

# WHAT MAURICE FOUND



HONOUR SERIES

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“OH! HOW JOLLY!” BRYAN EXCLAIMED WHEN FIRST  
HE SAW THE SWANS

# WHAT MAURICE FOUND

BY

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Author of "Twixt Altar and Plough,"  
"Her Little Kingdom," etc.



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# WHAT MAURICE FOUND

## Chapter I

### How Daddy Came Home

ON a bright March morning a soldier in the uniform of a sergeant, with three bright medals glistening on his breast, might have been seen making his way up a quiet street off one of the thoroughfares in Dublin, and glancing up now and then at the names of the streets until with a sigh of satisfaction he exclaimed:

“Ah, Beech Street at last! Though where the beeches are remains to be seen. Now for Number 45,” and he glanced searchingly at the houses until he stopped at one bearing that number, and, springing up the steps, gave a loud knock and a ring at the bell.

It was answered by a stoutish middle-aged woman with a kindly face. She was somewhat slatternly dressed, and looked surprised at seeing her visitor.

“Does Mrs. Colquhoun live here?” he asked.

“She does; but she ain’t well enough to see visitors.”

The man smiled, but instantly inquired:

“Not well enough! She isn’t ill, I hope?”

“She is and she is not. Leastways she’s been that bad they took her off to hospital more’n a month since, and she’s only back a week, and the doctor says must be kep’ quiet; so it is no good your wanting to see her. But I’ll take a message so be you care to send it.”

“Ill!” exclaimed the man. “Nothing dangerous, I hope. No, I’ll send no message, thank you, but I’ll see her myself; for ’tis the best medicine she’ll get, seeing I’m her husband,” and he stepped into the narrow little hall.

The woman threw up her hands in amazement.

“The Lord be praised!” she cried; “and is it yourself at last, Sergeant? Come in, come in; ’tis welcome you are. Aye, as welcome as to-day’s sunshine, and more so indeed. Let me run and tell herself you’re here.”

But the soldier laid a detaining hand on her arm.



“Stop; don’t go. Let me tell her myself,” and without more ado he stepped past his listener and, pointing to a door at the end of the passage, asked, “Is she in there?” and receiving a nod of assurance, he marched on, and after giving a gentle tap, opened the door and went in.

“Is that you, Mrs. Carty?” came in a querulous voice from the bed, but the next instant there was a cry of joy, and as the door closed, the listener heard a glad, “Oh, John, John!”—and it satisfied her.

The good woman stood looking at the closed door:

“Well, to be shure,” she muttered; “and to think of his coming home like that and niver a word to tell us to expec’ him; and he ividently not knowing how ill she’s been, and her calling for him night and day. Well, the Lord be praised, he’s come at last, and good luck to thim both, the cratures.” So saying, Mrs. Carty disappeared into the kitchen regions.

Meanwhile, what was happening behind that closed door?

After that first glad cry of recognition, Ruth Colquhoun lay back feasting her eyes upon her husband’s face; their hands were fast clasped in one another’s, and while her eyes were filled with tears of gladness, his had a quiet joy shining in them.

“Ruth, my own dear wife,” he kept murmuring, and then asked: “But you have been ill. Tell me all about it, and that you are getting better.”

“Yes, I’ve been ill with bad influenza, but I’m better, and was sent home from hospital last Saturday. They say I’ll be all right once I get into the country, or by the sea, but I don’t feel I want anything now I’ve got you. A sight of your face, John, is the best medicine they could give me.”

She beamed at him and he laughed:

“That’s good to hear; but, please God, we’ll have you and the boys out of this as soon as possible,” and he glanced round the dingy room in which she lay.

“Mrs. Carty has been very kind, John. I’ve been here for over a year, and when I was taken ill she promised she’d look after Maurice, and she sent him to a cousin of her own down in the country, Delgany way, for the doctor said the child needed the country same as me; and she assured me the cousin would look after him well.”

“I hope she does; but I’ll see to that when I go to see him. And where’s Bryan?”

“At school, to be sure. He won’t be home till twelve o’clock for his dinner. Oh! John, how glad he’ll be to see you,” and they both laughed gaily.

Of course he would be glad. When a wife and her boys haven't seen their father for years, would they not be glad?

Sergeant Colquhoun was ordered out to India with his wife soon after their marriage, and had spent many years in that distant land. There their three children, two boys and a girl, had been born. When little Nora was three years old the unrest was so increasing on the frontier that all women and children of Sergeant Colquhoun's regiment, with several others, were ordered home, and with a sorrowful heart he bade them farewell, though glad to think they would be in greater safety at home.

As they were both Irish, Mrs. Colquhoun naturally returned to that country, and found lodgings in Dublin, her only relative being an old uncle with whom she and her only brother had lived most of their lives when they had been left orphans.

As he lived in a very lonely part of County Cork, she felt it would be better to stay where her children could attend schools, though hitherto, having been a well-educated woman, she had taught them herself. How gladly Uncle Tony would have welcomed her and her children in his little home, but after paying him a brief visit directly after their return from India, he saw little of them.

It was in Dublin their first great sorrow came, for little Nora was called to that Home for little children, there to join that happy band of little ones safe in the Saviour's keeping. She was the very light of her parents' eyes, and both her brothers had been her willing slaves, especially Maurice, who was two years her senior, and with his mother never ceased to mourn for the little sister who had so brightened their home.

But the Home-call of Nora was also a call to her parents and brothers. The latter had been in the habit of attending a Sunday School in Dublin, and hearing of their trouble, their teacher at once called to see their mother; and from that time Alice Adair became a valued friend to them all. She and the Vicar of the parish became constant callers, and little Maurice especially, her devoted follower.

She was away from home when Mrs. Colquhoun had been taken away to hospital, or she would have found a far better place for little Maurice than Bridget Deesey's cottage, which was not only far from clean, but its owner was only too glad of the ten shillings a week sent her by the boy's mother, while she fed him on the poorest food, giving him hardly any milk, which she had faithfully promised he should have plentifully, by the doctor's orders. His mother would indeed have been distressed had she had any idea of the way in which he was treated.

Maurice was ten years old at the time of his father's return; a slight, sensitive, thoughtful boy, devoted to his books, and a great contrast to his elder brother Bryan, who delighted in the rough games he played with his schoolfellows. His mother felt proud of her sturdy son, as he rushed into her room, and then stood still on seeing his father. But when he recognised at once who he was, he rushed at him, flinging his arms impulsively round his neck with the glad cry of, "Dad! Dad!"

The Sergeant had no cause to grumble at the welcome he received from his wife and son, and looked forward with pleasure to seeing his younger boy, whom he promised his wife he would visit the following day.

What a happy time the trio had as they gathered round the dinner table in Mrs. Colquhoun's sitting room, and in the evening they talked far into the night, for after six years of absence they had much to hear and say.

## Chapter II

# Scattered Households

IT was indeed a very beautiful part of the country in which Ruth and her brother Jim O'Brian had spent their early life under the kind and generous care of their Uncle Tony.

He had been a school teacher, and knew the value of a good education; but when his wife died he had retired to a small holding which had belonged to his father, and there he had built his cottage and settled down, happy and content to cultivate his garden, raise his vegetables, and attend to his bees.

Beyond walking once a week to the nearest village of Inchigeelah, and twice on Sunday to his church, his neighbours saw little of him, and were astonished when his young nephew and niece took up their abode under his roof.

But Tony O'Brian loved children, and he gave a hearty welcome to his dead brother's bairns, so that they never felt the loss of their parents. He sent them both away to good schools, and always hoped Jim would follow in his steps and take up teaching. Ruth, the elder of the two, was well content to live with her uncle and look after his house, but not so Jim. His whole interest seemed centred on engines, motor cars and such like, and so his kind uncle gave way to his earnest entreaties and apprenticed him to an engineering firm in Dublin.

It was on one of his vacations that he brought home John Colquhoun, whom he had met in Dublin, and it was not very long before John fell in love with gentle, efficient Ruth, and with her uncle's consent they were married. The only hindrance to their happiness was when John took her away, and Uncle Tony parted with his much loved niece and saw her depart to India. Then all his interest centred on Jim, who would be a great engineer. He was proud when constant calls came for his help, especially when, Colonel Bolton of Oaklands, the big house of the district, sent for him one day when his chauffeur was ill, something had gone wrong with his car, and no one could find out what was the matter.

It did not take long for Jim to set things right, and he was appointed to drive out the Colonel and his family as long as their chauffeur was laid up. The Colonel's household was a large one, and consisted of his wife and half-

a-dozen children, besides his orphaned niece who lived with them. She was a bright, intelligent girl, and bitterly resented her position of dependence on her relations, who did not always treat her with much consideration.

Una Ferris admired the obliging young fellow who had so readily come to their help when Willis, her uncle's chauffeur, was ill, and who was always willing to help in any emergency. Thus it gradually became a regular thing for him to drop in occasionally whenever he was at home to offer his services, and no notice was taken as he grew more and more intimate with the family.

Una found her way to the stables and garage more often than was necessary, and when war broke out in France, and news came that Jim O'Brian had joined up and was likely to be sent out to the front, Uncle Tony was not the only one who regretted the step the boy had taken.

Before long Una was missing, and the anxiety of her relatives was great, especially when the girl wrote confessing that she was out in France nursing the wounded. When the war was over, further news came from South Africa, telling of the marriage of Jim O'Brian, and Una Ferris.

Needless to say, Uncle Tony was deeply distressed, not only because he felt the match was a most unsuitable one, but the whole thing had been so underhand. His honest, open nature revolted from it, and he felt ashamed of his nephew's conduct. He had always trusted Jim, even when the Colonel had taken him as chauffeur on his expeditions to Connemara, where he liked to take his family to a little property he owned in that district. He had a shrewd suspicion that it was there he had won the heart of the lonely girl.

So with Jim in South Africa and Ruth in India, the old man's life became once more very lonely, and just two years before Sergeant Colquhoun came home Uncle Tony had died, leaving his little homestead, with his three acres of land, to his much loved niece Ruth, and making no mention of Jim, who had not written to him much from the day he went to the front.

It was not long after that a letter came to Ruth from Jim's wife, who had written to her occasionally, telling of Jim's death and of the birth of a little daughter. But after that there was silence, and Ruth heard no more; and as the Colonel and his family had moved out of the county, Ruth gave up all hope of any news in the future.

Of course she had mourned the death of dear Uncle Tony who had always been so good to her, but she never could make up her mind to visit her old home, and when the solicitor called with his will to consult her about the property, Ruth, expecting her husband's early return, decided the cottage should be locked up to await his return.

She dreaded going over all the rooms where everything would remind her of her lost relative, and thus it came about that the windows were boarded up and the door locked, while the keys were handed over to Ruth, who put them away and longed more than ever for her husband's advice and ready help, little dreaming that two years would pass till he returned.

So there was indeed much to talk about on the night of his return, and deeply the Sergeant regretted his wife's neglect of her little homestead, and he determined as soon as possible to inspect her property.

But Maurice must come first—no doubt about that. His heart yearned to see his younger son, in whom he felt six years must have made a great difference. He wondered would he remember him. At four years of age memory is apt to grow dim, and he must now be ten. Bryan was now a fine sturdy boy of twelve, while his father always remembered Maurice as small, timid, and fair, more like wee Nora, to whom he had always been devoted.

What had his wife said, that it had taken years for the boy to get over the death of his little sister? Yes, and that the doctor advised a country life for him, but she had clung to Dublin for Bryan's sake; he was doing so well at school, his studies must not be interfered with. Bryan—Bryan, always Bryan, and his father recollected it had always been so, even from infancy, when she had put him first, proud to show off her elder son. But he, too, listened to all his boy told him of his school life and doings, his mother well pleased to hear him talk, putting in a word now and then and smiling all the time.

"Of course I'll be a soldier like you, Dad," he exclaimed. "I'd love to go out and fight for the King and win medals like yours, and see India again; though mother doesn't want me to go so far. She says she wants to keep us always near her, and hopes I'll not go into the army. What do you say, daddy?"

The Sergeant smiled.

"I think it's too soon to make up our minds yet as to the future, my son; time enough in a few years time till we see how the Lord leads us. 'He knoweth the way that I take' is a good word to rely on. India's been a good place to me, and I'll never forget it."

"I'm sure you won't, dad. Look at all you've gone through. Why, you've been in seven or eight engagements, and won all those medals. How proud you must be of them; aren't you, dad?"

"I'm glad to have them, Bryan, and to feel I've done my duty for my King and country, but out in India, in one of the Sande's Soldiers' Homes, I learned something else, that I had a higher duty to perform to a better King,

and out there I entered the army of the King of kings, and became a servant and follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. Of course I'd love you to serve King George, God bless him! But I'll be still more proud to have you and Maurice enter the army of King Jesus."

He had his arm round Bryan as he spoke, and the latter looked at him wonderingly. But he was silent.

"Well, boy, what do you say?"

"Why, of course, dad, I'd like to be a soldier—a good one, I mean—and a Christian too. But I was made that when I was baptised, wasn't I? Last month while mother was in hospital and I stayed here with Mrs. Carty, a friend came in to tea one Sunday with a baby, and Mrs. Carty asked her where she'd been, and she said, 'Making a good Christian of the baby.' He'd been christened that afternoon. Well, I know I was christened in India. I've heard mother say what a good man your padre was, so I'm a Christian too, aren't I?"

"Thank God, a good man did christen you, Bryan, and I'm sure he prayed for you; but for all that it was only the outward form of enlisting that took place. Mother and I and the padre did our part, but we couldn't change your heart. Once you are old enough to understand and make a choice, the responsibility becomes yours; you have to choose if you will take the Lord Jesus to be your Captain and serve Him. Fetch me a Bible and I'll show you."

Still wondering, Bryan obeyed, and watched his father turn over the leaves until he found II Timothy 2, and read from the fourth verse, "Chosen to be a soldier." "There, boy, that's the Lord's choice for you and me, and then He shows us we are to 'Endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ,' see verse three. That's what I want you to do, Bryan—enlist in His army and then fight manfully under His banner to your life's end. Will you?"

"I'd like to, and I'll think about it, daddy."

"Go farther than thinking. *Do it, boy, do it,*" and then, as it was getting late, his mother rose, saying it was time for bed, and so saying good night they separated.

But Bryan had plenty to think about before he went to sleep.

## Chapter III

# Maurice is Rescued

AS soon as breakfast was over and Bryan had gone to school, his father started for Delgany to visit Maurice.

He was able to take a 'bus most of the way, and was glad of the long ride which gave him time to feast his eyes on the peeps of the sea and the beautiful country through which he passed. Dublin Bay is too well known to need description, and this morning it looked unusually lovely, with the sunlight dancing on the water and the blue sky overhead.

On reaching Greystones, the Sergeant decided to walk the rest of the way, and after a good half-hour's walk he found himself entering a narrow lane on the sides of which grew quantities of fern and wild flowers, and at length he came to a little white gate and guessed it led to the cottage he sought.

He looked over the gate into a somewhat untidy garden, but plenty of marigolds, wallflowers, stock, and pansies grew in wild profusion, the whole surrounded by a thick fuschia hedge.

