

Adopting Granfa

Mazo de la Roche

Illustrated by
B. J. Rosenmeyer

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Adopting Granfa



We had never gone a-fishing in all our lives. When our mother had died, and we had been brought by our bewildered young father to the house of Mrs. Handsomebody, we were too small to have taken advantage of the tiny trout stream that had bordered our country home. We had now lived with our governess for several years and The Seraph had quite forgotten what the country looked like; but Angel and I still recalled it as a place where good-natured gardeners gave one rides in a barrow cushioned with sweet-smelling new-cut grass; where windows stood open to the sun and wind, and one had a whole egg for breakfast.

At Mrs. Handsomebody's, on a Sunday morning, Angel and I had an egg divided between us, after our porridge. It was boiled rather hard so that it might not run, and we watched the cutting of it jealously. The Seraph's infant organs were supposed not to be strong enough to cope with even half an egg, so he must needs satisfy himself with the cap from Mrs. Handsomebody's; and he made the pleasure endure by the most minute nibbling, filling up the gaps with large mouthfuls of toast.

It was at a Sunday morning breakfast that Mrs. Handsomebody broached the subject of fishing. Angel and I had just scraped the last vestige of rubbery white from our half shells and, having reversed them in our egg cups, were gazing wistfully at what appeared to be two unchipped eggs, when she spoke:

“You have been invited by Bishop O’Sullivan to go on a fishing excursion with him to-morrow, and I have consented, provided, of course, that your conduct to-day be most exemplary. What do you say? Thanks would not be amiss.”

Angel and I mumbled thanks, though we were well-nigh speechless with astonishment and joy. The Seraph bolted his cherished bit of egg whole and said in his polite little voice:

“He’s a vewy nice man to take us fishin’.”

“If it had been anyone but the bishop,” Mrs. Handsomebody went on, “I should have refused, for there are untold possibilities of danger in trout fishing. You must, for example, guard against imbedding the fish hook in the flesh, to say nothing of the risk in sitting on damp grass, or the stings of insects.”

“Did you ever sit on the sting of a ninsect please?” questioned The Seraph eagerly.

Mrs. Handsomebody looked at him sharply. “One more question of that character,” she said, “and you will remain at home.” Then, glancing around the table, she went on, “What! Your eggs gone so soon? We shall give thanks then. Alexander”—to The Seraph—“it is your turn to say grace. Proceed.”

The Seraph, with folded hands and bent head, repeated glibly:

“Accept our thanks, O Lord, for these Thy good cweatures given to our use, and by them fit us for Thy service. Amen.”

There was a scraping of chairs, and we got to our feet. The Seraph, holding his bit of egg shell in his warm little palm, asked, “Is an egg a cweature, yet?”

Mrs. Handsomebody gloomed down at him from her height. “I say it in all solemnity, Alexander, the natural bent of your mind is toward the ribald and cynical. I do what I can to curb it; but I fear for your future.” And she swept from the room.

All three of us sang in the cathedral choir, though it was only for the sake of Angel’s fluty treble that The Seraph and I were admitted, since he would not be separated from us. Yet The Seraph was decorative in his purple cassock and tiny white surplice, and if my voice were not flutelike it was at least lusty, and I could sing out the responses without so much as a wink at my prayer book.

On this May morning the sunshine had taken on the mellowness of summer, and it struck fire from the sacred vessels on the altar and the brazen-winged eagle of the lectern. Strange-shaped patterns of wine-color and violet were cast from the stained glass windows upon the walls and pillars, enriching the gray fabric of the church like tropic flowers. I heard the bishop’s rich voice roll on:

“. . . Most heartily we beseech thee with thy favor to behold our most gracious Sovereign Lady, Queen Victoria; and so replenish her with the grace of Thy Holy Spirit that she may always incline to Thy will—” The

bishop's voice became one, in my mind, with the murmur of a river, as it moved among the sedges. I brought myself up with a start. The bishop's voice came from a great distance. . . . "beseech Thee to bless Albert Edward, Prince of Wales"—Angel was joggling me with his elbow.

"You duffer," he whispered, "you've been nodding. Get your hymn book."

In the choir vestry the bishop stopped for a moment beside us, his fluttering surplice falling into folds about him like the sails about a tall mast when the wind dies. "At seven," he said, "to-morrow morning at my house. And *wear old clothes.*"

The sails were filled, and he moved majestically away, towering above the small craft around him.

