into Wyle Cop, which he tore along at the top of his speed, up the steps, round among the churches, in and out, up and down the streets, slackening as he found he was not pursued.

The woman of the shop had rushed out after him, but she could not run at a boy's pace, she feared to leave her goods unguarded, and she was not sure that Jack had stolen the coins. While she was gazing one way down the street, after the boy who had now disappeared, her husband and a policeman came up from the other direction.

The bird's flown! gasped the woman.

Her husband muttered some harsh words as to her stupidity in letting the young scoundrel go; the policeman smiled grimly, and said that if the lad kept on at that little game he would be run in sooner or later.

And so ended the affair as far as these people were concerned. But not so with Jack.

He found himself in the market. The coins were safe again in his pocket; the box he had left on the counter. He had slackened his pace when he found that he was not pursued, and now wandered about considering what he had best do next. Should he try any other way of disposing of the coins? offer them to another pawnbroker? present them to the museum? sell them to one of his school−fellows? He was as far as ever from knowing what they were and what they were worth. And as he rambled on he was unable to come to any conclusion as to his next move in the matter. He wished sincerely that he had shown them to Mr Corbet the moment that Bonnie disinterred them; and the thought came across his mind that he might go to Battlefield, re−bury the coins, and then take Mr. Corbet to the spot and manage that he should find them for himself. But on further reflection this seemed a lengthy and foolish method of getting rid of his trouble; and having used deception once with such a bad result, he was not inclined to use it again.

He now found himself in the garden known as the Quarry, he walked through the Dingle, and gazed at the flowers, hardly seeing them, and then went down one of the avenues of elms, and came to the bank of the Severn, and looked at the placid water. And he walked on beside the river, by the path through the fields, and up a lane into the town again, and all the time he was debating the question What shall I do with the coins?

He met two ladies whom he knew, who stopped him and inquired after his mother. He replied shortly, and when they went on he was still saying What shall I do next? And at length the obvious and the right thing forced itself upon his attention; he would go to his mother and tell her his trouble.

When he got home, hot and tired and unhappy, he found that his mother was engaged with visitors. He hung about on the stairs until they were gone, and then he walked into the drawing−room, saying, Mother, I want your advice.

Mrs. Warren saw by his face that something was wrong. What is the matter? she asked, in alarm.

Jack pulled out the coins and threw them on a table. I found these things yesterday.

What are they? cried his mother.

I don't know; that is just what I want to know. I found them yesterday at Battlefield; Bonnie scratched a hole and brought them out. I was hunting for coins.

Mrs. Warren's surprise increased. What made you go hunting for coins? How very odd!

Under his mother's eyes Jack's colour went and came, and his voice grew husky, and he felt how mean and shabby he had been towards Mr. Corbet, and he had acted the part of a sneak. Mr. Corbet was looking for curiosities and I was helping him.

That was kind of you, said Mrs. Warren; and I suppose Mr. Corbet was greatly pleased when he saw these coins. He is so fond of antiquities, and so anxious to find something of the sort, that I am sure he would be delighted at the discovery.

His mother's words showed such confidence in her son's generosity and straightforwardness that more than ever did his heart resemble a battlefield, but now the hosts of good were driving back the hosts of evil. Strength not his own was helping him as he silently asked for it; and he was able to tell by degrees the whole tale which placed his character in a very sorry light.

Mr. Corbet did not see them; I caught up the box and put it in my pocket, and he does not know that I found anything.

Does not know? Mrs. Warren seemed bewildered. But you say you were helping him; he must have seen; you were bound to show him what you found.

Jack was silent.

Jack, I am afraid that you were

Yes, said the boy with a sigh, I was ungrateful, and deceitful, and ungenerous. I was a regular sneak. The poor old fellow would have been so pleased with these coins.

And surely if you were acting under his direction whatever you found belonged to him.

Yes. Shall I take them to him now?

Well, I must think. If you take them to him now that will not be at all the same thing as if he had found them himself. And what are they?