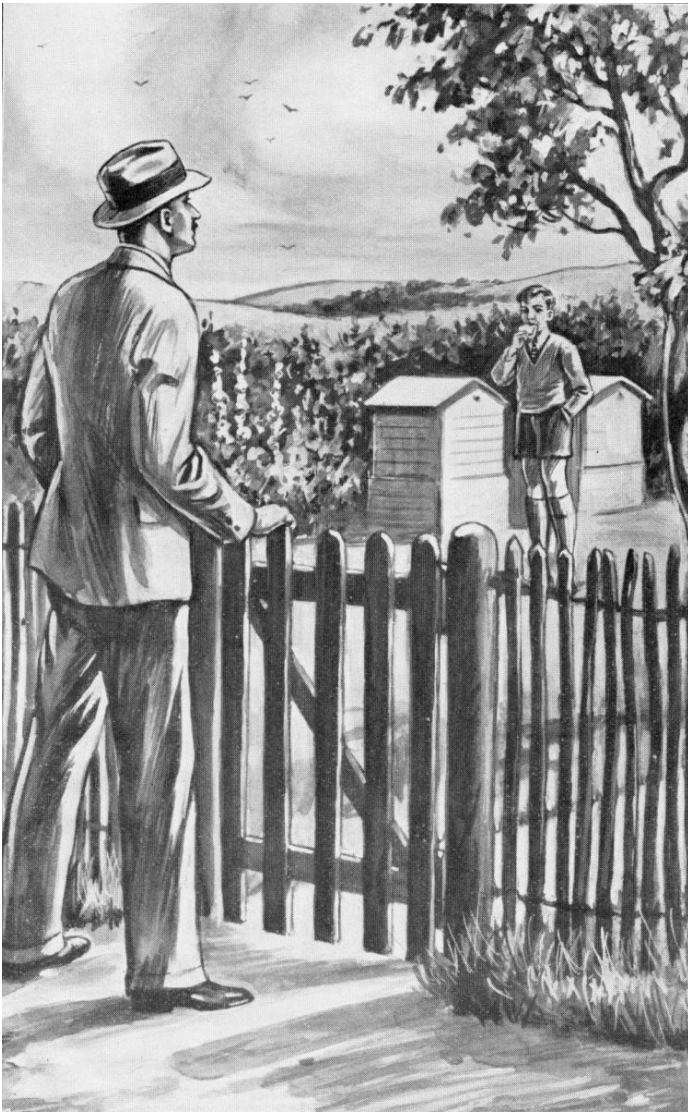
A little boy in navy blue trousers and jersey stood close to a beehive with a large piece of thick bread and butter in his hand.

He looked up as the Sergeant unlatched the gate, but as the latter wore plain clothes the boy hardly noticed him, being absorbed watching the busy little insects, and seemed quite fearless as they buzzed round him.

John Colquhoun stood watching him and then drew near. No one was about, though the cottage door stood open, so he took a seat close to Maurice, for it was he, he felt sure.

“Like bees?” queried the Sergeant.





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A LITTLE BOY IN NAVY BLUE TROUSERS AND JERSEY  
STOOD CLOSE TO A BEEHIVE

Maurice nodded, as he finished the last mouthful of his crust. Then he said: "Aren't they wonderful? I love watching them. See that fellow there? His legs are covered with pollen, and I believe he's got it from the marigolds, 'cause it's yellow. Won't the baby bees be glad to get it?"

"I guess they will," answered his father laughing, all the time taking in the face of his child, who looked somewhat delicate, with his fair hair and

slight form.

“And where do you come from?” asked the Sergeant. “Do you live here?”

“I come from Dublin, sir; but I’m only here for a bit till mother comes out of hospital; then she’ll send for me.”

“Oh, so poor mother’s been ill? You’ll be glad to return to her, I’m sure. Won’t you?”

“Of course I will, but I’ll be jolly sorry to leave the country. I don’t like towns; they sort of choke you up. Here it’s grand, and you can go where you please and see things.”

“But there’s plenty to see in Dublin, isn’t there?”

“Oh, yes, but not *nice* things like trees and bees, and flowers, and the fields. Isn’t the sea grand, sir?”

“Yes, and indeed I agree with you, it’s grand. I spent many days on it lately. I’ve just come from India.”

At the mention of India, Maurice turned and came over to his father’s side.

“Oh, sir, did you meet my father?” he asked. “He’s been in India years and years. Mother’s always expecting him home.”

“And would you be glad to see him?” and John took the boy’s little hand.

“’Course I should,” he exclaimed. “Why, I’ve wanted him ever so,” and he looked inquiringly at his father. “I’ve wanted him till I ached inside. Mother didn’t know it. It would have made her ache too, and she ached long enough when my little sister died. Did you ever ache like that?”

The Sergeant felt a lump coming in his throat. He put his arm round the boy and lifted him to his knee.

“Aye, lad, I ached too, when your little sister died. She was a lovely wee bairn, wasn’t she?”

The boy stared up at him.

“Did you know her, sir? Oh! she was lovely, and I’m always asking God to send me another like her, though of course no one *could* be ever quite like our Nora. Do you think He will?”

The Sergeant’s eyes were now decidedly misty.

“Maybe, lad, maybe. Never give up praying, Maurice.”

“How’d you know my name?” exclaimed the boy suddenly, gazing searchingly at him.

“I knew your father, lad. Am I anyway like him?”

The boy looked him up and down.

“I don’t know,” he said slowly. “It’s so terribly long ago since I saw him, but—but—my father had a queer finger; he broke it and it came crooked. Have you one, too?”

He seized the man’s hand and examined it carefully.

“Why, you’ve got one too,” he cried.

“Yes, boy, I have. Fancy you remembering it,” and he looked pleased.

But Maurice looked puzzled, and kept looking first at the bent finger, and then up into the Sergeant’s face.

“Maurice, would you like me for your father?”

The boy looked at him wonderingly, and then suddenly the Sergeant flung his arms round him and hugged him to his breast.

“Oh, my son, my little son!” he cried; “my little Maurice, don’t you know me?”

When he loosened the boy, both their faces were crimson.

“Father! Is it really my father? Oh! I wasn’t at home to welcome you! I’d made up such lovely ways of doing it, and now—and now——”. He hid his face on the Sergeant’s shoulder.

“And now it’s all come about so quickly, hasn’t it, lad. Never mind; think only how good it is to be here with you now.”

“But mother—mother ought to see you first. Oh! let’s go up to Dublin at once and tell her.”

“Why, Maurice, of course I’ve seen her first. I got home yesterday and went straight to her, and then she told me where to find you here. She’s out of hospital, and will be quite well soon, I hope. She needs country air, like you, eh?”

The boy’s eyes were shining. He clapped his hands with delight.

“Oh! It’s lovely! lovely!” he cried. “’Course I won’t mind our going back to Dublin now mother’s out of hospital and you home. Everything’s going to be all right now. Mother always said it would be once you came home.”

So they sat and chatted, those two, well pleased to be together, and time sped on.

Presently they were startled by a harsh voice from the other side of the fuschia hedge. It was Bridget Deesey returning from shopping in Greystones. Her voice sounded harsh and angry.

“Maurice, are you there? Where have you been, you lazy spalpeen, niver coming to help carry me things? I’ll make it hot for you, that I will, and me hunting for you everywhere.”

The boy shrank into his father’s arms.

“It’s Bridget, and she’s angry, dad. You won’t let her beat me, will you?”

“No, boy, no one shall touch you,” and just then the woman’s hot and flushed face appeared at the little white gate.

She caught sight of the boy’s fair head and was just starting to scold him afresh when the Sergeant stood up and advanced to meet her.

She carried a heavy basket, and he took it from her and opened the gate for her to come through.

She looked taken aback and gazed at him inquiringly.

“That boy,” she began—“that boy should ha’ met me at the cross-roads and carried the basket; but what good is he? I’ll be bound he stayed looking after them insects; he’s always a-watching and leaving me all the work.”

Maurice sidled up to his father.

“I forgot, Biddy,” he began, but his father broke in:

“You must blame me, Mrs. Deesey, the boy has been talking to me. But isn’t this basket too heavy for such a little chap to carry? He’s not strong.”

“He’s strong enough for *that*,” answered Biddy. “Did ye think I’d have him here and leave him to do nothing? Come, Maurice, take the basket into the kitchen,” and she pushed him into the house.

Maurice took the basket which his father gave up, and as he staggered with it into the house the Sergeant noticed how heavy he seemed to find it. When he had disappeared, the woman turned to the man, saying:

“And who may you be, sir? What may you be wanting?”

“I’m wanting you kindly to pack up my boy’s things, for I’m taking him back to Dublin with me. His mother is home again, and I am his father, and only returned yesterday.”

Biddy’s face was a study. She sat down on the bench he had left, and cried, her face very red and angry:

“*You* his father, the Sergeant? Well, to be shure, and is it taking the boy away from me all so sudden like, after all the care I’ve given him these months past and more? Shure, how can I spare him, the dear child, and he so delicate, and you taking him up to the city out o’ all this lovely fresh air. Oh! ahone, shure, and ’twill be the death o’ him, the crature.”

The Sergeant looked amused. While he and Maurice had been together he had asked the boy many questions, and discovered the milk his mother

had so especially ordered and for which she had paid extra had never been given him, and the boy's light weight when he had lifted him up proved he had not been properly fed. Here was this woman professing to look after him and threatening to "make it hot for him" when his father's back was turned. No, she should never have him any more under her charge; he had quickly made up his mind about that, hence his order to her to pack up his clothes.

Biddy Deeseey had been well paid for keeping the boy, and she dreaded losing him on that account. Just then he appeared in the doorway.

She turned to him at once.

"What's this I hear, Maurice lad? Here's your father come home and wants you to go back with him to Dublin City. Sure, I can't spare you, acushla; and you wouldn't like to lave me, now, would you, and the bees and all the insects you're so fond of?"

But the boy, who had appeared with a frightened look on his face, now met his father's eye. His courage rose.

"Yes, I would, Biddy. I'll go anywhere with my dad and mother too. Oh, dad! are you really taking me home, and to-day, too?"

The boy was well used to Biddy's wheedling ways. Her honied words fell on deaf ears, and though her resistance and Maurice's determination raised a storm, the Sergeant got his way, though the two pound notes he placed in Biddy's hand failed to stop her abusive tongue, her words echoing down the lane as she watched the boy and his father march away.

Maurice's face was radiant, his father's set and stern, but a smile broke over it when, having reached the 'bus, they climbed into it, turning their faces towards Dublin.

"Oh, dad! Isn't it just grand? How 'sprised mother and Bryan will be. It's like a fairy story, dad; you suddenly appearing and carrying me off; but, oh, how glad I am! Now we will be all together again. Will it be 'and they lived happy ever after?' I do hope so."

"And so do I," echoed the Sergeant. "Anyhow, I've got you safe, thank God; the future rests with Him."

## Chapter IV

# “I’ll Make the World Beautiful”

I NEED HARDLY say Maurice received a hearty welcome. No one was expecting him, for the Sergeant had quite intended only paying him a visit and returning for him another day; but seeing the boy’s condition, and having a shrewd suspicion Biddy was not giving him sufficient nutritious food, had suddenly made him decide on bringing him back to his mother, more especially when he saw how he shrank from Biddy’s angry words.

So a very happy little party sat down to supper, and it was only after the two boys had gone to bed that the Sergeant had the opportunity of telling his wife about Biddy’s treatment and his discovery that he had never had the daily milk and eggs which Biddy had promised Maurice should receive.

When Mrs. Carty heard it she, too, was filled with indignation, declaring she would never, no never, trust Biddy Deeseey again.

Feeling convinced that country air was necessary, and the sooner the better for both his wife and son, and having only a month’s leave, made the Sergeant determined to lose no time in visiting his wife’s little homestead at Inchigeelah, and he and she talked over the matter that night, he deciding he should start without delay.

“I’d like to take Maurice with me,” remarked his father. “He’d enjoy the country; only, I don’t know if the house is fit to stay in. It may be half a ruin by now.”

“Hardly,” answered his wife. “I blame myself for not visiting it before; but Reynolds, when he brought me the keys, assured me he had locked up everything and boarded up the windows.”

“That means I’d better take some carpenter’s tools with me when I go down, and I’ve no notion of sleeping in a damp bed, if such a thing is to be found there. No doubt there’s an inn near. Gouganebarra Lake wasn’t more than a mile away from your uncle’s, if I remember right, and as tourists go there, there’s sure to be an inn. I think I’ll risk it anyway.”

“And take Maurice?”

“Yes, he’ll be very useful, and I’ll take good care of him. I feel now I’ve got you all, I can’t bear to have you out of my sight,” and he looked at her

fondly.

“Yes, but I’m not strong enough to take the journey. It’s a cross country one, and I’d be no good to help until I get strong. But take Maurice; he’ll be good company for you.”

The Sergeant was well pleased, and spent the next day making preparations, so that, the day after, the pair left Dublin by an early train. It certainly was a cross country journey, and Maurice was a very tired little boy when the ’bus drew up at the only inn Inchigeelah possessed, “The Harp and Crown,” and after a hearty supper of bread and milk, he lay down by his father in bed.

The Sergeant was up early making inquiries how to get to his destination, which he found was several miles distant from the village. But the baker’s cart went daily to Gouganebarra, and the driver was only too glad to give a lift to the man and little boy. He regaled them all the way with incidents and legends of the district, and put them down at the entrance to a pathway which he told them would lead to the cottage they sought.

“You’ll be sure to get a bed at the Lake Hotel,” he assured them, “but I’ll be passing here at two o’clock and can take any messages you may want,” and with a friendly “Good-day” he was off.

Father and son looked after him as the cart mounted the hilly road leading to the lake. All around them was wild heathery country; rocky land with shrubs and stunted trees met their eye, bleak hills surrounded them, and beautiful ferns, more especially the Royal Osmunda, were growing on all sides of the roads and lanes. They looked down on the green valleys beneath them, with the lake in the distance, and Maurice was enchanted. He stood with clasped hands, speechless with joy. Beautiful things, and especially scenery, always moved him.

After standing for quite ten minutes, they both woke to the present, as the Sergeant remarked suddenly: “Come, Maurice, my boy, let us wake up and see where this pathway leads. Baker said we’d find the house a little farther on. I seem to remember it, though its many a year since I was here. The path seemed wider and more worn. I expect few people use it to-day.”

They began to follow the pathway, Maurice running on ahead, and presently his father heard a shout. “Here it is, dad. Oh! such a dear little house; but, oh! the garden.”

He stopped short, and no wonder. Could it be called a garden, that wilderness of brambles and weeds; that broken-down fence (evidently thieves had been at work), that little gate hanging only on one hinge; and the boarded up windows gave the place a lonely and neglected appearance.

The Sergeant gave a low whistle as he contemplated the scene.

“Seems to me, Maurice, there’s work to be done here. Come along, lad, let us look round.”

And look round they did, walking down the garden path, pushing aside the brambles and weeds which impeded their progress; looking at the places where flower beds had been, but noting that the fruit trees which had not been cut down were bursting into bloom, and somewhat brightening the scene.

They walked round the house, and Maurice noted a bench at the bottom of the garden where two or three straw skeps had stood. Alas! they had decayed away, and no bees hummed round them.

At length they came once more to the front door, and taking a key from his pocket, the Sergeant opened it, and they entered a small, dark hall. Everything smelt musty and damp. His first act was to walk through and open the back door wide, thus allowing a draught of fresh air to run through the house. The doors of all the rooms were then opened, and by the dim light they guessed which had been the living room, and opposite it a large kitchen with a larder and wash-house beyond.

“Our first business must be to get the windows open, and we can’t do that until the wooden shutters are removed. Here, Maurice, search my bag and bring me out the chisel and hammer.”

This was soon done, and before long light poured into the darkened rooms, showing dust everywhere.

His father threw open all the windows, and gazed round. The Sergeant went to the fireplace, and finding sticks and some pieces of coal in the outhouse, he proceeded to light fires. While they were getting alight, he visited the four rooms upstairs. Dust, dust everywhere, but no dampness appeared, except in one place over the stairs, where rain had come in through the thatch, and the Sergeant remarked that that could soon be put right. More fires were to be lit upstairs, and Maurice was soon busy hunting for sticks, and having found and opened the coal shed, he was delighted to discover quite a good supply of coal and coke there still.