It was morning. It was seven o'clock. It was May. We were all stowed away in the bishop's trap with his man Rawlins controlling the fat pony, whose small fore hoof pawed impatiently on the asphalt. Angel and I had donned old jerseys and The Seraph a clean Holland pinafore, against which he pressed an empty tomato can, where a solitary worm reared an anxious head against the encircling gloom.

"I've got a worm," he gasped gleefully, as the pony, released at last, jerked us almost off our seats. "He's nice an' fat an' he's quite clean, for I've washed him fwee times. He's as tame as anyfing. He's wather a dear ole worm, an' it seems a shame to wun a hook frew him."

"Child, it shall not be done," consoled the bishop. "Keep your worm, and when we get to the river bank we'll introduce him to the country worms, and maybe he'll like them so well that he'll marry and settle down there for the rest of his days."

"If he could see a lady worm he'd like," stipulated The Seraph.

"He'd have a wide choice," said the bishop. "The country is full of worms, some of them charming, I dare say."

"And, I say," chuckled Angel, "you could perform the ceremony—if only we knew their names."

"This is Charles Augustus," said The Seraph with dignity.

"She'd likely be Ernestine," I put in.

Soon the town was left behind and we were bowling along a country road past a field where boys were flying a kite, its long tail making sinuous curves against the turquoise sky. The air was sweet with the fresh May showers; and the swift roll of wheels was an inspiring accompaniment to our chatter.

Farther along lay a tranquil pond in a common, its surface stirred by a tiny boat with white sails. An old white-bearded man in a smock frock was teaching his grandson to sail the boat. It must be jolly, we thought, to have a nice old grandfather to play with one.

At last we passed a vine-embowered inn, set among apple trees in bloom. It was "The Sleepy Angler," and the bishop said that the river curved just beyond it.

We gave a shout of joy as we caught the glint of it, a shout that might well have been a warning to any lurking trout. Angel and I scarcely waited for the pony to draw up beneath the trees before we tumbled out of the trap; and the bishop, grasping the eager Seraph by the wrists, swung him to the ground after us.

We felt very small and light and almost fairylike as we ran here and thither over the lush grass, studded with spring flowers. The Seraph never once let go of his can, and Charles Augustus must have had a harrowing quarter of an hour.

The stream, which was a sharp, clear one, sped through flowery meadows, where geese were grazing as soberly as cows. An old orchard enfolded it at last, scattering pink petals on its flowing cloud-flecked surface, and drawing new life from its freshness.

Rawlins made the pony comfortable; and the bishop made ready his tackle, while the three of us clustered about him, filled with wonder and delight to see the book of many-colored flies, and all the intricacies of preparing the rod and bait. Angel and I were equipped with proper rods baited with greenish May-flies, and The Seraph got a willow wand and line, at the end of which dangled an active grasshopper.

"You know," said the bishop, when we had cast our flies, "if I were a whole-hearted angler, I would not have brought three such restless spirits on this expedition, but truly I am:

"No fisher,
But a well-wisher
To the game.

So, now that you are here, suppose I give you a lesson in manipulating your tackling? If you proceed as you have begun, there will very soon not be so much as a minnow within a mile of us. Easy now, Angel; just move your fly gently on top of the water so that his bright wings may attract the eye of the most wanton trout. Easy, John. . . By the lord, I've caught a grayling! And come and sniff him, and you'll find he smells of water thyme."

How aptly we took to this sort of teaching, given in the fresh outdoors, the air pleasant with honeysuckle, and a lark caroling high above us! We could scarcely restrain our shouts when Angel's first trout was landed with the aid of a net, and lay golden and white as a daffodil on the grass. So absorbed were we that no one gave any heed to The Seraph, stationed farther down-stream, till a roar of rage discovered him, dancing empty-handed on the bank, his rod sailing smartly down the stream, leaving only a wake of tiny ripples.

"It was a 'normous lusty trout," he wailed, "as big as a whale, an' he swallowed my grasshopper, an' hook, an' gave me *such* a look! And I'd pwomised him to Mary Ellen for her tea!"

"We may as well give up for a while," said the bishop mildly, "and have some lunch. Bring The Seraph to me, boys, and I will comfort him, whilst you unpack the hamper."