I don't know, answered Jack.

Mrs. Warren looked out of the window without seeing anything. She was grieved to think that her boy had acted so mean a part by a good old man to whom he owed much gratitude; but then, she was glad to see that Jack was ashamed of himself.

I must consult with your father, she said at length. Put the coins on the side table, and when your father comes in we will talk to him.

A very bad hour was spent by Jack, who knew that his father would look with indignant contempt on conduct which had been unmanly, ungentlemanly, unchristian. Mrs. Warren went to her husband in his study, and told him all that she knew of the affair.

Mr. Warren's voice sounded stern as he called out, Jack, come here.

Jack walked gravely into the study.

This is very odd behaviour on your part; not what I should have expected from you. I don't call it honourable, or even honest, to take possession of what you found when you were acting under Mr. Corbet. What made you do such a shabby thing, boy?

I wanted to sell the coins and keep the money.

You have as much pocket−money as is right for a lad of your age.

Yes, Father, I know that; but I wanted money for a special purpose.

What purpose?

To buy a gold watch and chain.

Phew! whistled Mr. Warren. When you had a silver watch you contrived to smash it.

I should be more careful with a gold one. Besides, Arthur has a gold one.

Oh! said Mr. Warren with ineffable contempt; a little envy and covetousness mingling with your other amiable sentiments. Well, what do you purpose doing next?

Poor Jack felt so crest−fallen and so out of conceit with himself that he hardly knew how to reply. Nor did he know what he ought to do with the coins. For every reason he could not keep them; they were, in strict right, not his; and at any moment the pawnbroker might point him out to the police and he might be dragged to jail.

I should like to get rid of them, Father; I am afraid to keep them.

Why afraid?

Jack told the story of the pawnbroker and his wife.

Mr. Warren smiled grimly; he was softening a little at the sight of Jack's remorse and dread.

No one can give you in charge for having these coins in your possession, though you might be called on to say how you came by them. They are not yours; the question arises, what will you do with them?

I think, said Jack, that I ought to give them to Mr. Corbet.

I think so too; but, you know, it will not be a pleasant task to tell that good old man how you have what shall I say? cheated him.

No, said the boy, looking very downcast; but I must do it.

Right! And to help you in an unpleasant duty I will, if you like, go with you to Mr. Corbet and open the explanation. He will not be angry, but grieved.

Thank you, Father; and Jack seized his father's hand, and would have put his lips to it, but Mr. Warren grasped his boy's hand with his strong fingers as man grasps man, in token of equality, approval, and honour.

I never thought you so much a man before. Now, Jack, let me see these unlucky coins. Where are they?

In the drawing−room.

Bring them to me.

And while Jack was gone from the room Mr. Warren thanked God for a son who, though he did wrong, yet had the grace to confess his wrong−doing, and to desire to atone for it.

He looked closely into the two bright coins, and put them under his hand−microscope.

I am no numismatist; I understand little about coins, but still I think I know what these are.

What are they, Father? cried Jack.

I will not give my opinion until I have heard that of Mr. Corbet, who knows more of such things than I do. I think I can call at Magnolia Cottage to−morrow morning, if you will come with me.

Yes, Father, answered Jack, his heart sinking at the near prospect of a confession.

Be ready to come out with me at ten o'clock, and we will go together to see Mr. Corbet.

Jack was about to leave the room, but said, without looking back, Will this make any difference as to my confirmation?

His father answered after a pause, You had better lay the matter before your clergyman, whose office gives him authority to judge in it. I hope he will think you still a fit candidate. Repentance, confession, and restitution will, I trust, insure pardon for your fault.

The lad went out with his head bowed and his heart very humble.

Chapter 13. VICTORY.

Nothing was said to the younger children about Jack and the coins; they looked on their elder brother as a big, old, clever, and good person, whose example they would do well to imitate. And Mr. and Mrs. Warren liked to see the young ones so full of admiration for the elder; they also thought that Jack would be careful not to forfeit the high opinion of his juniors. Hitherto he had been an ideal brother to Elsie, and Percy, and the others, and now it would have been very bitter to him to come down from his pedestal.