Meanwhile the Sergeant was turning out drawers and cupboards, and tossing out blankets and sheets, thankful to find no trace of moths. Evidently the agent had put plenty of camphor and newspapers over everything.

Maurice, who had always helped his mother, and was used to household duties, ran downstairs, found a big kettle which he filled with water and put on the range where the fire was now burning brightly. Up and down, in and out, sped father and son laughing and chattering, and presently the musty



smell seemed to leave the rooms, and by one o'clock everything assumed a cheerful aspect.

"I guess it's dinner time, Maurice, and I'm hungry, and am sure you are too. I quite forgot to bring any food with me from the "Harp and Crown." If you're not too tired, we'll walk to the Lake Hotel and have some dinner. I think we will be sleeping there to-night."

The Sergeant was right, and meeting their friend the baker when he returned to the village, he gave him a list of groceries which the good man promised to bring out the following morning.

After dinner the pair returned to the cottage, and worked hard till tea time, when once more they found their way to the hotel after locking up the house.

Busy days followed, days which Maurice looked back on with pleasure, when he helped his father, and day after day saw everything growing brighter and cleaner, and dreamed dreams of the time when his mother would join them and the garden would once more be filled with sweet flowers and vegetables. But many a day had to pass before that took place, though when once the house had been cleaned down, father and son began to weed the garden, and the former started digging up the ground, saying he would bring down from Dublin a supply of seeds so that the ground must be prepared for them.

It was while working together that the Sergeant found out many things about his younger son. He discovered that, unlike Bryan, he had no desire to be a soldier; that he loved books and reading, and would much prefer to be a schoolmaster; that he knew the names of many insects and flowers and trees, and that all his inclinations were towards a country life.

"I think I'd die if I lived always in a city," he confided to his father. "I always feel shut in, as if I'm being choked. Oh, dad! this is what I love, all this," and he waved his hand, pointing to the open space round them. "I always feel God is here," he continued softly. "Teacher said God is everywhere, and of course I knew He was, but I think He's most here, for He must love the lovely things He's made much better than all the bricks and houses men have made. Don't you think so, dad?"

The Sergeant nodded. He liked to hear his boy talk.

"Someone has said that God made the country and man made the town. Yes, I think you're right, my boy."

"When I'm a man," Maurice continued, "I'm going to plant flowers and trees everywhere. Yes, *everywhere*, dad; and make the world beautiful

wherever I go. I think the men who build rows and rows of houses exactly the same should be punished for making such ugly things.”

The Sergeant couldn't help laughing. “A very severe punishment, Maurice? Perhaps they don't know better!”

“Well, they ought. If ever I build houses, I'll have them all different and pretty, really pretty, and they shall all have gardens, not just backyards. Oh! I'd make *lovely* houses, dad; see if I don't, and I'll be called ‘the man who left lovely things behind him.’ ”

Again the Sergeant laughed, but there was a prayer behind that laugh, that the boy's words might come true.

## Chapter V

# Maurice Picks Up a Treasure

**A**FTER spending a week in their mountain home, and getting it into something like order, the Sergeant decided to return to Dublin and bring his wife back, as she was now well able to travel. He must make some arrangements to leave Bryan in Dublin until the Easter holidays, and Maurice would have to return to Dublin with him and then come back with his parents. He couldn't leave him alone in an inn.

Mrs. Colquhoun was of course delighted to welcome the travellers, but Mrs. Carty was sorry to lose her lodgers. However, she promised to look well after Bryan until his school term ended and he joined his parents at "Ardcaein," the name of their little homestead, which means "Beautiful Height."

Maurice was glad when in a few days they were all in the train again, and Dublin was left behind. Oh! how he looked forward to returning to the garden he had helped to weed, and to show his mother over her house, quite forgetting she had lived in it for years before he was born.

They had a compartment to themselves when they entered the train, and his parents settled themselves in corner seats, while the boy took possession of another at the other end. No one entered their carriage, and Maurice was well pleased to look out of the window and puzzled himself wondering why the telegraph wires seemed to dip up and down.

By and by two men got in and took the seats opposite him, and as they were somewhat loud talkers, he could not help hearing what they said. At first he paid them little attention. He was absorbed in his day dreams. What good times they were all going to have in their new home, and what a beautiful garden, for he knew his father was bringing down a supply of seeds. Bryan would help dig the garden, he felt sure, and dad had promised they should have a dog, saying it was necessary they should keep one in such an out of the way place. Perhaps they would have a cat too, and he wondered if there were any mice there; probably, and rats too, and——

Suddenly his attention was arrested by hearing one of the passengers opposite him remark:

“It’s all very fine, Forbes. What’s the good of talking about neglected land and farms, and the country going to waste. What I want is to set people to work, and show them there are possibilities in everything. Why, look at my bees now! I began by reading that little book I told you about, “Keep Bees,” written by that old French priest, and bless the day it came into my hands. I was taking a holiday in Brittany, and met the old chap there. I saw his hives, not a great many, but they kept him going. The French are far more thrifty than we are. Anyhow, he thrilled me, and gave me permission to translate his book into English. He was delighted at the thought, and said the more people knew about bees the better, so here you are,” and he pulled a ragged little paper-bound book out of his pocket and held it out to his friend.

“Good gracious, Langridge, do you always carry your bee books about with you?”

Mr. Langridge laughed. His dress proclaimed him to be a clergyman.

“Not always; but this one, the first I had printed, I generally have with me. I never part with it; it’s a sort of old friend, and I value it accordingly. I sent you a copy once and only hope you read it. Well, here we are; we change here, don’t we?”

As the train drew up at a side station, the two men got up, collected their bags and coats and jumped out of the train. Maurice followed them with his eyes as long as the train remained stationary.

Oh, how he had longed to read that little book! If only he could possess a copy! The gentleman wanted people to read it; of that he felt certain, but where could it be obtained? Maurice turned from the window and then he looked at the floor. What was that? He stooped, and with a delighted face, flushed with pleasure, he picked up the very book. Yes, the very same; there was the title, “Keep Bees.” He held it fast, then slipped off his seat, and going over to his parents held it out, saying:

“Look, mummie, one of those gentlemen dropped this book when they left the train. What will we do with it?”

His mother took it carelessly. “Oh, its some old thing; see how its been read. Throw it out of the window, Maurice; nobody wants it, I’m sure.”

“Oh, mummie, *I* want it, and I’m sure that man will be ever so sorry he’s lost it. I heard him say he always kept it on him. I wish we could give it back to him.”

“Well, we can’t. We don’t know where he is or anything about him. What’s it about?”

“It’s about bees. See, it’s called ‘Keep Bees.’ Do you really think I might keep it?”

“Why, of course. You picked it up. It’ll suit you, I guess, if it’s about bees. You always were crazy about those sort of things. Dad,” she added, addressing her husband, “have you noticed how this boy loves natural history? Why, when the Vicar asked him what he’d like for a Sunday School prize, if he didn’t choose a natural history book. Bryan laughed at him and chose “The Three Musketeers.”

Both parents laughed, but his father comforted Maurice, seeing his flushed face.

“Never mind, boy. Every man to his taste. Stick to your book. There, go and enjoy it.”

So Maurice returned to his corner, clasping his friend, and was soon absorbed in its contents. He was sorry for the loser, but intensely glad he had been the finder.

And it was indeed a treasure. By the time they left the train, he had quite made up his mind that keep bees he must and would. Would dad let him? He thought he would. He carefully placed the little book in his pocket and waited for a more convenient time to make his request.

But for a while he forgot everything. His mother was very tired by the time their little house was reached. It had been a long, hot journey, and though a motor had brought them all the way from the station, his father saw his wife should at once be put to bed, and he and Maurice helped her there. His father had arranged everything before they had gone up to Dublin, and also that milk and groceries should be at the house on their arrival. The milk was to be got at the Lake Hotel, and Maurice had more than once gone with his father to fetch it, and was proud when told that calling for it was to be his job in future. The innkeeper kept cows. Maurice wondered whether he would teach him to milk them.

The days were now very busy ones. Ruth was not able for much, but the Sergeant induced her to sit in the garden where she watched him and Maurice working. The Sergeant was very anxious to get the garden well dug and the seeds planted before he had to return to his regiment, an event both his wife and Maurice dreaded; but he cheered them up by saying his time would be up in less than another year, and then he could retire and settle down amongst them.

Till then he wanted both the boys to remain with their mother, but here the latter demurred.

“I don’t like Bryan being taken away from school, John,” she said. “It’s a great mistake. You say he’ll be such a help to me and keep the place in order, but I know he hates doing household things, like carrying coal and cleaning boots, those common things; and as to digging, why, I know he’ll just hate it. Really, he’s made for higher work than that. Maurice is well able to do all those little things.”

She did not notice the frown on her husband’s forehead as he listened to her remarks. He had not been long in finding out how most of her affection was centred in the elder boy and Maurice pushed into the background. He had noticed how different they were. Bryan thought nothing of coming into the room when he returned from school, noisily, and flinging his clothes and books on to any chair, of grumbling if dinner had not been ready, and finding fault with the food. It had tried his father to hear his wife tell Maurice to shut the door and pick and hang up his brother’s things, and put his books away; and he had not failed to notice how unobtrusively the boy had begun to lay the table and slipped out of the room to ask Mrs. Carty to hurry with the dinner as Bryan wanted to get away early for a cricket match.

But when the Sergeant discovered how often Bryan’s tastes were considered when certain dishes were chosen and he heard his wife saying to Mrs. Carty: “Oh, we can’t have so and so, Bryan doesn’t like it; he wouldn’t touch it,” or, “Yes, we must have such a pudding, it’s a favourite of Bryan’s,” then his father felt things were going too far. Why should Bryan be considered before others? She was ruining the boy, and he spoke seriously to her about it. Ruth did not like it. She could not deny that she considered Bryan’s tastes, and gave in to his fancies, but resented the idea that she made favourites, although she knew in her heart that Bryan was first in her thoughts and plans, “the very light of my eyes,” she had once called him, when speaking about him to a friend. Her eyes were blinded to his selfishness; in her eyes he was perfect. She allowed him to go and consult with Mrs. Carty as to the food he chose, and when he refused to eat what was on the table, his mother remarked, “Well, if you don’t like it, dear, just go out and see if Mrs. Carty has something nice for you.”

She had never done this with Maurice. He never complained of his food. He ate it or left it as he wished. No notice was taken beyond the remark: “Poor little boy, I suppose he has no appetite. Well, leave it, dear.” And Maurice left it.

The Sergeant, used to discipline, and quick to notice any injustice, was troubled about his wife’s conduct; but having spoken to her, he determined to throw more responsibility on Bryan, and hoped he might develop into a real helper during his absence from Ireland.

He determined to have a serious talk with him.

## Chapter VI

# A Forbidden Pleasure

**A** WEEK later the Easter holidays began, and Bryan arrived, full of curiosity and expectations, at the little cottage.

Ruth was delighted to have her son, “and only hoped he would not consider it too small or lonely.” Maurice was charmed to see his brother, and followed him about everywhere, pointing out all the beauties he admired in the place and its surroundings and constantly speaking of all his father had done, and how hard he had worked in the garden, never mentioning the hours he himself had spent weeding, nor all the numerous ways in which he had assisted to make everything comfortable.

Bryan was full of suggestions. This tree was too old, and ought to come down. The window of his bedroom was too small; in the hot weather he would be suffocated; could not bow windows be thrown out of the sitting rooms? The path leading to the cottage was far too narrow; it should be wide enough for two motor cars to pass each other.

Maurice listened to all his brother had to say, but seldom replied. If he thought Bryan mistaken, he never said so, but would repeat his suggestions later to his parents, his mother remarking at the cleverness of Bryan, so full always of useful remarks and suggestions; but his father simply smiled and said nothing.

Every day Maurice would make his way to the farm adjoining the hotel by the lake and bring home the milk, and at first Bryan went with him, enjoying the novelty of the work, and delighted with the lake, upon which two lordly swans sailed.

“Oh, how jolly!” Bryan exclaimed when first he saw them. “Well, this is a pretty place. I hope there’s plenty of fish in that lake and there are boats. Oh! Maurice, we must get one and go out in it. I’m sure I could manage it.”

But when he mentioned this before his parents, at once his mother took fright. She knew neither of the boys had any experience of boats, and seeing how anxious she became, at once the Sergeant quickly remarked:

“Boys, you may go fishing whenever you like, and I dare say mother will be only too glad to have fresh trout in the larder for I hear the lake is full of them, and I only wish I had time to give you both lessons, but will



Speak to the innkeeper and ask him to let you go out fishing with some of his men, whom he can trust. But one thing I absolutely forbid. You are never to go out alone in a boat. The lake is very deep in places, and though Bryan tells me he can swim, and that Maurice is learning, I can't have you boating alone; so promise me you won't do so. Do you hear now?"

"Yes, daddy," came readily from Maurice, but Bryan seemed none too pleased, and began arguing:

"Oh, but, dad, it would be quite safe. I can swim and row a boat, and I'm not a baby now."

"But you'll act like one if you disobey me, Bryan. Besides which, your mother would never have an easy moment if you went boating alone. Now remember, I forbid it, and I'm trusting you. Do you understand?"

Something like a growl came from the boy, and no one noticed he never gave the required promise.

The Sergeant was none too pleased to see how reluctantly Bryan came to help him dig the garden; not even the fact of sowing the seeds appeared to give any pleasure, while Maurice was all eagerness, and watched the process with interest.

"I'll have the garden fine when you come back, dad," he cried. "See if I don't. Cabbages and onions, cauliflowers, turnips, beet, and carrot. Oh! grand! I'll see they're watered and kept weeded, and Bryan will look after the fruit bushes. Won't you, Bryan?"

But Bryan looked at them scornfully.

"Call those raspberries and currants and gooseberries? Why, they're only fit for a rubbish heap. You surely won't keep them, dad; will you?"

"I think they are worth keeping, my boy, and only require reasonable care, pruning and manuring, and then we may get some good fruit from them. See, they are full of young shoots," and he pointed at the budding branches.

Both the boys examined them. Yes, sure enough, there was plenty of life there, and young gooseberries were already forming.

Maurice was in high delight. "Oh! dad, I do believe we'll have gooseberries and currants yet. Of course I'll look after them too. Bryan will help; won't you, Bryan?"

But Bryan turned away and pretended to be examining a plum tree which was white with blossom.

The Sergeant sighed. He wished both the boys were eager about the garden. Of Maurice he had no fear but Bryan——?

“Dad,” suddenly exclaimed Maurice, “Uncle Tony used to have bees here. Don’t you remember those old straw skeps. Wasn’t that what you called them? They stood on that bench by the hedge, and you burned them ’cause they had all fallen to bits. Oh, dad, I wish they hadn’t. I’d love to keep bees. That book I found in the train told such a lot about them. Why, the man who wrote it said every one should keep bees. He made pounds and pounds every year with his.”

The mention of money made Bryan prick up his ears.

“How did he do that, Maurice? How could bees make money?”

“Why, by making honey, of course. The gentleman in the train said what a pity it was to see hundreds of acres going to waste, specially where there’s heather. Bees love flowers, specially heather and clover. There’s lots and lots here. Oh! dad, do let us keep bees.”

“And who’d look after them? You?” laughed Bryan. “Why, they’d only sting you, and you’d be howling all day. No, no, keep them away from me,” and whistling an air, with his hands in his pockets, he strolled away.

But the Sergeant looked kindly at his younger son.