What hearty, wholesome appetites we brought to the cold beef and radishes! And how much more satisfying such fare than the milky messes served to us by Mrs. Handsomebody! Rawlins had buried a bottle of ale for the bishop under the cool sod, and we had tastes of that to wash our victuals down. Even Charles Augustus had a little of it poured into his cell to comfort him.

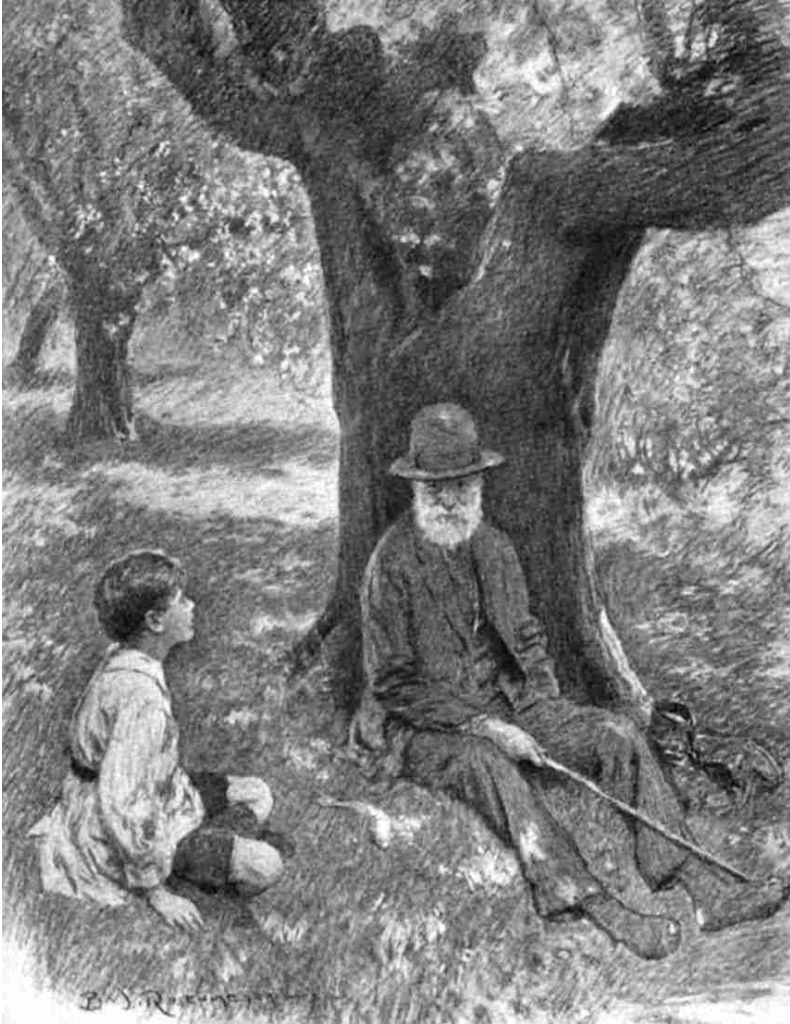
When we were satisfied, the bishop retired to the shade of a hedge with his pipe; The Seraph wandered off by himself to hunt for birds' nests; and Angel and I took fresh flies and tried our luck anew. But the sun was high; the south breeze was fallen; and the trout had sought their farthest chambers in the pool.

Angel soon tired when sport flagged.

"Let's go find the kid," he said, throwing down his rod, "he'll be getting himself drowned if we don't keep an eye on him. I'll race you to that nearest apple tree!"

With nimble legs and swiftly beating hearts we scampered over the smooth turf, and I threw a triumphant look over my shoulder at him as I

hurled myself upon the mossy bole of the old tree. Then I saw that Angel had stopped stock-still and was staring open-mouthed beyond me.



The Seraph was seated beneath an apple tree in deep conversation with a most remarkable old man

The Seraph was seated beneath an apple tree on the bank of the stream, in deep conversation with a most remarkable old man, who was fishing industriously with the very rod The Seraph so lately had bewailed. He was an astonishingly old man, with hair and beard as white as wool, wreathing a face as pink as the apple blossoms that fell about him. Cautiously we drew near, quite unobserved by the two, who seemed utterly absorbed in their

occupation of watching the line as it dipped into the stream. Now we could see that the old man's clothes were ragged, and that he had taken off his boots to ease his tired feet, the toes of which protruded from his socks, even pinker than his face.