When Percy saw Jack climb into the phaeton, he said from the doorstep, I wish I were in your place!

Do you? said Jack.

I should like, cried Elsie from within the hall, to do exactly what you are going to do!

Jack shook his head, and then his father drove off.

They went along in almost entire silence, for the groom was with them, and they did not wish anyone but Roger Corbet to know the business that took them to Magnolia Cottage.

Arrived there, the father and son got down from the phaeton and went in among the flowers. Mrs. Clive had heard wheels, and came out to meet them. She looked very stout and very red, though it was a cool day with a fresh breeze.

Mr. Warren! she began, her skirt blowing about and her hair growing wild. I am very glad you have come!

Why? Is Mr. Corbet not well?

He is *that* silly! she cried, though in a low voice. He has been digging all yesterday evening in the battlefield and tired himself out, and he has given away all his port wine to old Petherick, and he won't let me buy any for himself, though I am sure he wants something to strengthen him. You just feel his pulse, sir, and give him your orders; he won't obey me.

I will see to it, said Mr. Warren, getting past Mrs. Clive and into the house, followed by Jack.

They found Mr. Corbet sitting in his drawing−room with the great red *Owen and Blakeway's Shropshire* open before him. As they entered he was saying to himself, In the sixteenth century there were hedges in the streets of Shrewsbury.

Then, seeing his visitors, he held out his hand. Excuse my rising, friends; I am really so stiff to−day that I can scarcely move.

You have been overworking yourself, said Mr. Warren.

So Mrs. Clive tells me. Well, Jack, dear boy, I am afraid I did not sufficiently thank you the other day for the help you gave me at Battlefield.

Jack fidgetted on his chair, and Mr. Warren said:

Jack wants now to tell you what he ought to have told you that day.

What? said Mr. Corbet sharply.

That he found something.

Ah! Coins? relics? what? The old man twisted himself round, forgetting his stiffness in his excitement.

Show them, Jack, said Mr. Warren.

Jack brought out the handkerchief, and shook from it the coins. Mr. Corbet pounced upon them, and took them up one by one, raising them to his eyes.

One by one he laid them down again. Then he said: Did you find these on Battlefield that day, Jack Warren?

Yes, sir.

You did not show them to me.

No, sir.

Why not?

Jack was silent, but Mr. Warren said:

Be so kind as not to press your questions too far. He is now very sorry that he did not at once show you what he had found, and he has come here to−day to ask your pardon, and to undo his fault if possible.

The dear boy! exclaimed Mr. Corbet. I have nothing to forgive. He might have let me see his discovery; but then his discovery was not mine.

Jack pushed the coins close to Mr. Corbet's hand. They should be yours; I was only digging for you.

That is true, yes. They would be more mine than yours, and the honour and glory of finding them should by rights be mine. But the coins themselves, Jack, can be neither yours nor mine.

Jack looked up somewhat surprised. They must be yours.

Oh, no. Are they mine, Mr. Warren?

No, said the doctor.

But why? asked Jack; you found them; and 'finding is keeping.'

Not among honest people. Anything found on Battlefield belongs to the owner of the soil, to the Lord of the Manor, to my very distant relatives, the Corbets' of Sundorne Castle, who already have a few pieces of armour and a few coins, found when the church was restored.

Jack stared blankly; that the coins should belong to neither himself nor Mr. Corbet, but to the owner of the estate, was a thing that had never entered his head; though, of course, Mr. Warren had known all along the laws relating to treasure−trove, and Mr. Corbet, a barrister, was fully aware that only honour, not profit, could accrue to him if he unearthed any treasure.

While Jack was musing over this unexpected aspect of affairs, and perceiving more plainly than before how much reason the pawnbroker had for calling in a policeman, Mr. Warren was speaking to Mr. Corbet about his health; begging him to be as thoughtful and careful for himself as he was for others.