“All right, Maurice, you’re a bit young yet. Wait until I come home and we’ll keep them together,” and the boy’s eyes brightened. “Wait till I come home.” How often he heard that remark! So much was to happen then, but a whole year was to pass before his father could leave the army. Still, they hoped he would get a few days’ leave at Christmas, far off though it seemed. Anyhow it was something to which they could look forward, and it helped to cheer them when a week later he left them and returned to Aldershot.

Mrs. Colquhoun wept a little. Maurice wept much, but it was in secret, and in the hours of darkness, when he could bury his head in his pillow for fear Bryan might hear. They shared a room, and he knew Bryan would laugh at him, for Bryan didn’t seem to care, and hadn’t shed a tear.

He was really rather glad of his father’s departure. Proud as he was of him, especially when he appeared in his uniform wearing his medals, yet it did not take him long to realise that here was one who understood him, and would stand no nonsense, but expected to be obeyed, though he spoke quietly and never lost his temper.

How different he was to his mother, who gave in to every whim, and whom he could twist round his little finger. His father he respected, although he loved him with fear. They had had some serious talks together when his father had impressed upon him the necessity of looking after his mother and obeying her. He told him how he trusted him to be the man of the house while his father was away, and that he must not put too much on Maurice,

who, though willing, was not over strong, and should be considered. A feeling of responsibility came over the boy, and realising how his father trusted and expected great things of him, his spirits rose, and he determined to do all that was expected of him.

“Bryan,” said the Sergeant on leaving, “I am sure you will remember all I have told you. You are young, but not too young to be a great help here. But, my son, one thing above anything else I desire, to see you a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Once I was sure you had enlisted in His Army, and put Him and His wishes first, I could leave you with a quiet mind. Do that and pray about everything.”

“Of course I will, dad. Don’t fear for me. I’ll do my best, and you’ll see how I’ll keep everything first class. Don’t you fear.”

They bade each other farewell, but somehow the Sergeant was not quite happy about his elder son. “Always so sure of himself,” he murmured. “If only I knew he had learned to depend on Christ and desired to please Him above everything else, I’d be satisfied.”

Although there was only two years between the brothers, Maurice often felt as if there was twice that distance. Bryan had a way of always speaking in such a superior way and of putting his young brother down, making him feel his ignorance of many things which Bryan had learned in his school life. Oh! how Maurice often longed for the little sister who had left them four years previously. He had been devoted to her, and often prayed earnestly that God would send another little girl to their home. The years passed, and that prayer had never been answered. Yet surely God had heard. Would the answer come? Maurice prayed on.

The days seemed to pass slowly once their father left them, and gradually the boys got used to their country life, and took up duties mechanically. Maurice always fetched the milk morning and evening, dusted the sitting room and made the beds, while Bryan attended to the fires, carrying in the coal and any water his mother needed, helping her in other ways when asked to do so. At other times he loved to rove about the country, hunt for bird’s nests, and occasionally made friends with any boys who might be stopping at the hotel by the lake, and he would fish from its banks when he could get anyone to go with him.

He was very proud and his mother was delighted, when he brought home two fine fish which he had caught.

Maurice meanwhile spent as much of his spare time as he could in the garden. He watched the appearance of the seeds his father had sown with

keen interest, watering them and keeping them free from weeds, and never failing to tell the Sergeant in his weekly letters how everything was growing.

He wished there was someone to teach him many things about the flowers and fruit he longed to know. He had not many books or opportunities of obtaining them, but one day something happened which gave him great joy.

It was Wednesday afternoon when the Rector called on his mother. Alas! she was out, and had taken Bryan with her, having got a lift in the cart of the ever-obliging baker who was taking a supply of groceries to a distant village, and had promised to bring his passengers back in the evening.

Maurice was all alone, busily trying to dig a piece of ground which Bryan had promised to attend to, but had forgotten, when the boy heard the gate click, and looking up he saw a clergyman walking up the garden path.

At once he laid down his spade and came forward, looking ruefully at his soiled hands. But Mr. Carey met him with a smile as Maurice put his hands behind his back.

“Good evening, little man. I believe Mrs. Colquhoun lives here; are you her son?”

“Yes, sir. But mother’s out, and Bryan too; and father is away at Aldershot.”

“Dear, dear, every one away; so you are looking after the house? I heard you had come to live in your uncle’s old home, and wished to call earlier, but have been from home. And how do you like living here? Too lonely, eh?”

“Oh, no, sir. I just love it. I’ve always wanted to live in the country; but Bryan likes Dublin best.”

“And who is Bryan?”

“He’s my brother. He’s thirteen, and after the Easter holidays he’s going back to a boarding school, and so there’ll be only mother and me here.”

“Dear, dear. Just you two all alone. Will you be afraid?”

“No, sir,” answered the boy gently. “Dad said we’d be quite safe. You see he’s asked God to take care of us, so of course He will. Won’t He, sir?”

“Of course, of course,” answered the clergyman hastily, recognising the boy’s unconscious rebuke and inwardly confessing to himself that he would not care to live in such a lonely part of his parish. “And are you not going to school, too?” he asked.

“Oh! mother’ll teach me. She used to be a teacher long ago, before she went to India with daddy, and she’s taught me often before she was ill.”

“Then you are a fortunate little boy to have a mother to teach you.”

“Yes, I only wish there was some one else to learn with me,” said Maurice wistfully. “It’s much nicer to learn with others.”

“Quite true, and I must see if we can find a companion for you. Protestant children are rare in these parts. And what do you like best to learn?”

“Oh, mother will teach me lots of things, history and arithmetic, and spelling, and botany, and——”

“And why botany?” interrupted his new friend.

“Oh, sir, I want to know all about the flowers, and trees, and fruits,” and he waved his hand over the garden. He was losing his shyness now.

“Quite right, quite right, my boy; yes, learn botany—learn all you can. I’m glad to see the garden is being taken in hand again. Your uncle used to keep it beautifully. Visitors going to the lake used to stop to admire it.”

“Oh!” cried Maurice, clasping his hands. “Then we must make it like that again. Bryan and I must work hard, but Bryan doesn’t care for gardening. He wants to be a soldier, and he says gardening’s no use for soldiers.”

“I think your brother makes a mistake. It’s most useful, and it’s well to know how to do everything possible. God always finds work for willing hands.”

Maurice nodded. “*I* mean to learn everything I can,” he answered. “Yes, *everything*,” and the emphatic nod of his head brought a smile to the Rector’s face.

## Chapter VII

# Noreen

“WELL, my boy, I must be going,” said the Rector, rising. “Tell your mother I hope to see her some other day. I fear our church is too far for her to walk, as she’s been ill, you tell me; but I have seen you and your brother there. That’s right. Keep Sunday and God’s commands and you’ll have His blessing.”

So with a friendly nod the Rector went away. He was a dreamy man, and found his scattered parish somewhat difficult because his parishioners, even though a mere handful, lived such long distances apart. He was a bachelor, living alone with his housekeeper, with occasional visits from a brother clergyman from another county and a niece from Dublin.

“I wish Alice Adair were here,” he said to himself, as he made his way homewards. “She’d be so interested in this family. A nice boy that, and very superior. His mother evidently an educated woman. Wish she were nearer and would start a small school. Seems an opening. I must think about it; yes, think about it.”

But by the time he reached home his resolution was forgotten!

Meanwhile Maurice was recounting to his disappointed mother and Bryan the visit from the Rector. Mrs. Colquhoun was loud in her lamentations at being out when he came. “The only day I was out; too bad I call it. And he never saw you, Bryan. There’s no knowing what he might have done for you, helping you with those holiday tasks which I don’t believe you have touched. You’ll disgrace us all when you go back to school. Oh, dear; why was I not at home!”

She went on bemoaning her absence, but Bryan only laughed, declaring he was only too thankful they had been away. He didn’t want to meet the Rector if it meant a renewal of lessons, which were a nuisance in holiday time, and everything would be all right when he returned to school. “Half the boys never learnt their holiday tasks, so why should he?” And off he went, leaving his brother to repeat once more all the Rector had said, and what he had replied.

“Well, I expect he’ll come again. I have plenty to consult him about, and seeing it’s too far for me to get to Church I must just wait till he comes

again; but I'm glad you and Bryan go."

It was true, the Church was too far away for Mrs. Colquhoun to get to regularly. She had been once when the friendly baker gave her a lift, but as he attended the Roman Catholic Chapel, and it lay in a different direction, she seldom met him and did not trouble herself any further. Alas! she was like too many parents, careful to send their children to places of worship, but seldom going themselves. The good old custom of seeing parents and children all making their way to the Lord's house is dying out, and the children are following their parents' example, and gradually drifting away from places of worship.

Maurice was so busy attending to the garden and other duties that he had little time in which to feel lonely, especially when Bryan joined him at his work. But Bryan loved nothing so much as boating and fishing, and spent most of his time down by the lake, delighted when anyone took him out in a boat, and more so when he brought home to his mother some of the fish which were so plentiful in the lake.

But at length the time came for Bryan's return to Dublin to start life as a boarder, and his mother saw him depart with tearful eyes, and never ceased bewailing his absence, quite ignoring the fact that her younger boy was a far greater help and companion to her than Bryan had been.

So the days passed on, and if Maurice felt lonely now he never said so, but often longed for his little sister who had died, and continued to pray that God would send him another one.

About a month after Bryan's departure, one afternoon Maurice was returning from the hotel carrying the can of milk he always went for at that time, when he suddenly heard a child's sob, and turning a corner of the path leading to his home, he came across a little girl sitting on a large flat stone, nursing her foot, while big tears rolled down her cheeks, and a can of milk stood by her side.

"Hullo!" said Maurice. "What's up?"

The child let go her foot and stopped crying, while she gazed at him.

"It's my foot," she explained. "Shure there must be a thorn in it. It hurts just awful, and I can't get it out; see," and she held out her foot towards him.

In an instant he had put down his can, and kneeling down, began to examine the foot carefully.

"Sure enough, here it is," he exclaimed. "I'll have it out in a jiffy. There, don't cry. I may have to give it a pull, but it'll be out in a minute," and never waiting for her reply he dexterously gave a pinch, the child gave a slight scream, and next moment a big thorn lay in his hand.

“My word, what a whopper. No wonder it hurt. How ever did you get such a big one in your foot? But sure, you won’t wear boots, so what can you expect with bare feet!”

The child looked at him shyly. “I like bare feet best. The moss and grass are grand to spring on, and Gran can’t give me boots every day. We keep them for winter; it’s cold then.”

“That’s true; but thorns like this come from the furze bushes. See what a lot of them there are about.”

“Oh, yes, I know, and I always keep away from those bushes, but when I help Gran collecting berries and things I often get a thorn.”

“You collect berries, do you; and what else?”

“All kinds of flowers and leaves. Gran knows them all, and she makes grand medicines out of them. Gran’s very clever, much cleverer than the doctors. Lots of people come to her to get her physics.”

“Oh, herbs, you mean; don’t you? And where do you live? I’m sure I’ve seen you fetching milk. Do you go for it every day?”

“Yes, and I’ve seen you, too. I think you’re a nice boy,” and she patted the wounded foot.

Maurice laughed. “Because I’ve helped get the thorn out of your foot? Well, I think you’re a plucky girl. What’s your name? Mine’s Maurice, and I’m ten years old.”

“Maurice? That’s a nice name. Mine is Noreen, and I’m eight.”

The boy jumped to his feet and impulsively seized hold of the girl’s hand.

“Oh, I say, we must be friends, for I’m sure God sent me to meet you. I had a little sister called Noreen. She died when we came home from India, and she would be just eight. I heard mother say so only yesterday. She said, ‘If our Nora had lived she’d be just eight now.’ Isn’t it strange mother should have said that? Noreen, we must be friends. You must come and see mother. I’m sure she’d love you.”

Maurice was pink with excitement, but Noreen shook her head.

“Nobody loves me, ’cept Gran,” she said. “Gran’s all I’ve got, and I’m all the children we’ve got. You’ve got your mother, and she’s got you, but I haven’t got anyone ’cept Gran.”

Maurice looked at her pityingly. He had both mother and father and Bryan. His heart went out to this lonely child.

“Well, Noreen,” he remarked at length, “now you’ve got me. God has sent us to one another. I’m quite sure He has, and I’ll tell mother so. She’ll



be glad. You must come and see her. Now I must run home, for she'll be wanting the milk for supper," and with a nod he picked up his milk can and was off.

Noreen followed slowly, for her foot was still painful. The thorn had been an unusually long and sharp one, so it took her some time to reach the cottage where she lived with Gran.

Mrs. Colquhoun reprimanded Maurice sharply for being late with the milk, but when he began to pour out his story of Noreen and the thorn, and then that her name was Noreen, and she was eight years old, her interest quickened, and tears stood in her eyes when the boy ended his story by saying he was sure, quite sure, God had sent him to find Noreen and help her, and he intended to have her for a little sister.

"But, Maurice, boy, you hardly know her. She may not be at all a nice child or willing to be friends with you. I don't like you picking up strangers."

"Oh, but mother, I'm sure she'd love to be my friend. I know she doesn't wear shoes and stockings. I think her granny must be very poor, as she only lets her wear shoes in winter, and Noreen likes bare feet best. She told me so. I told her I knew you'd love her, and you will; won't you, mother? She's got no mother, she says only Gran, and I expect she's very old. Grannies mostly are; aren't they? Oh, do let me bring her to see you."

"Well, we'll see about that later. Now come to supper; it's getting late," and mother and son sat down at the table, but Maurice's mind was full of a little bare-footed girl who called herself Noreen.

And he fell asleep that night dreaming about her.

## Chapter VIII

# “She’s Not a Witch!”

IT was several days before Maurice met his new friend again. Mrs. Colquhoun had started lessons with him. She was a good teacher, and determined he should not lose by living in the country, and if the boy found it somewhat dull learning by himself, he never complained, and was such a book lover that lessons were never irksome to him.

But the books he loved most were on natural history, and he pored over any of those which were in their scanty library. One or two of Bryan’s prizes had chapters on nature, and he read these again and again, and the book on bees he had found in the train became one of his special favourites. Oh, how glad he was the gentleman had lost it, though he always had a fear that if ever he met him again he ought to restore him his lost treasure. Once he mentioned this to his mother, but she only laughed at him.

“It’s not likely you’ll ever see the gentleman again, and even if you do, there’s no occasion for you to mention the book. He dropped it, and has probably forgotten all about it.”

“Oh, but mother, I know he valued that little book. I heard him say so to his friend, and I’d hate to lose a book *I* loved.”

“Why, child, it’s only a trashy little book; not worth sixpence. Don’t worry your head about it. It’s yours for the finding, and no doubt if he’s a kind man, he’d be only too glad it gave you pleasure.”

But, in spite of his mother’s reasoning, Maurice did not feel satisfied. He hoped he would not meet the owner of the book again. He had read it so often he felt he knew it by heart, and oh, how he longed to have bees of his very own!

One day, Bryan, who had had lessons in carpentering at school, told him in a fit of generosity that he would make him a hive. But, alas! Maurice knew only too well the value of Bryan’s promises, and had often laughingly remarked:

“Bryan’s promises are like pie crust, made to be broken!”

They did not hear from him very often. Bryan hated writing, and always said he was too busy, so his mother had to content herself with few letters in

the term from her schoolboy son.

But she had the consolation of her husband's letters, which came regularly once a week, and the knowledge that he would get a week's leave at Christmas, and on his return to Aldershot would only have a few more months before he could retire on his pension. He always wrote brightly, enclosing letters every now and then to his boys, full of sympathy and interest in their studies and pursuits, and encouraging them to work hard and well, while looking forward to meeting them soon.