He was speaking in a full soft voice with an accent which was new to us.

"Yon trout," said he, "was in a terr'ble frizz wi' the hook gnawing his vitals, and he swum about among the reeds near the bank in a manner to harrer your feelings. The line got tangled in the growing stuff, and I, so quick as an otter, pounced on him, and had him on the bank afore 'ee could say 'scat,' and there he lies, breathing his last, and blessing me, no doubt, for relieving him in his shameful state."

"I fink he's weally my trout," said The Seraph. "I caught him first, you see."

"That p'int might take a terr'ble understanding lawyer to unravel," replied the old man: "but sooner than quarrel, I'll give 'ee the trout, though I had a notion of roasting him to my own breakfast."

The Seraph stroked the glistening side of the recumbent trout admiringly; he poked his plump forefinger into its quivering pink gill. The result was startling. The trout leaped into the air with a flourish of silvery tail; then fell floundering on The Seraph's bare knees. Our junior, seized with one of his unaccountable impulses, grasped him by the middle and hurled him into the stream. A second more and the trout was gone, leaving only a thin line of red to mark his passing. Angel and I ran forward to protect The Seraph, if need be, from the consequences of his hardy act; but the old man was smiling placidly.

"That trout," he said, "is so gleeful to get away from his captivity as I be to escape from the work'us."

"Oh, did you run away from the workhouse?" we cried in chorus, gathering around him. "Have you run far?" And we looked at his broken boots.

"I ban't a dareful man," he replied, "that would run down the road in daylight for the whole nation to see, and I be terr'ble weak in the legs, so I just crept out in the night, so quiet as a star-beam, and sheltered in the orchard yonder, till I seed the rod fairly put in my hand by the Almighty, that I mid strike manna out of the stream, like old Moses, so to speak."

"You're a funny man," said Angel. "You've a rum way of talking."

“I come from Devon by natur,” he answered, “and my tongue still has the twist o’t, though I haven’t seed the moors these sixty years.”

“You must be pretty old.”

“Old! I be so aged that I can remember my grandmother when she was but a rosy-cheeked slip of a gal.”

We stared in awe before such antiquity.

The Seraph ventured, “Did your grandmother put you in the work’us?”

“No, no. Not she. It was my two grandsons. Well-fixed men they be, too, for Philip had a fine cow until the bailiff took her; and Zachary thinks naught on a Fair day o’ buying meat pasties for hissself and his missus, and parading about before the nation wi’ the gravy fair running down their wrists. Ay—but the work’us was good enough for old Granfa. ‘Darn’ee,’ says I to Philip, ‘there’s life in the old dog yet, and I’ll escape from here in the fullness of time.’ Which I did.”

We grouped ourselves about him in easy attitudes of attention. We felt strangely drawn to this ancient rebel against authority. We pictured the workhouse as a vast schoolroom where white-haired paupers labored over impossible tasks, superintended by a matron, cold and angular, like Mrs. Handsomebody.

“Are your own children all dead?” I put the question timidly, for I feared to recall more filial ingratitude.

“Dead as door nails,” he replied, solemnly. “All of them.”

“Were there many?”

“When I had been married but seven year, there were six; and after that I lost count. At that time I was moved to compose a little song about them, and I’d sing it to ’ee this moment if I had a bite o’ victuals to stay me.”

“Look here, Seraph,” I cried, “you cut back to the hamper and fetch some beef and bread, and anything else that’s loose. Look sharp, now.”

The Seraph ran off obediently, and it was not long till he reappeared with food and the dregs of the ale.

It was a treat to see Granfa make away with these. He smacked his lips and wiped his beard on his sleeves with the relish born of prolonged abstinence. As he ate, the apple blossoms fell about him, settling on the rim of his ragged hat, and even finding shelter among the white waves of his

beard. We sat crosslegged on the grass before him, eagerly awaiting the song.

At last, in a voice rich with emotion, he sang to a strange lilting tune:

“I be in a terr’ble fix,
Wife have I and childer six.

“I’d got married just for fun,
When in popped Baby Number One—

“I’d got an easy job to do,
When in strolled Baby Number Two—

“I was fishin’ in the sea,
When up swum Baby Number Three—

“My boat had scarcely touched the shore,
When in clumb Baby Number Four—

“I was the scarest man alive,
When wife found Baby Number Five—

“The cradle was all broke to sticks,
When in blew Baby Number Six—

“And now I’m praying hard that heaven
Will keep a grip on Number Seven.”