Then these coins, Jack broke out suddenly, must be sent to the Lord of the Manor; and I suppose he will give them to the museum, and your name will be put to them, Mr. Corbet, as the finder of them.

Mr. Corbet smiled. They must certainly be sent to my relative; but I do not think he will offer them to the museum, nor would the museum accept them if he did.

Why not?

They are worth nothing, except just a trifle over the value of the gold.

Worth nothing! Jack repeated. I thought they were great curiosities.

Mr. Corbet looked at Mr. Warren. I daresay you know, or guess, what they are?

The doctor nodded.

What are they? cried Jack, growing impatient of all this mystery; surely they are coins!

Yes, they are coins, replied Mr. Corbet; they are guineas.

Guineas!

Guineas of the reign of George III. said Mr. Warren, as I perceived when I put them under my microscope. They are worth nothing as money, because they are not now in circulation; and they are not curiosities, because they are not uncommon. They would sell for something over twenty−one shillings. I daresay your friend, the pawnbroker, could have told you their precise value.

While his father was speaking Jack's feelings were various; he was disappointed. Twenty−one shillings each for the coins; that would be altogether four pounds four shillings. Why, if the guineas were his own they would not suffice to buy a gold watch; had he really found them, were there no Lord of the Manor, could he dispose of them, he would not have attained his object. Everything had gone wrong. No pleasure to Mr. Corbet, no honour, no profit to anyone; only a sore and shamed feeling in Jack's own heart. Yet, had he known it, this humiliation was a sure road to humility, the most entirely Christian of all virtues, that in which our whole nature should be clothed.

Mr. Warren now rose to take his leave. We must be going, he said; we will leave these guineas with you, Mr. Corbet, and you can send them to Sundorne Castle. But one word more; can you at all account for a tin box containing guineas being buried at Battlefield?

Yes, in this way. It is known that Griffith the miser, who lived in this house at the end of the last century, had constant fits of panic lest he should be robbed; and that he used to hide his money in all sorts of strange places. It is quite likely that he buried some of it at Battlefield, and at other spots in the neighbourhood. He died suddenly, and many of his secrets must have died with him. Poor deluded man! 'We brought nothing into the world, and it is certain that we can carry nothing out.' How foolish we are, all of us; old and young, rich and poor. Well, well!

The doctor held out his hand, which Mr. Corbet shook warmly; and then the old man put his right hand on Jack's head, and gave the left for the boy to grasp, and father and son went away.

As soon as he had settled down to his desk Mr. Corbet made up the guineas into a neat little packet, and wrote a neat little note to his relative at Sundorne Castle, and then hobbled away to the nearest post−office where he could register the parcel. Two days later it was returned with thanks, as the guineas were not worth preserving, and Mr. Corbet was requested to restore them to the boy who had found them.

My black hat and my silver−mounted cane, please, Mrs. Clive, I am going to the town on business.

Well, to be sure! and you so rheumatic you can hardly move, sir. Can't I go instead of you?

No, indeed; besides I am much better to−day. So off he went, straight to Mr. Warren's house, and asked to see Jack.

He put the guineas into the boy's hands. They are sent to you, for you to do what you like with them.

A vision of pleasant things passed before Jack's eyes; a gold chain for himself, a china jar for his mother, drawing lessons for Elsie. The vision paused. Will you come with me, please, Mr. Corbet, and if you approve of my plan we will do it.

Do what? for Jack's quest was lame and vague.

Please come, and you will see.

Mr. Corbet was hurried away through the town to the hospital, and there Jack silently pointed at the box outside marked Donations.

Mr. Corbet silently nodded.

Jack put the four guineas one after the other into the slit, and they were heard chinking as they fell.

Good−bye, said Jack, and walked quickly away.

Mr, Corbet looked after him. Good has conquered evil in that boy's heart. 'Thanks be to God who giveth us his voice died away as he finished the text to himself.