So the weeks went by. The summer holidays drew near, and Bryan's return was being looked forward to by his mother and brother. It was about three weeks to the end of the term when Maurice once more met Noreen. He couldn't think why he had never seen her lately. Surely she must have been as usual for her granny's milk. But she told him they had been busy collecting herbs, and she had gone far into the country round seeking special plants which her grandmother needed, as she supplied various chemists.

This interested Maurice very much, and he learned the names of various herbs pointed out by his little friend, who was well instructed in them, plants which he had never noticed and which he had imagined had no use.

When he went home he told his mother of this, and so interested her that he obtained permission to bring Noreen to their house if he could induce her to come.

To his surprise she at once consented, and very proud he felt as he led her into his mother's presence, even overlooking the fact of her bare feet.

But Noreen had not forgotten, looking shyly down at her little toes, and hanging back as Maurice pulled her in.

Mrs. Colquhoun, however, guessed the child's feelings, and putting out her hand, drew the little girl to her side.

"Come in, dear. So you are Maurice's little friend? I'm very glad to see you. I hear you live somewhat near; don't you?"

"Yes. Gran and I live in Blackberry Cottage. It's the other side of the road down the lane by the big rocks. You'd never know there was a little house there. Shure, it's hid among the rocks intirely, and Gran loves it."

"I'm sure she does. I think the country round here is beautiful. But aren't you lonely? Have you no other little girls to play with?"

"No," answered the child gravely. "I'm all the children we've got. Gran and me suit each other fine."

Mrs. Colquhoun smiled.

"But don't you go to school, Noreen? Maurice tells me you can't read."

“Shure, and I can’t, but I can’t help it. Gran won’t let me go to school here. She says me mother wouldn’t have me go here, and she’s sure to send money one day to have me taught. I’d like fine to read, though. Is it very hard to learn?”

Mrs. Colquhoun looked thoughtful.

“I should like to know your grandmother, Noreen. Do you think she’d come to see me? Will you ask her?”

Noreen gave a short little laugh.

“Come I will, ma’am, but maybe she’d not come. She never visits the neighbours. Some of them call her a witch, but she isn’t, is she?” and her small hands were clenched.

“A witch! Certainly not. I’m sure she’s a dear kind Granny, and loves you dearly. Don’t mind what silly things people say. Maurice tells me she is a very wise, clever woman, and knows a great deal about plants and herbs, which proves she is no witch, but a very knowledgeable woman. Now come and have tea with Maurice and me,” and she turned to the table where tea was already laid, and noticed how the frown which had gathered on the child’s brow faded away at the kindly mention of her grandmother.

It was such a happy little tea party, and the plates of bread and butter and jam emptied rapidly. Both children seemed to enjoy, especially the good plain cake, truly a treat to their little guest, though Maurice and his mother did not know it.

Gradually Mrs. Colquhoun learnt her family history. Her father was dead. She had never known him, and could remember nothing of her early life, but granny had told her that her mother had brought her to Blackberry Cottage when she was very small, and handed her to granny, bidding her look well after the child, and some day she’d return to claim her.

“But she’s never come,” said Noreen pathetically. “Gran and me have waited and waited, and Gran says she is sure to come. Besides, she sends Gran money now and then, so we know she’s somewhere; but Gran doesn’t know where, and what can we do?”

“Dear, dear, that is sad. I don’t see what you can do,” answered Mrs. Colquhoun.

“I know what she can do,” remarked Maurice. “God knows where Noreen’s mother is, so she can ask Him to find her. She must pray about it.”

Mrs. Colquhoun smiled, but Noreen looked serious.

“Shure, and aren’t I praying, and Gran too. Don’t I go ivery week to the holy island and pray at the shrines, but I gets no answer. Do you think God

hears?" she asked suddenly, turning to Maurice's mother.

"Surely, dear, God always hears us. But why do you go to the island to pray?"

"Oh! it's where the Saint Finbar lived and prayed, so it's a holy place. He lived in the queer little cells all around, and if you go into the chapel you can say your prayers too, and you can see the saints there."

"Really, where do you see them, Noreen?"

"Shure in those pretty windows with all the colours. I loves to look at them. Don't you know, ma'am, that saints are the people that let the light through?"

Mrs. Colquhoun looked thoughtful. The child's words had gone home. Was she a saint? Did she let the light through? The words rang in her ears long after the children had risen from the table and run out into the sunny garden. She sat thinking of this little girl who seemed so content with her lot, living with a grandmother who evidently possessed little of this world's goods, with a father dead and a mother lost and unknown. Had God sent her that she, Mrs. Colquhoun, might help her and might mother her?

She wondered. It set her thinking. Maurice saw his little friend home, and on his return informed his mother he had seen her granny, and declared she was no witch.

"She's just a plain old woman, mother, and spoke quite nicely. She said it was good of you to have had Noreen to tea, and thanked me, and she just seemed to love her."

"Did you ask her to come and see us, Maurice?"

"No, but Noreen did, and she only shook her head and laughed. But maybe she'll come."

But Bet Scanlan did not come, though Mrs. Colquhoun waited for several days, hoping against hope, for somehow little Noreen had crept into her heart, and the idea of the child having to live in that lonely spot with no one to teach or help her grew very distasteful to the good woman who, having been a teacher, knew the value of education, and shrank from the idea of either of her boys growing up in ignorance.

The more she thought about it, the stronger grew her desire to help the child; but she seldom saw her, though Maurice and she met frequently, both going to and fro for the milk, or when the boy wandered down to the lakeside to catch fish for his mother. He was getting quite an expert at fishing, though he never went on the lake in a boat unless in company with one or other of the fishermen, who were often glad of the company of the little boy who made many friends amongst them.

## Chapter IX

# Restored

AT last the holidays came and Bryan came home. There was great rejoicing at the cottage, and mother and sons went late to bed that night, Bryan had so much to tell and talk about.

The following morning both boys went off early for a dip in the lake, and returned to eat a hearty breakfast, after which Maurice took his brother all over their small domain, pointing out all he and his mother had done during his absence. The garden looked very tidy, and the seeds they had sown were well up, not only the vegetables, but also the flowers. Mignonette stocks, sweet peas, and nasturtiums were all in bud. Bryan saw, but said little. He never praised his brother for the work he had done, though he must have realised the improvements had cost him and his mother hours of labour. His father had before leaving home pruned the few little fruit trees they possessed, and the currant and gooseberry bushes, and they all gave promise of fruit.

This Bryan noticed with satisfaction. He was fond of fruit, but when they came to the place where the remains of the old bee hives had stood he only laughed, and asked Maurice why he hadn't made some more hives.

Maurice looked at him reproachfully.

"Why, Bryan, you promised me you'd make me one some day. I never learnt to do carpentering, same as you do at school. Don't you remember?"

"Oh, yes, I believe I did say something about it, but there's plenty of time. It's summer now, and where can you get bees?"

"Why, this is the time they swarm. I've read all about it, and if a swarm came this way it would be grand if we could catch it. It might be the beginning of our fortune. But I've no hive to put it in, even if it does come," he added sadly.

"Oh, well, cheer up, old chap," replied Bryan, whose conscience smote him about his broken promise. He was one who always *meant* to do things, but seldom *did* them.

"Summer's here and we'll see what we can do before it's over."

He whistled and turned away, and Maurice tried to “cheer up,” and hoped Bryan would yet remember his promises.

Those were happy days as the boys wandered about together, fishing and visiting the island. It was on one of these occasions that they came across Noreen kneeling at one of the cells with clasped hands praying fervently.

Bryan was for laughing and passing on, but his brother held him back and pulled him into the shade of another cell.

“Don’t laugh at her, Bryan,” he whispered. “It’s Noreen, the little girl I told you about. I ’spect she’s praying for her mother. She’s lost her, you know.”

“Lost her! Is she dead, then?”

“I—I—we don’t know. She left her with her granny, and has never come back, and Noreen comes here to pray they may find her. There, now she’s finished. Come, let me tell her who you are,” and Maurice went forward.

But Noreen had seen them, and shrank from this big schoolboy, whom she had seen several times with Maurice. The latter she knew and trusted, but there was something in this other boy which she distrusted. Would he laugh at her?

So when Maurice would have brought them together, the little girl crept behind a bush and then took to her heels and fled homewards.

Bryan laughed. “She can run like a hare,” he remarked, “and fancy her coming here to pray. I’d hate anyone to see *me* doing it.”

“Why, it’s nothing to be ashamed of. I’ve often seen the poor people about here coming and praying. Mother says she thinks they like the quiet, and she only hopes they pray to the Lord Jesus, same as we do, and not to the Virgin and saints, who can’t help them.”

“How do you know they can’t?” asked Bryan roughly, who dearly liked an argument, though he did not care for the turn the conversation had taken. “How do you know?”

“Oh, Bryan, the Bible tells us. Don’t you remember learning the Hundred Texts in Sunday School, and 1 Timothy 2. 5, which says, ‘There is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus;’ and St. John 14. 6, ‘Jesus said, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No man cometh unto the Father but by Me.’”

“Oh, I’ve forgotten all that long ago,” answered Bryan, carelessly. “I don’t go to Sunday School any more. I’m too old now.”

“Oh, I’m sorry. Then what do you do on Sunday afternoons?”

“Oh, go for a walk if it’s fine; and if not, there are plenty of books in the school library. I’ve read lots of them, sailor and war stories. Say, Maurice, I’m not so sure I’d like to be a soldier. Sometimes I think I’ll be a sailor. I’d see more of the world, and it’s not so fagging; you just lie on deck and do nothing.”

“Who does nothing?” asked a voice, and both the boys, who had been lying on the grass outside the little chapel into which Noreen had disappeared before finally going home, jumped up and saw a smiling face with twinkling eyes gazing at them.

Bryan turned red, but Maurice laughed.

“Why, it’s Mr. Carey!” he exclaimed, as he recognised the Rector, and held out his hand.

“Yes, and you are my little friend from that pretty cottage where your mother has buried herself. I hope she is well. What brings you here to the island, eh?”

“Bryan and I like coming here. It’s holidays now, sir, and we come here to fish or go boating when some one takes us out.”

“Ah, I see. Well, I have two friends who are coming to stay at the hotel there,” and he pointed at the little inn. “They are keen fishermen, so look out for them,” and with a smile the Rector hurried away.

“He seems a jolly old chap,” remarked Bryan. “Isn’t he the Rector? I wonder who his friends are. I hope they will take us fishing.”

“So do I,” answered Maurice, who dearly liked going on the lake, and knew how Bryan chafed against his father’s command that he should never go alone. He knew the danger, if his boys did not, for the lake was wide and deep.

The opportunity of meeting the Rector’s friends came sooner than they expected. A few days later Bryan was wandering by the lake side when he saw a gentleman come out of the hotel with a fishing rod in his hand, and make for a boat by the edge of the water. At once the boy turned and went towards him.

“Here, my boy,” asked the fisherman on seeing him, “do you want a job? If so, come along with me and help me row. You can row, I suppose?”

“Rather!” exclaimed Bryan. “I’ll be glad to go with you, sir. I know the lake well. I’ve often been on it.”

“Oh, come along, then,” and they proceeded to get into the boat.

Just then Bryan saw Maurice come along. He had followed him, and now Maurice looked wistfully at the boat. Would the stranger ask him too?



“Hullo; who’s this?”

“My brother, sir. Can you take him?”

“I fear not; another time perhaps;” then seeing the boy’s disappointed face, he laughingly added: “Go and make friends with that gentleman over there. He’ll tell you a lot of interesting things,” and he pointed to a man who was just coming out of the hotel, as they pushed off into the lake.

Maurice turned, and as the newcomer strolled towards him, his face turned, he took a step forward and then stood still.

“Well, my boy, aren’t you going on the lake too?” Then seeing the boy gazing at him, he smiled and held out his hand.

Maurice took it shyly.

“Oh, sir,” he stammered, “please, I’ve got it, got it quite safe.”

“Got it? What—got what, my lad? And what is quite safe?”

“Got your book, sir. You dropped it in the train, and I picked it up. You got out before I could give it to you, but mother said it didn’t matter.”

The gentleman looked more and more puzzled. He sat down on a low bank skirting the lake, and drew the boy towards him.

“Now tell me. When did this happen? How do you know me, or that I dropped any book? I don’t remember.”



(Page 114)

MAURICE HAD FOLLOWED BRYAN, AND NOW  
LOOKED WISTFULLY AT THE BOAT

“Please, sir, it’s quite true. Some months ago dad and mother and me were coming down here from Dublin (we live here now), and you and a gentleman got into the train, and you sat opposite me, and I heard you talk about bees; and you showed him a little book and said you thought a lot of it. And then the train stopped and you both got out in a hurry, and the book

fell on the floor. It was only when we had gone on again I found it; and, please, sir, I have it safe. Shall I fetch it?"

The gentleman's face lit up.

"Ah! Now I remember. Why, it's that little book I have mourned for. I'd had it for years. It was written by a French priest, and was the means of making me keen on bee-keeping. So, my lad, you found that book, and you knew me again. Well, well, how strange, how wonderful!" and he looked away, and Maurice saw his lips move.

The boy watched him. Would he want his book back? Then their eyes met.

"I was just thanking God that my book was found. 'In everything give thanks,' you know, and nothing is too small or trivial to pray about. My boy, I wonder if you have found that out?"

"Yes, sir, I do pray about lots of things. Dad told me to, and God does hear and answer."

"Of course He does. Is He not our Father. Now, come and let us find the book."

He rose, and taking the boy's hand, let him lead him to his house, the pair chatting all the way, so that by the time the cottage was reached they seemed quite like old friends.

His mother was out, but Maurice opened the door and going to a bookcase, took down the much-prized book and held it out to the gentleman.

The latter took it with a smile.

"Well, well, to think I should find it here," and he looked lovingly at the shabby little volume. Then seeing Maurice watching him, he asked:

"I suppose you have read it?"

"Oh, yes, sir, over and over again. It's a grand book."

"Indeed it is. And are you sorry to part with it, eh?"

Maurice flushed. "Yes, sir, for I've learned a lot out of it. I know lots about bees now."

"That's right. And do you keep them?"

"No, our old uncle did. He owned this house, and left it to mother. But no one lived here for some years, and now he's dead and the hives are rotted away. Bryan said he'd make me a hive—but—but——"

"But it's too late in the season now:

“A swarm of bees in May  
Is worth a load of hay.  
A swarm of bees in June  
Is worth a silver spoon.  
A swarm of bees in July.  
Isn't worth a fly!”

quoted the stranger, and then they both laughed, exclaiming: “And now it's August, so we don't know what its worth.”

The gentleman put the book carefully into his coat pocket and looking at Maurice, said:

“Now, my lad, I'm not leaving you this book, but thank you heartily for restoring it to me. When I am next in Dublin, I'm going to get you a book which will tell you all about bees; much more information than my little book contains, and I'm sure you will enjoy it. Now show me your garden, and where your bees used to live.”

The two passed out into the sunlit garden.

“Ah, a very good place. Just the place for them. And would you like to have bees here? You wouldn't be afraid of them?”

“Oh, no, sir. I'm not afraid, and I'd love to have them. Perhaps Bryan may make me a hive some day.”

“Who is Bryan?”

“My brother. You saw him go out in the boat with the other gentleman, didn't you? He goes to school in Dublin, but it's holidays now.”

“I see. Well, if he can make a hive, well and good; but I want to give you a little present in memory of your restoring to me my book, and I will promise you a hive next Spring.”

Maurice clapped his hands. His face was radiant.

“A hive! A real hive, and for me? Oh, sir, I do thank you ever so much. But can you spare it?”

The gentleman laughed.