“And did heaven keep a gwip on it?” inquired The Seraph as soon as the last notes died away.

“Not a bit of it,” responded our friend. “They come along so fast that I was all in a miz-maze trying to keep track on ’em. And good childer they was, and would never have turned me out as their sons have had the stinkin’ impidence to do. But now, souls, tell me all about yourselves, for I be a terr’ble perusin’ man.”

We thought the old man was excellent; and we found it an easy thing to make a confidant of him. So, while he puffed at a stubby clay pipe, we drew closer and told him all about the bishop and about our father in South America, who was coming back one day to make a home for us.

“It’s a great pity,” said Angel, “that Father isn’t here now, because I’m certain he’d be jolly glad to adopt you for a grandfather for us. He’s a most reasonable man.”

Our new friend shook his head doubtfully.

“It would be a noble calling,” he said, “but I can’t be wanted by nobody, I’m afraid. I think I’ll just bide here by this pleasant stream, till in the fullness of time I be food for worms.”

“Well, you’re not going to be deserted,” said Angel, in his lordly way. “We’ll just adopt you on our own. Mrs. Handsomebody won’t let us have a dog nor a guinea pig, nor rabbits, nor even a white rat; but, you bet, she’s got to let us keep a grandfather if we take him right home and say he’s come for a visit; and, of course, Father’ll have to pay for his board. Let’s do it, eh, John?”

When Angel’s eyes sparkled with a conquering light few could resist him. Certainly not I, his faithful adherent. Anyway, I wanted Granfa myself badly, so I nodded solemnly. “Let’s.”

Angel rolled ecstatically on the grass.

“It’ll be the greatest lark ever,” he cried; “and here comes the bishop.”

“Hand me my shoon, quick,” said Granfa nervously.

The bishop was, indeed, coming slowly toward us, across the sun-lit meadow, carrying his rod in one hand, and in the other the can containing Charles Augustus. By the time he had reached us, Granfa had struggled into his boots and was standing, hat in hand, with an air of meek expectancy. Angel, always so fluent when we were by ourselves, balked at explaining things to grown-ups, and though the bishop usually saw things from our point of view one could never be absolutely certain that even he would not prove obtuse on such a delicate issue as this.

So I rose, and met his inquiring look with such explanations as suited his adult understanding.

“Please, sir,” I said politely, “this nice old man has been turned out by his grandsons, and he’s on his way to the town, where he’s got some kind grandsons—”

“Fwee of ’em,” put in The Seraph.

“And we were wondering,” I hurried on, “if you’d give him a lift that far.”

“I expect you’re tired out,” said the bishop kindly, turning to Granfa.

“I be none too peart, but terr’ble wishful to get under the roof o’ my kind grandsons, thank ’ee.”

“You shall have a seat beside Rawlins. I see you’ve had some lunch, and now, boys, I think we have time for an hour’s fishing before we start for home.”

The bishop and The Seraph resumed their fishing, but Angel and I preferred to lie on the grass beside Granfa while he told us tales of old smuggling days in Devon and Cornwall.

We were delighted with Granfa. It seemed to us that the acquiring of him was the finest thing we had yet done. This elation of spirit remained with us during all the drive home. The gray old town was wrapped in a golden mist of romance; its windows reflected the fire of the sunset. It was not until we had separated from the bishop and stood, a group of four, before Mrs. Handsomebody’s house, that dread misgiving took the pith out of our legs. All of a sudden, Granfa loomed bulky and solid; the problem of where he was to be stowed presented itself.

“Better go round to the back,” suggested Angel, “and tackle Mary Ellen first.”

So we traversed the chill passage between the tall houses and softly lifted the latch of the kitchen door. Mary Ellen was alone, her work done, her nose buried in a novel.

“Is it yersilves?” she exclaimed with a start. “Sure, you’ve give me a nice fright prowlin’ about like thaves—and whoiver may be the ould man wid ye? The mistress’ll stand no tramps or beggars about, as well you know.”

“He’s no tramp or beggar,” I retorted, stoutly. “He’s Granfa.”

“Granfa! Granfa who? Noan o’ your nonsense now, byes. What’s the truth now?”