“Maurice, my name is Langridge. I am Rector of a parish up in County Tipperary, and bees are my hobby. I have sixty-five hives, and began by keeping *one*! There now, what do you think of that?”

Maurice was speechless.

“You began with one, and now you have sixty-five,” he murmured. “Oh, sir, could I ever have so many?”

His friend laughed.

“Why not? It only takes time and patience. When you are older you may be a bee master, and go to lectures on bees, and encourage others to keep them. I often grieve to see acres and acres of clover with never a bee near them. Why, boy, every neglected field means money lost. Well, I must go, but I won’t forget, and will send you the book I have promised you.”

He shook hands warmly with the boy, and Maurice saw him striding back to the lake side, there to rejoin his friend.

The boy stood and watched him. Somehow he felt he had made a friend, and suddenly he regretted the loss of the cherished little bee book, yet he felt glad the real owner had received it back, and the prospect of another book on the same subject gave him real pleasure.

He was not disappointed, for about a week later the book arrived, a beautiful volume, full of pictures, and with far more information than had appeared in the other little book. His mother and Bryan were both interested in all he told them about the stranger’s visit, only regretting they had missed meeting him; but the days passed all too quickly; and yet Bryan never attempted to make the promised hive, though Maurice mentioned it several times, and at last he returned to school with his promise unkept and the hive was still unmade.

## Chapter X

# Granny's Secret

**M**AURICE saw very little of Noreen while Bryan was at home. The little girl seemed to realise he did not want or care for her, so she kept out of his way, much to Maurice's regret, who had hoped they would all be friends together.

Mrs. Colquhoun liked the little girl, but even her constant invitations had no effect. Noreen kept away, and as Bryan's mother never guessed that he was the cause of her absence, she ceased asking her.

But just after he had returned to school, an unexpected pleasure surprised the little family at the cottage, and this was the appearance of Alice Adair, the boys' much loved Sunday School teacher when they lived in Dublin.

Maurice heard her knock at the door, and on opening it gave a cry of joy.

"Mother! Mother!" he cried. "It's teacher, Miss Alice herself! Oh, mother, aren't you glad?" and then next instant he had thrown himself into her arms.

Mrs. Colquhoun was just making the tea, but the boy's cry quickly brought her out, and then indeed there followed such exclamations, such questions and answers that they all three hardly knew who was speaking most. Of course Miss Adair had tea, and of course they all sat down to the table, and Mrs. Colquhoun produced a cake from some mysterious tin box, and her favourite strawberry jam, and then such a merry tea party took place.

Teacher had so much to tell them about the Sunday School and her new scholars, and how she missed Maurice, and how sorry they were never to see Bryan, though she had asked him several times to come and see her.

Then she said her uncle (the Rector was her uncle, a fact neither of her listeners knew before) had not been feeling well, so she had determined to pay him a visit and find out if he was seriously ill.

"I hope he is not," remarked Mrs. Colquhoun. "We don't often see him, for, as you see, his church and rectory are some distance away, and he does not do much visiting."

“That’s just it,” said Miss Adair, “I see a difference in him. He is getting older, and is not so active as he used to be. He wants me to come and live with him, and I think I had better do so, and look after him.”

There was a shout from Maurice.

“Oh, teacher, Miss Alice, that’s lovely. I don’t mean that the Rector’s ill or ailing, but for you to come and live here. Oh, it will be fun!” and he clasped his hands with delight.

Miss Adair looked pleased. “Well, Maurice, it’s nice to get a welcome, and I do feel it’s time my uncle had me near him. I can easily give up my pupils in Dublin, though I shall miss them and the College where I teach, but if God wills, I shall come here. I can only obey, and I’m sure there will be work for me here as well as in Dublin.”

Alice Adair was right. God has work for His children wherever He sends them, and when she had settled into the Rectory it was not long before the whole parish noticed the difference, for her uncle looked happier, and was often seen out with her paying visits to the cottages where they were always welcomed, and sometimes they would be seen driving together when they had to visit people at a distance.

The Sunday School began to look up and increase, for Alice Adair was not one to let the grass grow under her feet, but soon found new scholars, and to his great delight Maurice was once more with his old teacher. Also, another delightful thing happened. He told her about Noreen, and her lonely life with her old granny, and as his mother spoke about the child, Alice decided to look her up and see if she could persuade her old granny to let her come to Sunday School.

So one bright afternoon Miss Adair found her way to Granny’s cottage, and the old woman being at home, was very surprised to see coming to her doorway, a stranger who, with a bright smile, inquired if she was Mrs. Scanlan, and might she come in?

Granny gave a low curtesy, and Noreen gave a little bob.

“Why, yes, miss. I’m Mrs. Scanlan for shure, and glad to see you. Please come in. Shure, you’re welcome; though I don’t know you or have seen you before.” And Granny brought forward a chair for her visitor.

“No, we are strangers to one another, but I hope will not be for long. My uncle, Mr. Carey, is the Rector. You may know him; though he tells me he has never met you. But I have come to live with him, and I want to know his parishioners, and so am visiting them and come to see you. Also I have heard of Noreen from Maurice Colquhoun. You know him?”

Granny shook her head, but Noreen glanced up brightly.

“Oh, yes, miss. Maurice and me be friends. We fetches the milk together, and I’ve had tea with his mother. I like going there.”

“Do you? I’m so glad. Well, perhaps Granny will let you have tea with me some day. Also, I wonder if you can come to Sunday School. Maurice comes, and would bring you.”

Noreen clapped her hands with delight, and looked at Granny, but the old woman seemed troubled.

“I’m sure it’s really good of you to ask her, but I don’t see how she could go to Sunday School. I’d like her to go, but she’s had no learning, miss. She can’t read or write, and—and——”

“Can’t read or write! Why, how old are you, Noreen?”

“I’m going on to nine,” she said in a low voice.

“Going on to nine and cannot read yet! That is sad, dear. I think the first thing is to get you taught, eh, Mrs. Scanlan?”

The old woman continued to look very troubled, and stood twisting the strings of her apron. She glanced at Noreen.

“Well, you see, miss, I couldn’t help it. There’s wheels within wheels, as folks say. I’d like well for Noreen to get learning, but there’s only the village school at Inchigeelah, and that’s too far for her to be going alone every day, and——”

Seeing how worried the old woman looked, Alice Adair did not like to press her with questions, but after a bright talk, took her leave, and all the way home kept wondering how she could help Noreen and her Granny, and if there were some secret about them she had not discovered.

In a few days she called on Mrs. Colquhoun and consulted her as to what she could do. In the mean time, that good woman had again had Noreen to tea, for the child having found out that Bryan had returned to Dublin, no longer feared meeting him, so was delighted to meet Maurice and his mother again.

Miss Adair and Mrs. Colquhoun had a long talk about the little girl, and knowing the latter taught Maurice daily, ventured to suggest that Noreen should learn with him.

Mrs. Colquhoun was very much taken aback, but Miss Adair pointed out that it would be doing a real work for God, and how glad she would have been if any one had cared for her little Noreen, about whom Maurice had often told her.

Tears came into the mother’s eyes as her lost darling was mentioned.



“Oh, Miss Alice, what can I say? Why, she’d be just the age of Noreen O’Brian had she lived,” and bursting into tears, she buried her face in her hands.

Miss Alice put her arms round the poor woman’s shoulder and spoke loving words of comfort.

“Don’t cry, dear friend. Your Noreen is safe and happy, and will be always yours. But for the sake of her, I feel sure you would like to do something for this poor, neglected, little one. I did not stop to ask her Granny any questions about her, but somehow they are not a bit alike. There’s a refinement about the child which is lacking in the old woman, though they both seem devoted to one another. Now, for Christ’s sake, I feel sure you will help me rescue this child; won’t you?”

“I can’t refuse you, Miss Alice, and having my Noreen’s name and all, it seems as if it’s to be. Yes, I’ll teach her to read and write, and do all I can for her. Tell her Granny to let her come here and learn with Maurice, though of course he’s far ahead of her in learning.”

“Oh, of course I know that, and I hope her learning with him won’t keep him back. No, I don’t think it will; and I’ll see Granny Scanlan and tell her of your kind offer.”

Granny seemed very grateful, and now began a new life for little Noreen. She was very shy at first, but Mrs. Colquhoun’s kind encouraging words and Maurice smiling at her across the table, all gave her courage, and she began A B C with avidity. She was a quick learner, and really anxious to get on, though she found it somewhat irksome to have to sit still in the house instead of running wild in the fields.

But after school hours, if her Granny was out herb hunting, she and Maurice would wander in the country for miles, and the latter got to know the district as never before. Sometimes they met Miss Alice when she was visiting some cottager, and then the three would go off together, and Alice, who was a keen botanist, taught them the names and habits of many flowers and birds which they did not know; while Noreen told her the kind of herbs her Granny found, and how she got sale for them at a chemist she knew in Cork, to whom she sent them.

This interested Alice Adair very much, who wondered where Granny had picked up her knowledge, but Noreen could give no information about that, beyond saying that Granny used to live “out west,” and could speak Irish, a language Noreen also spoke on occasions.

So the autumn, and such a beautiful autumn, drew on, and Maurice almost counted the days to Christmas, when his father expected to get leave

for ten days, before returning to Aldershot for a few more months, after which he could finally retire.

The boy lived in expectation of this, and would chatter about it to Noreen, till she felt she knew the big brave Sergeant of whom Maurice was so proud.

She had never seen him, and imagined him in a scarlet coat, his breast covered with medals, and Maurice did not undeceive her.

So the days went on, and by Christmastime Noreen had mastered her alphabet, and could read short words, an accomplishment of which she was exceedingly proud.

“Now I can read Granny’s Book,” she confided one day to Alice Adair, whom she met in a wayside lane, and who had stopped to inquire how the reading was progressing.

“Granny’s Book!” repeated Miss Alice in surprise. “Why, Noreen, I didn’t know Granny had a book or could read.”

Noreen looked wise. Then she drew nearer to Miss Alice and spoke in a whisper.

“Whist now, Miss Alice. Granny can’t read, but she had a book. Doesn’t she keep it in her box under our bed? I only seen it once, when I cut me hand, and she went to the box to get some rag to bind it up, and I seen a book, and asked Granny what it was, and she just clapped the lid of the box down and niver a word would she tell me about it.”

Alice said no more, but the child’s words gave her food for thought.

What was the book? Where had Granny got it? Why did she never mention it to Noreen or to Miss Alice?

Ah! that was Granny’s secret.

## Chapter XI

# Noreen's Christmas Party

CHRISTMAS drew near, and the Sergeant duly arrived, bringing Bryan with him, whom he had picked up in Dublin. Such a happy little party they were. Mrs. Colquhoun had bright fires in all the rooms to welcome the travellers, and Maurice and Noreen had brought in plenty of holly and ivy and traveller's joy in preparation for decorating the walls.

The following morning, which was Christmas Eve, father and sons decorated the house, and Maurice received Noreen with a shout of welcome, glad of an opportunity of showing her to his father.

But Bryan only received her with a distant nod. He resented her appearance, and called her "that beggar child," and ignored the lovely bunch of holly berries she had brought as a special offering to his mother.

But Mrs. Colquhoun received the little girl with a kiss and words of grateful thanks and drew her towards her husband and called her Maurice's little schoolfellow, saying how well she was learning to read.

The Sergeant patted her head kindly. The little girl, just the age his would have been had she lived, and also bearing her name, attracted him strangely, and he was thankful his wife had found time and inclination to have another pupil. Miss Alice's suggestion had worked well.

Noreen, who had run in daily to the house, seemed quite at home, and made herself useful over the decorations, running back to her Granny at midday, delighted at having been asked to spend the afternoon of Christmas Day with her friends.

"And Miss Alice hopes to come in to tea," cried Maurice. "Won't that be lovely, dad?"

"Yes, indeed my boy. I will be pleased to meet Miss Alice, about whom you have so often written. She's been a real friend to you and mother."

"Yes, indeed, she has, and Bryan knows her too. In Dublin he used to go to her Sunday School. Didn't you, Bryan?"

Bryan mumbled something, adding that that was in the old days, but of course he was too old for Sunday School now. At that his father looked sad.

“Why, Bryan, when I was a lad, I never thought myself too old for Sunday School. In fact, I looked forward to going. We had a unique one, for there was a class of old women, ‘Grannies’ Class,’ it was called, and then one for grown boys; others for girls of different ages, and so on, down to the little ones. Oh! but we did have good times. I can look back and thank God for my Sunday School days.”

Bryan looked surprised, and then said:

“But of course that was long ago, dad. Times are changed now. Lots of boys and girls don’t go to Sunday School now.”

“More shame for them,” retorted the Sergeant. “It’s a downward step when our young people give up their Sunday teaching. Many and many a time have I lain awake at night over at the front, saying over to myself the hymns and texts I learnt in Sunday School as a boy, and they were a big comfort to me. Our early teaching rings through our life. I’d never force any boy or girl to go, but teach them that they are losing a privilege and I hope my sons will remember this, and not lose chances they may regret all their lives.”

Bryan said no more, but his father’s words were not forgotten.

Noreen duly arrived on Christmas Day, arrayed in a pretty warm frock Mrs. Colquhoun had made for her, and very proud and pleased with the scarlet jumper, also made by her kind friend, and a cosy coat and good stockings and boots provided by Miss Alice. She was beaming with pleasure. Even Bryan’s curt greeting failed to mar it.

They had dinner at two o’clock, the Sergeant having been at Church with his wife and boys, and for the first time Noreen saw and tasted a real plum pudding, while the goose seemed too wonderful a bird even to eat. But the boys did not think so, to judge by the helpings they managed to stow away. The Sergeant produced a box of crackers, but Noreen, who had never seen or heard such things, was so frightened, he had to take her on his knee and reassure her, while she hid her face in his coat, and Bryan called her a little muff.

After dinner they sat round the fire, and the boys roasted chestnuts, and they all sang carols till tea time, when Miss Alice arrived and fresh greetings took place.

After tea they brought out games, and their father joined them and taught Noreen tiddly-winks, the first game she had ever learned to play in her life, and at which Bryan scoffed and settled himself in an armchair by the fire, with a new book his father had brought him. So while the Sergeant, Maurice, and Noreen played games, Miss Alice sat and chatted with Mrs.

Colquhoun, and in a hushed tone told her what Noreen had let out about Granny's book.

Both women were much interested. What was the book? And how was it in Granny's possession?

Miss Alice more than ever felt sure that some mystery lay behind it all.

What a merry tea party that was! The only regret Noreen had was Granny's absence. Miss Alice had hoped she might have been induced to join them, but the old woman refused, and when seven o'clock came and Miss Alice rose to go home, the Sergeant said he would see her home, and called Bryan to go with them, saying they would drop Noreen at her cottage.

Bryan didn't like this arrangement at all. He didn't fancy leaving the warm fireside for the open country, and though he knew it was only common politeness to take Miss Alice back to the Rectory, he bitterly resented the idea of walking with that "little beggar."

However, his father's word was law, and he dared not refuse, only taking care to walk by his father all the way, leaving little Noreen to hold Miss Alice's hand. Finally they reached the cottage, and Miss Alice, peeping through the window, saw Granny sitting by the fire, her head buried in her hands. She looked so sad, so lonely and helpless that Miss Alice's heart went out to her; so, asking the Sergeant and Bryan to wait for her, she softly opened the door and led Noreen in, who at once flew to the old woman's side.

"Oh, Gran! Gran!" she cried, "we've had such a grand time, plum pudding and cake and tea and goose, and things called crackers that go off with a bang. Every one was ever so kind. I only wanted you to be there and see it all, Gran, then it would have been quite all right."

"My lamb, shure it's meself that's glad you enjoyed it all; and Miss Adair, I thank you for bringing the child back. 'Tis a grand time she's had entirely, asthore," and she hugged and kissed Noreen as if they had been parted for months.

Miss Alice determined to see more of the old woman if possible. Then the Sergeant and Bryan saw her home to the Rectory.

Of course it was lovely having their father with them, even for a short time, and it passed all too quickly. The weather was mild—more like spring, folk remarked; so the boys were out a good deal, and wise heads prophesied it would not last, and perhaps they might have snow or storms before long.

Bryan had been reading several stories about sailors and the sea while at school, and, to his father's disgust, now declared he wished to be a sailor,

and begged he might go on to a naval training ship as soon as the Sergeant came home for good.

But both parents said nothing, and hoped by then his views would have changed. They were all sorry when the New Year came and they had to be separated again, but the Sergeant tried to cheer them all up as he waved farewell and told them to look up, not down; the time would soon pass.

Still, he had some anxious thoughts as the train bore him away to Dublin. It was about Bryan he thought most. He had noticed how little he did to help his mother in the house, always pushing his younger brother into jobs he disliked, such as chopping wood, lighting fires, or carrying coal and water. He was always ready to run on errands that took him out of doors, especially any to the hotel by the lake, where he met other boys and often remained out much longer than was necessary, larking and playing about even when he knew his mother needed him and the goods he had been sent to fetch.

All this his father had noticed, and also his curt behaviour to little Noreen. The Sergeant having taken a great fancy to the little girl, wondered if Bryan had noticed it, and if it had made him jealous. He had overheard her remark to Maurice one day when they had met and the latter asked her was she not coming to see his mother: "No, Bryan is with you, and he doesn't like me," and Maurice, feeling this to be true, had remained silent.

"I don't like it; no, I don't," the Sergeant muttered to himself, and then he had leaned back in the carriage and, closing his eyes, had prayed earnestly for his wife and boys.

How little his fellow-travellers knew he was praying! Oh, it's a grand thing to have praying parents!

## Chapter XII

# Through the Storm

THE neighbours' fears were realised only too soon, for just after the New Year opened the weather changed; storms, hail, and sleet came in, the days of heavy rain made the country like a bog in many places, and few people were seen out, preferring their firesides and homes.

Mrs. Colquhoun became anxious about Maurice, who took a severe cold, caught one afternoon while fetching water from the well, a job his brother had been asked to do earlier in the day, but which he had neglected.

Maurice was much stronger than he had been in Dublin. The fresh mountain air suited him, and his mother rejoiced to see colour coming into his cheeks, and he looked so much more robust. She was therefore very grieved when he developed the heavy cold which necessitated his staying in bed for several days, and made her anxious when she heard him cough. Bryan made nothing of it, and laughed at her fears, secretly thinking far too much fuss was being made of his little brother, and grumbling at having to do his work; ignoring the fact that his carelessness was at the bottom of Maurice's illness.

Nothing was seen of Noreen, much to Bryan's satisfaction, and then one wet afternoon she timidly knocked at the door, and looked half frightened on seeing it opened by Bryan, when she asked for his mother and might she come in? "Granny's ill."

"You can't see her," answered the boy curtly. "She's busy nursing Maurice. He's got a bad cold and is in bed. She doesn't want any beggars here," and he slammed the door.

Tears came into Noreen's eyes. Granny was ill. She had come to tell Mrs. Colquhoun about it, hoping she would come and see her. That was bad enough, for the child was frightened, not being used to illness. But to be called a beggar! That was cruel, and, sobbing, she turned away.

She stood in the pathway thinking, what could she do now? Who could she get to come and see Granny? Most people were afraid to come to the cottage. They called her a witch, and never came near them.

But Granny was ill. There was no doctor near. Oh! what could she do? Great sobs almost choked her, and the rain poured down on her, soaking her

coat and hair, for she had come out without a hat.

Suddenly she thought of Miss Alice. They had met several times. Miss Alice was kind. She would help; yes, she was sure she would help, and running up the narrow pathway to the gate, she sped away to the Rectory. It was a long way, over a mile if she went by the fields, which was the shortest route; but Noreen was well acquainted with the district, and Granny was ill and needed help, so she flew along, heedless of wind, weather, and the gathering twilight.

And a boy had looked out of a window as she left his mother's house, and felt very uncomfortable, realising how angry that mother would be if she knew he had turned her little pupil away.

Bryan took a story book down from a shelf, and curled himself up by the fire. What did it matter to him if that beggar child's granny was ill? No business of his. But conscience pricked him, and he knew he had acted wrongfully.

Half an hour later, a soaking little woebegone figure stood in the Rectory kitchen, water dripping from her garments and making little pools on Bridget's clean brick floor.

"Mercy on us, child, wherever be you come from? Why, 'tis like a drowned rat you be! Whatever are people thinking about to let such a mite as you out in such weather, and the night coming on too? There, don't cry, my lamb. Come over to the fire, and tell me who you are and what you want," and the kindly maid pulled Noreen to the glowing hearth.

"Miss Alice. It's Miss Alice, please, I want. Granny's ill, and Miss Alice will know what to do. Oh, do tell Miss Alice."

"To be shure I will, honey; though I don't know from Adam whose your granny," and Bridget left the kitchen to find her mistress.

The latter was in the Rector's bedroom, for he, too, was confined to bed with a bad chill, and looked up when Bridget announced that a child looking like a drowned rat was in the kitchen and asking for Miss Alice.

"Who is she, Bridget? And such weather to be out in, too, though the wind and rain seem getting less. But who is she?"

"I'm sure I can't say, Miss, though now I think of it, I seem to have seen her about. But she says her granny's ill, and she's crying dreadful."

Which indeed Alice found to be true as she entered the kitchen and recognised poor little Noreen, who could hardly speak for tears.

"Bridget, heat up some milk at once, please. The child is soaking wet and shivering with cold. Go up to my room— No, I'll go while you heat the



milk—but take off her wet clothes and dry them, and I’ll get a blanket and wrap her in it.” So in a short time Noreen found herself with a warm shawl and a blanket folded round her, and warm sweet milk held to her quivering lips.

Then she told her story. How Granny looked queer and wouldn’t hardly speak, only kept crying and saying something about something hadn’t come—a sentence no one could understand.

“Is Granny eating anything?” asked Miss Alice.

Noreen shook her head.

“No, miss, there’s not much to eat. Gran only likes tea, and when the bread’s hard she soaks it in the tea and that warms her. Baker hasn’t been yesterday, nor to-day. It’s been so wet, and Gran wouldn’t let me out. I had to steal away to come here.”

“But why didn’t you go to Mrs. Colquhoun? She’s much nearer to you than I am?”

Noreen’s small hands clenched.

“Please, miss, I did, and that big boy, Bryan, wouldn’t let me in. He shut the door and called me a beggar; yes, he did,” and the child’s eyes flashed.

“Did he? That was naughty and rude; but we’ll not think of it, only of Granny. Now tell me, Noreen, what food have you in the house?”

“Please, miss, we’ve hardly any. Baker fetches our things from the village most days, but he hasn’t been for three days now, and the bread’s mostly gone; but there’s a little tea, only no sugar or butter.”

Alice smothered a sigh. Then as the child’s clothes became drier, she quietly went to a cupboard, taking out tea, sugar, cocoa, butter, and four fresh eggs, as well as a new loaf and some good soup, which she poured into a jug. These were all packed into a basket, and then, making sure that Noreen’s garments were dry, she left the room and presently returned clad in a strong macintosh.

“Oh! miss, you’re never going out this evening?” exclaimed Bridget in dismay.

“And let this child go all that way alone, poor wee thing, and her grandmother ill—and perhaps starving,” she added in a low tone. “Come along now, little one. Yes, put on your coat. I see the rain has stopped, and stars are appearing. We’ll go together and take care of each other, and see how Granny’s getting on.”

Noreen never forgot that evening walk. How she had dreaded the thought of returning to the cottage *alone*; but now with Miss Alice—oh,

how different it all was. For didn't she tell her beautiful stories all the time, and spoke about the Lord Jesus as if she knew Him quite well, and was walking beside them. Somehow the way didn't seem half so long, though they came by the road, which was drier, though longer.

The cottage was in darkness when they arrived, but Miss Alice's torch, which she had wisely remembered to bring with her, thinking of the return journey, lit up the cheerless little room, and at once Alice told Noreen to relight the fire, which was almost out, while she put down her basket and went into the inner room where Granny lay.

"Be that you, Noreen? Where have you been? Oh, child, child, I've been a calling you, and niver an answer could I get. Oh, alanna, alanna!"

"It's not Noreen, Granny. It's Miss Alice. You know me, don't you? You are not well, and very wisely Noreen fetched me. Why, you are quite cold," and Alice took the old woman's hand; it was shaking with cold.

She lay back, shivering. Alice pulled the thin blanket over her, and then went into the kitchen to hurry Noreen's preparations. The fire was beginning to burn up, and pouring some soup into a saucepan, she told the child to warm it up as quickly as possible. She lit a candle, undid the parcels she had brought and then returned to Granny, who still lay shivering. Miss Alice glanced round the tiny room. The cottage only contained the two apartments, and another small bed stood in a corner, which Alice rightly guessed belonged to Noreen, and noticed it seemed to have plenty of blankets on it, while Granny's had only the one thin covering.

She took some of the blankets off the child's bed and carried them over to Granny's. The old woman moved uneasily.

"Stop, stop, miss!" she cried. "You can't do that. The child must be kep' warm. She'll be ill, that she will, and I'll niver forgive meself. No, no! I can't take her blankets."

"Yes, Granny, you will," said Alice firmly. "I'll see Noreen shall have enough clothes. No wonder you're cold without warmer blankets."

Just then Noreen appeared with a bowl of steaming soup, which Miss Alice took, sending her back for some bread, and then, seating herself by Granny's side, she bade her sit up as she had a good supper for her. The old woman could hardly realise it, but finally roused herself and watched Miss Alice as she broke some bread into the savoury soup with an intense longing born of her great hunger.

Alice held it towards her. She hesitated.

"Is there any for Noreen?" she inquired.

“Yes, plenty; and now I’m going to sit by you till every bit is eaten. Come, see how good it is.”

No need to coax Granny. She ate like a famished hound. The tears filled Miss Alice’s eyes. Was it possible this poor old woman had been half starved? But why?

Miss Alice kept her word—till every morsel had disappeared—and Granny handed back the bowl. Then, with a grunt of satisfaction, she sank back on the bed.

Alice tucked the blankets round her; then seeing the old woman’s big Connemara cloak hanging up against the wall, she took it down and placed it on Noreen’s little bed. This satisfied the old woman.

“There now, go to sleep, and don’t worry about anything,” said Alice, as she bent down to bid her good-night. “I’ll go to Noreen and see that she has some soup too.”

“Yes, that’s right, Miss Alice—that’s right, and God bless you for all you’ve done for us.” Then she pulled Alice closer. “Miss Alice, you’ll come again, won’t you? Shure ye will now, me dear?”

“Yes, Granny, I’ll come again, and don’t you worry about food or anything. Here is something for you,” and she slipped two half-crowns into the old woman’s hand.

“Oh, Miss Alice, the Lord bless you. Shure He must have known it didn’t come, and I at me wit’s end to know what to do; and the child and all wanting food. Aye, He must have known.”

“Yes, God knew all about it, Granny. That’s why He sent it. It’s all from Him. ‘He careth for you.’ There’s a sweet promise to rest upon.”

The old woman again drew her close.

“Miss Alice, whist. When ye comes again I’ve summat to tell ye. But not that you’ll tell anyone, now mind, not a soul; but ’twill be a big ease to me mind. Now good-night, me dear.”

And her eyes closing, Granny fell asleep.

Alice stood for a moment watching her, and puzzling over her words. When she returned to the kitchen Noreen was sitting before the fire contentedly eating bread and soup. Miss Alice wondered if she knew Granny’s secret.

Promising the child fresh supplies of food on the morrow, and telling her to be sure to give Granny a good breakfast, she picked up her torch and went home, puzzling over Granny’s words all the way.

## Chapter XIII

# The Secret Out

**A**LICE was not at all happy about her uncle, whom she could see was failing in health, and the first thing she did on reaching home was to run up to his room.

He greeted her with a smile, holding out a green envelope.

“See, my dear, a wire from Langridge, saying he can come and preach for me, so you needn’t worry any more about me. I will stay here and rest. Bridget tells me you took that poor child home.”

“Yes, uncle, and I’m so glad at your news. I feel a load is lifted off my heart, now I know someone will take your duty on Sunday. I’m glad I went back with Noreen. She is far too young and small to be running about these country roads alone in the evenings. Yes, I saw the old woman; and oh, uncle, I believe she’s been half starved. I took her some soup, and she ate it like a half-famished person. I must get her some groceries to-morrow.”

“Do, my dear,” responded the Rector, who knew little about the needs of his parishioners, and was only too thankful to have a niece to look after them. He was growing old and forgetful.

“Langridge says he is coming to-morrow. I presume by the bus, that reaches Inchigeelah about twelve o’clock midday. You’ll meet him?”

“Yes, of course,” and at once Alice decided to drive into the village and bring back what she required for Granny at the same time.

Everything turned out as she had hoped. A letter came in the morning saying her uncle’s helper would arrive by the ’bus before mentioned, and the morning broke in sunshine, all traces of the storms having disappeared, so Alice drove off gaily in the little pony trap.

She sang as she went along. How could she help it? Everything seems happy and bright when the sun shines, especially after days of gloom and wet; and the only cloud in the sky was her uncle’s health, which seemed very failing.

She drew up at the corner where she knew the ’bus always stopped, and was just in time to welcome her guest, a bright, happy-looking clergyman, who greeted her warmly. His suitcase took up all the available room in the

trap, and Alice was glad to think that the large parcel of groceries she had ordered before meeting her uncle's friend would be brought out to Granny by the baker's cart, Patsy Connor, who drove it, evidently knowing the old woman.

The drive to the Rectory was a very enjoyable one, and the pair in the trap soon made friends, specially when Mr. Langridge remarked how glad he was to be once more in such a lovely neighbourhood.

"You have been here before, my uncle tells me," observed Alice.

"Yes, last summer, with a friend. By the way, I made the acquaintance of a very bright, intelligent boy then. You know, or probably don't know, I have a hobby—it's bee-keeping. I have quite an apiary in my own parish. This boy I discovered was most interested in bees; so much so, I promised he should have a hive in the spring; and that reminds me, I must look him up and see if he remembers my promise."

"Indeed he does!" laughed Alice. "For surely you are referring to Maurice Colquhoun? He told me about you and your bees, and showed me a lovely book you had sent him. When I saw your name in his book, somehow I never connected it with you who were coming to help uncle."

This recognition at once made a friendly feeling, and during the rest of the drive home Alice was kept busy telling Mr. Langridge all about the Colquhoun family, how she had met them, first in Dublin and then down here, and how glad she was Maurice had such a kind friend.

She did not, however, see Maurice to tell him who was staying at the Rectory, and it was not till Sunday morning he made the discovery, for, the day being so fine, his mother let him accompany Bryan to Church, and he almost shouted out when he saw who the clergyman was who entered the reading desk, and Mr. Langridge could not forbear a smile when he saw Maurice seize his brother's hand and, nodding excitedly, began whispering loudly to him.

After the service, there were the two boys awaiting him as he left the Church, and the welcome he got from Maurice quite warmed his heart. He insisted on introducing him to Bryan, and begged him to come and see their mother, which he promised to do during the week, and quite an excited pair returned from Church to tell her the good news.