“He’s Granfa,” I reiterated desperately. “Our own nice grandfather that we haven’t seen for years, and—he’s just come for a nice little visit with us. Why, Mary Ellen, the bishop knows him—”

“The bishop brought him wight here in the pony trap,” added The Seraph; “and we’d all yike a little nushment, please.”

Mary Ellen, in spite of herself, was half convinced. Granfa's blue eyes were so candid; there was an air of dignity about his snow-white locks and beard that disarmed hostility.

"Look here, now," said Mary Ellen in an aside to us; "he seems a nice ould gentlemine enough; but you brought a dawg here onct, and got us into trouble, so I won't have yez experimentalizing wid grandfathers."

Granfa appeared to have overheard, for he spoke up:

"I just want to bide here a little while, my dearie, till I hear from my son in South Americer. The other two put me out, you see, so I've only him to depend on, till I be called away."

Mary Ellen flushed. "You'd be welcome to stay if it was my house, sir; but my misthress is to be reckoned wid. By God's mercy, she is off to a missionary meeting to-night, her bein' präsident av the society for makin' Unitarians out av the blacks. Sorra a thing will she hear of this till mornin', and I'll put you in my own bed and slape on two cheers in the scullery; for it'd niver do for the byes' grandfather to be used like a beggar man."

We thought it a capital idea for Mary Ellen to sleep in the scullery—it would save her the fag of coming down-stairs in the morning; and Granfa would lie conveniently placed for us in case we wanted a story or game before breakfast.

So, after partaking of a little nourishment, as The Seraph put it, we retired to Mary Ellen's room; she leading the way up the dark back stairs with a lighted candle; Granfa next, bearing his little bundle; and we three in the rear, exceedingly tired, but in excellent spirits.

Our bedroom window was always tightly closed, and at night so were the shutters; yet a sunbeam, adventurous, like ourselves, found its way next morning through a broken slat and, cleaving the heavy air of the chamber, flew straight to The Seraph's nose, where it perched, lending a radiant prominence to that soft feature.

The Seraph roused himself. "Hurrah!" he cried. "Let's get up!" And scrambled out of bed.

At the same instant came a loud tapping on the door of Mary Ellen's bedroom. We surmised, correctly, that Mrs. Handsomebody, listening in vain for the sound of her handmaiden's descent down the back stairs had risen

wrathfully and come to summon her in person. A chill of apprehension ran along my spine. I got up and stole to the door, followed by my brothers.

Mrs. Handsomebody, in purple dressing-gown and red woolen slippers, stood in a listening attitude, her gaze bent on the door that hid Granfa.

“Are you aware of the hour?” she demanded peremptorily. “Rise at once and open this door.”

There was a creaking of the mattress and sound of shuffling feet: the door was opened reluctantly and Granfa, bare-legged, white of beard, and red-shirted, stood in the aperture.

Mrs. Handsomebody did not shriek; rather she made the inarticulate noises of one in a nightmare, and put out her hands as if to keep Granfa off. “Merciful heaven!” she whispered, “what has happened to you?”

“I do feel far from peart,” replied Granfa.

Mrs. Handsomebody looked ready to faint.

At that moment, Mary Ellen, having heard the voice of her mistress, projected her face above the door sill of the back stairs. It was always a rosy face; but now, with excitement and shamefacedness, it was as red as a harvest moon, coming up from the darkness.

The sight of her turned Mrs. Handsomebody’s terror into rage.

“Shameful, depraved girl,” she gobbled, “who is this you have in your chamber? You terrible old wretch!”—this to Granfa—“close that door instantly, while I send for the police!”

By this time we had ventured into the passage, and Mrs. Handsomebody, seeing us, groaned, “Under the roof with these innocent children—I thought that in my care their innocence was safe.”

“It was them same innocents that brung him here,” said Mary Ellen, stung into disclosing our part in the scandal, “and it’s himself is their own grandfather.”

Mrs. Handsomebody’s gaze was appalling as she turned it on us three:

“You? Your grandfather? What fresh insanity is this?”

“You see,” I explained, keeping my fascinated eyes on the tufted mole on her chin, “he’s just come up for a little visit, and he really is our Granfa, and we love him awfully.”

“I shall sift this affair,” said Mrs. Handsomebody, “to its most appalling dregs. You, Alexander”—to The Seraph—“are the smallest; look through that keyhole and inform me what he is doing.”