Miss Alice had sent quite a large parcel of groceries up from the village to old Granny. Tea and sugar, oatmeal, cocoa and cheese, eggs, and—what delighted the old woman most of all—several pounds of bacon. Oh, what feasting they had then!

But the Rector was too poorly to be left by Miss Alice, and it was not till a week had passed that she was able to get to Granny's cottage. To her great joy she found the old woman looking much better, evidently owing to the good food she had been sent. Noreen was busy, being absent on an errand, so Miss Alice felt sure Granny would now open her heart and its secret to her.

She was right. After greeting her and then looking cautiously round to make sure she had no eavesdroppers, she drew her chair close to Miss Alice and began:

"Miss Alice, alanna, 'tis I'm glad you've come when the child's out, 'cause 'tis about her I want to tell you. Once some one knows, some one I can trust, shure me mind will thin be aisy, for I got a fright, I did, last week, and it coomed to me I might die and no one be a bit the wiser who the child was, nor where she come from.

"Miss Alice, dear, shure she's her mother's no me child at all." Granny paused to see the effect of her words, and was not disappointed when Miss Alice gave a gasp and a start.

"Not your child, Granny? Then whose is she?" And Granny continued her story.

"I'll tell ye ivery bit of it, Miss Alice, and then ye'll know whose she is. Onst there lived in that very house where Mrs. Colquhoun now lives, her old uncle, who had no family, and brought her and her brother up, seeing they were orphans and his own flesh and blood. She grew up and took to teaching as you know, and the old man had great ideas that her brother Jim might do the same. But the boy was all for motors and engineering, so he went off to learn about it.

"Now, in that big house out west called Oaklands, Colonel Bolton and his family lived. 'Tis empty now, and has been since the Colonel died and his widdy and childer went away. They were a fine big family; I remember them well. He had seven children of his own, and Miss Una, his niece, who lived with them; and summer times he'd come down to Connemara out west, and 'twas there I met them and Miss Una too, for I lived there. She was a kind young lady, and very friendly like, and she'd talk to me a lot, and I got to love her. She was very different from her cousins, and wasn't too happy with them, though the Colonel, her uncle, was always kind to her. One time, when they were here at Oaklands, their chauffeur got ill, and young Jim O'Brian went up to help with the car. He was a great hand with cars, and Miss Una she was too, shure, she was a grand driver herself.

“Young Jim was nephew to Mr. O’Brian, uncle to Mrs. Colquhoun, and lived where she does now. In the summer when the family moved to Connemara, they took Jim too, and he and Miss Una got very friendly like, and took long walks together. Meantime Jim’s uncle wanted him to settle down and had bespoke a place for him in Dublin, but what did Jim do but enlist, and was ordered out to France when the big war was on.

“Then Miss Una disappeared, and her uncle was in a fine way about her, until a letter came saying she was out in France too, nursing the wounded. When the war was over, the Colonel heard from South Africa that Miss Una and Jim had got themselves married.

“Well, the Colonel and Jim’s uncle were both in a fine way. I knowed all about it, for I’d taken sarvice at Oaklands and come away from Connemara, hoping I’d hear more about Miss Una. I was fair gone on her.

“Well, she was married, and some years passed, and then came news that Jim had died. The Colonel had left the country, and I kept on as long as I could, and at last got the wee cottage I’m in now. I got work and picked herbs and roots, for I’d learned about them when I lived out west, and later from a gardener the Colonel had at Oaklands, but he’d gone away with them. The people about were niver friendly to me; they thought I was a furriner, coming from the west, and I had little to say to them, though they’d come to me for me cures. Well, I lived on here, wondering what had come of Miss Una, and thin one dark night a knock comes to me door, and there she stood, and you could ha’ knocked me down with a feather. She looked white and tired, and, oh, so thin, and she had a bundle in her arms, and she nearly fell into me arms. She just pushed the bundle to me and fell in a chair, and there she sat sobbing and sobbing, fit to break her heart.

“I got her some tea and soothed her a bit, and then the bundle cried out, and I found it was a baby, the living image of Miss Una herself. Then she told me all about it; how Jim had died and then her baby was born, and how she’d worked to keep it, but after a while found it more and more difficult to get a place having the baby, so she determined to come back and see if her uncle would have her and the baby too. How she heard he was dead and all the family gone; and she knowed his wife, who’d never liked her or forgiven her for marrying Jim, would never look at her. No one about seemed to remember her, and no wonder, she was that changed. And then she heard of me, and that I was the Bet Scanlan she had known in Connemara, and she found me out. She begged me thin to take the child, wee Noreen, and said she’d go back to South Africa and be sure to get money to keep her, and she’d send it me ivery two months; and she did regular till this last two

months, when it never came, and I not knowing where to turn till you came, Miss Alice, God bless you.”

Granny paused, and Alice asked if Granny had any papers left by Noreen’s mother.

“Oh, aye, indeed. She left me her marriage lines, for, said she, if iver the child needed a friend, Jim’s sister should have her; but shure she was out in India then.”

“And so little Noreen is really Mrs. Colquhoun’s niece. Oh, Granny, I’m so glad you have told me, and I’m sure her aunt will love her and do all she can for her.”

“But must I give her up, Miss Alice?”

Granny’s face was full of anxiety, and Alice could not help feeling sorry for the old woman, who had so faithfully looked after the child.

“Are you sure her mother is dead, Granny?” she asked, ignoring Granny’s question.

“No, Miss, I aren’t; but she always was so punctual sending the money, and it’s two months now since it came.”

“Well, we will try and find out. Let me have all the papers she gave you, and I’ll get my uncle to write to a clergyman in South Africa and see if we can trace her. Meanwhile, don’t say anything about this to anyone till we make sure of what has happened,” and then, having obtained the papers Granny gladly handed over to her, Alice took her departure.



## Chapter XIV

# “I’ve Got a Cousin”

**A**LAS! the old Rector was too poorly to investigate Granny’s affairs, but Mr. Langridge took the matter in hand, and though it took a long time to track Mrs. Jim, he finally traced her, but only to hear from the clergyman to whom he wrote that she had died, and he sent home her poor little belongings. But they proved that she was indeed the Miss Una, Granny had known in Connemara, that Noreen was Mrs. Colquhoun’s niece, and the sooner the latter knew of this relationship the better, so this Alice undertook to tell her.

Many months had gone by since Granny had told Alice her story, and Bryan had returned to school and Noreen to her lessons with Maurice; but on the day Alice called on Mrs. Colquhoun both children, to her great satisfaction, were out picking late blackberries, so the two women were alone.

Alice found no difficulty in telling her story. Mrs. Colquhoun had grown fond of Noreen, and as Alice proceeded with incident after incident, and it began to dawn on the good woman that Noreen was indeed her brother’s child, the tears came into her eyes, tears of thankfulness; and just as Alice finished speaking, the two children burst into the room, full of life and joy, rosy with running and holding a big basket of blackberries between them.

They came to a stop on seeing Alice, and Maurice was quick to notice tears on his mother’s cheeks.

“Oh, mother, you’ve been crying. Has anything happened? Bad news from dad?”

“No, my boy, not bad news at all; only good news, which Miss Alice has brought to me.” Then holding out her hand she drew Noreen to her, and putting her arm round the little girl, kissed her again and again.

Maurice looked on wonderingly, but his mother had only eyes for Noreen.

“Noreen, my darling, would you like to have me for your aunt?”

Noreen gazed at her. “I wouldn’t mind, ’cause you are Maurice’s mother, and you’ve always been good to me. But of course I love Granny best.”

“Yes, my dear, and with good reason;” and then with Noreen on her lap and Maurice kneeling beside her, the two women told them Granny’s story, the two children staring with wonder as they took it in.

When it was told, Noreen was the first to speak. She threw her arms round her aunt’s neck and burst into tears:

“Then you’re my aunt, my real live aunt, and I’ve got a proper one of my own. Oh! I’m so glad. But of course I must have Granny too. You won’t send Granny away, will you?”

“No, indeed. We owe a big debt to Granny for all her care of you. We will always look after Granny. Now Maurice and Bryan are really your cousins; just think of that!”

Maurice’s thoughts led him to spring to his feet and dance round the room singing: “I’ve got a cousin, a real true cousin, and she’s mine! mine! mine!” till he had all the others laughing too.

Then Mrs. Colquhoun said she would take Noreen home, and Maurice must come too; so seeing them all so happy, Miss Alice thought it best they should meet Granny alone, and she returned to the Rectory.

It did not take long for the news of Noreen’s relationship to her cousins to get about, but her aunt could not induce her to leave Granny, and so, at least for the present, the two lived together.

But life was changing at the Rectory. The old Rector grew worse and one morning Alice found him, as she thought, asleep, but it was the sleep which knows no awakening. She had been nursing him for months, and now the reaction set in, and Alice had to take to her bed, and at once Mrs. Colquhoun offered to go and nurse her. But what could she do with Maurice? It was Noreen who settled that matter by proposing that she and Granny should go and live at his home until Mrs. Colquhoun returned.

The weather was getting cold, and Granny readily agreed, so soon the three were snugly housed in their new home. Mr. Langridge stayed on at the Rectory, and before Alice was ready to return to her work in Dublin, the living had been offered to and accepted by Mr. Langridge, much to the satisfaction of the parishioners, who were thankful to have a clergyman who would take a real interest in them, visit them, and prove a true friend.

This he had indeed shown himself to be, both to rich and poor, and before long he was a welcome visitor in every cottage and house in the village and round about.

Alice, of course, returned to Dublin, and somehow the Rectory seemed very lonely without her bright presence and cheery voice. Meanwhile as the months went by, Maurice got to know Mr. Langridge more intimately. The

Rector had always been much drawn to the boy, and delighted him one day by bringing him a real beehive. It was not long before it was filled with busy little workers, which the boy was never tired of watching.

## Chapter XV

# Fresh Surprises

IT was too late in the season for the bees to make honey, but Mr. Langridge had discovered a broken up hive in the garden of a disused cottage, where a late swarm had alighted. The bees would have perished if left to themselves, but the Rector knew what to do with them. Protected by veil and smoker he carefully moved them into an empty hive which he had filled with combs, and he showed Maurice (whom also he saw was well protected by a bee veil) the queen as she entered her new quarters, and a buzz of contentment filled the air as gradually the whole swarm followed her.

Maurice was in ecstasies, and more than ever eager to learn all he could of natural history. Once all the bees had settled in, Mr. Langridge fed them with warm syrup, telling the boy they would carry it down and fill the empty combs, and so have food for the coming winter.

Every week the Rector came to visit them, and see how they were getting on, and he covered them up carefully as the weather grew colder, and so left them safely housed for their winter sleep.

Christmas drew near, and with it the expected return of Bryan. Mr. Langridge went up to Dublin, and promised Mrs. Colquhoun that he would visit him, and that they would return together.

But there was someone else the Rector visited too; some one whose face looked very bright and happy when they parted, and whose happy voice sounded in his ears long after, for he had extracted a promise from Miss Alice which he knew would rejoice all the people in his parish, and more especially Mrs. Colquhoun and her family.

The Sergeant had been delayed at Aldershot longer than he had expected, but he bade farewell to his regiment in time to get home for Christmas, and was with his wife and Maurice when Bryan arrived.

Nothing could have been kinder than his greeting to Noreen. He taught her to call him uncle, which delighted her; and as Mr. Langridge had had a long serious talk with Bryan as they travelled down from Dublin together, the boy's resentment towards his little cousin gradually faded away, and his

parents were indeed thankful to see he treated her with kindness, though he felt shy as he remembered the way he had spoken of and to her previously.

But Noreen was far too happy to bear any grudge. Her new aunt and uncle seemed to be like a fairy tale, and she and Maurice became greater friends than before. What a happy Christmas they all spent, although this time Miss Alice was not with them, but she sent them a big parcel of presents, and promised to see them before long.

Meanwhile the Rector had induced Granny to leave her cottage and move into the Rectory. He had only a very young girl to cook and look after his wants, so Granny, who had never forgotten her earlier training at Oaklands, felt quite proud to go and take charge of the house-keeping. Mr. Langridge told her a secret one day which made her smile and look very important, and when just after Christmas he paid another visit to Dublin, Granny seldom had a smile off her face. Noreen noticed it; for though she now lived with her aunt and uncle, she was daily running up to the Rectory to see how her dear Granny was getting on without her.

Granny was growing younger instead of older. The responsibility of having charge of Noreen and her secret no longer weighed on her. Noreen now belonged to her relations, and every day improved both "in wisdom and stature." Her mother's death had been proved, and she quite understood her relationship to her aunt, who grew to feel more and more that God had sent her another daughter in place of her little girl in Heaven. She loved to teach her, and was rejoiced to see her improving in her way of speaking and acting.

And then came a day when the Rector quite unexpectedly arrived home and walked into Mrs. Colquhoun's cottage. He was not alone, and a glad cry of "Miss Alice! Miss Alice!" rang through the house as their friends held out two hands of warm greeting.

"This is indeed a surprise, sir," exclaimed the Sergeant. "We did not know Miss Alice was coming. When did she arrive, and does Granny know she is here?"

"Yes, indeed, Granny knows, and has known for the last week that she was coming here; but no longer as Miss Alice, for I now present her to you as *my wife!*"

Then indeed there was shouting and joy, Maurice and Noreen dancing round the bride and bridegroom, singing all the time, and the Sergeant and his wife and Bryan looking no less pleased.

They all gathered round in the little sitting room, where tea was speedily prepared, and after it was over they escorted the newly married pair to the

Rectory to meet Granny, whose face was wreathed in smiles, very proud at having kept her secret so well.

“Oh, yes, ma’m,” she said, “I knew all about it, that quiet wedding in Dublin, and I’ve had everything ready for them. Me and Bridget have cleaned up the house, and a grand welcome we gave them when they arrived. Oh, my! won’t all the village be pleased!”

And indeed the villagers were pleased. Kind and warm greetings awaited them everywhere. They felt now the Rectory was a *real* home, and a home where they had friends ready to help and sympathise with them in their joys and sorrows, where they could go for advice, and, above all, where they would always be pointed to Christ as the true home-maker and Friend.

As time passed on, fresh life seemed budding everywhere. With his wife’s help Mr. Langridge was able to do much he had long felt needed a woman’s hand. Alice gathered all the mothers near and far, and soon had an enjoyable Mother’s Meeting every week, where the women loved to come and where one by one they learned to know the Lord as their personal Saviour.

Cottage gatherings were held in homes for people too far off to attend services regularly, and homely talks where little groups gathered were always welcomed.

The Sunday School increased, and Alice, who knew all about nursing, with Mrs. Colquhoun, started Ambulance and First-Aid Classes, and soon had young women and girls so interested that more than one determined to enter an hospital and learn to be a real nurse. Yes, and more than one in the future found her way into distant lands and worked in missionary hospitals.

All this came about in future years, when Maurice and Noreen grew up, both leaving home for school, and Bryan joining the Navy and becoming a first-rate sailor.

So the years passed all too quickly for Mrs. Colquhoun and Granny, who missed the children as they grew up, but who rejoiced to see them growing up into useful men and women.

Then there came a day when Maurice, a well-educated schoolmaster, and Noreen a fully qualified teacher, joined hands once more, and had a little home of their own, where the Sergeant and his wife loved to go, and were always welcomed as Grandpa and Granny by Maurice’s children.

Granny lived for many years as the loved and respected housekeeper at the Rectory. It was there she discovered “What a Friend she had in Jesus,” her favourite hymn, and even to the end of her days her quavering voice

might be heard singing it, and her face would light up as she would exclaim with others:

“Aye, aye, and it’s true! It’s true!”

## TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled 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.

Some illustrations were moved to facilitate page layout.

[The end of *What Maurice Found* by Laura Anna Barter-Snow]