The Seraph obeyed, chuckling. “He’s took to the bed again—all exceptin’ one leg.”

“We can dispense with detail,” cut in our governess. “Is he at all violent?”

“Bless you, no,” replied Mary Ellen. “He’s as mild-mannered as can be, and an old friend of the bishop’s, so they say. ’Twas him that brung him home in his pony trap.”

“The bishop! I must see the bishop instantly.”

“Butcher!” The stentorian voice came from below stairs. Mrs. Handsomebody started.

“There,” she said to Mary Ellen, “is the butcher’s young man. Call him up instantly, and he shall guard the door while I dress. Explain the situation very briefly to him. It would be well to arm him with the poker, in case the old man becomes violent. David (David is Angel’s name), go to Bishop O’Sullivan and tell him that I beg he will call on me at once, if possible. Put on your clothes; but you may leave your hair in disorder, just as it is. It will serve to show the bishop into what a state of panic this household has been thrown.”

She was obliged to retire hastily to her room because of the arrival of the butcher’s young man, Mr. Waltin, Mary Ellen’s ardent “follower.”

It was some time before Mary Ellen and The Seraph and I could make him understand what had happened, though we all tried at once. Then he said, “Hullo, here’s the old ’un himself, and quite a character, to be sure.”

The door had opened behind us; Granfa stood revealed, wearing his ragged coat and hat, and carrying his stick and a little bundle wrapped up in a red handkerchief.

“Don’t ’ee get in a frizz, my dears, about me,” he said with dignity. “I be leaving this instant moment.” And he trotted to the head of the stairs and began to descend.

The Seraph and I kept close on either side of him, clutching his hands.

“She’s in the parlor,” I whispered, “and the bishop’s with her. Shall you go in?”

Granfa nodded solemnly.

We stood in the doorway of the sacred apartment. The portrait of the late Mr. Handsomebody in side whiskers stared at us from its place above the case of stuffed birds. Even there the spirit of the May morning seemed to have penetrated, for a stuffed oriole had cocked his eye with a longing look at a withered nest that hung before him.

Mrs. Handsomebody had just finished her recital. "I thought I should have swooned," she said.



*The bishop turned to us with a look of mingled amusement and concern:
"Now, what do you suppose I'm going to do with you, Granfa?"*

"And no wonder," said he; "I'm quite sure I should have." Then he turned to us with a look of mingled amusement and concern: "Now what do you suppose I'm going to do with you, Granfa?"

"Oh, Parson, don't 'ee send me back to the work'us! If I bide there any longer 'twill break my fine spirit."

"I am going to propose something very different," said the bishop kindly. "We need another sweeper and duster about the cathedral; and if you think you are strong enough to wield a broom, you may earn a decent living. I

know a very kind charwoman who would lodge and board you, and you would be near your little—”

“Gwandsons,” said The Seraph.

“Silence!” ordered Mrs. Handsomebody.

“You would be near us all,” finished the bishop blandly.

“Ess fay. I can wield a broom,” said Granfa. “And ’twill be a noble end for me to pass my days in such a holy spot. ’Twill be but a short jump from there fair into heaven itself, and I do thank ’ee, Parson, with all my heart.”

So it was settled, and turned out excellently. Even Mary Ellen could have learned from Granfa new ways of handling a broom with the least exertion to the worker; aye, in his hands, the broom seemed used chiefly as a support, a staff, upon which he leaned while telling us many a tale of those rare old smuggling days of his youth.

Sometimes, in dim, unused parts of the building, we would rig up a pirate’s ship, and Granfa would fix the broom to the masthead to show that he, like Drake, had swept the seas.

Sometimes, indeed, we found him fast asleep in a corner of some crimson-cushioned pew, looking so peaceful that, rough seagoing fellows though we were, we had not the heart to rouse him.

Once, standing before a stained glass window in memory of a young man, Granfa said:

“It beats all how thicky lad does yearn toward me. His eyes follow me wherever I go.”

“And no wonder, Granfa,” cried The Seraph, throwing his arms around him, “for evwybody loves ’ee so!”

THE END

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

Illustrations have been relocated due to using a non-page layout.

A cover was created for this ebook which is placed in the public domain.

[The end of *Adopting Granfa* by Mazo de la Roche]