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Kit Kennedy

BY B. B. CROCKETT.

CHAPTER XLIX.—(Cont'd.)

The other letter was from Betty Landsborough. It ran more briefly:

"Dear Kit—I write to let you know about your mother. Walter Mac Walter is, Rob and I both think, plainly going out of his mind. And we think something ought to be tried to get her away from him, lest he do her a mortal mischief. He locks her up in a room at Kirkoswald and keeps the key, letting none go near her but himself. Heather Jock brought the word, but Walter Mac Walter has threatened to shoot him if ever he catches him about the house again.

"Dear Kit, they say that you collegers have holidays at Christmas time. Come home if you have to walk all the way, and Rob Armour and you and me will try to get her away from that man. It is not safe. We are all in some measure of health here. Your grandfather and grandmother are well at time of writing. Laziness is all that is the matter with Rob, also conceit of himself.

"Kit, I hope you are behaving yourself among the Edinburgh lassies, and have not forgotten your old friend, BETTY LANDSBOROUGH."

While Kit perused his letters the "Orra Man" sat looking at him with a hungry look in his face. He had noticeably improved in appearance since the day after the Elysium. He now wore, not a spare suit of Mr. Bisset's, but a well-cut overcoat, frockcoat, and grey trousers. His carefully-brushed silk lay on the table in front of him.

He continued to gaze wistfully and eagerly at the letter in Kit's hand. Kit laid it on the table whilst he read over Betty's.

"Well," said Christopher Kennedy, M.A., a white and quivering anxiety setting down upon his pale face. He frequently smoothed his hair, now liberally sprinkled with silver, and pulled at the moustache, which, however, still remained black and long.

An impulse came over Kit. It was an old adage of his grandfather's, which he had but lately begun to understand the meaning of, that nothing steadies a man like responsibility or women like children of their own.

Impulsively he thrust both letters across to his father and sat looking at him as he tried to peruse them. Christopher Kennedy laid the papers down, gravely drew out a double eye-glass, carefully adjusted it upon his nose, and lifted Lillias Mac Walter's letter with shaking fingers.

As he read his head drooped on his hand, and the letter was laid down on the tablecloth, with a fast-falling rain of tears falling upon it.

Kit sat silent and waited. At last his father looked up. He read both communications more than once.

"Kit," he said, in an almost inaudible voice, "do you think you can trust me with these letters? I have too long stood apart as unworthy and allowed this iniquity to go unchecked. Now, thank God, by the help of my two friends and fellow-townsmen, Alexander Strong and Daniel Bisset, I am depending upon strength that is not my own. There lies upon me a responsibility of which you know nothing. Will you trust me a little longer, and do nothing in this matter till I have laid these two letters before them?"

"What has Mr. Strong or Mr. Bisset to do with my mother?" said Kit, with sturdy Scotch unwillingness that such troubles should be spoken of outside the family.

"Mr. Strong nothing, save as one in whom I have confided, and who has helped me as it does not often fall to one man to help another. He has put power and purpose into my poor life. But as to Daniel Bisset and his daughter! That is another matter! They are most intimately connected with all that concerns Walter Mac Walter."

Kit felt that he was beyond his depth. But the look of power and dignity on the "Orra Man's" face was so surprising that he suffered him to carry off the letters.

Christopher Kennedy rose with the two papers in his hand.

"I will return as soon as we have decided upon a plan of action," he said. "Fear nothing. God has given Walter Mac Walter into our hands, and the wronged woman who has been so long in the valley of the shadow shall again walk in the light."

He passed through the door and went down stairs. Kit, sitting silent over his books, could hear the door of the Bissets' flat open and shut. Then in a while it opened again, and presently looking past the edge of the blind he could see the broad shoulders of Daniel Bisset and the tall slender figure of his father striding down the windy street arm in arm. And he knew that the ex-drunkard and the Infidel Lecturer were on their way to take counsel with that eminently noble gentleman and Christian minister, the Reverend Alexander Strong, of the more than Metropolitan Church of Saint Laurence.

Rob Grier came back in the highest spirits and slapped Kit on the back.

"I've got a berth for you after the New Year," he cried. "What do you think of that? There's a cousin of my cut who is going in for his medical 'prelim.' He has yarned his father that he has passed already, and now the old man is on the war-path and is coming up at the end of the session to prospect. Besides he is ready to take his first professional, and he can't unless he has passed his preliminary. So I've promised that you will shove him through."

"Why don't you do it yourself, Rob?" said Kit, smiling up at him.

"Oh, Rob Grier kens his place," said the ex-smith, dropping into the vernacular. "It's mainly Latin and Greek that he wants. Besides, I hae as muckle afore my nose as I can manage!"

The two lads rose and shook hands without words on either side.

"Now," said Rob, "just cast your blinker over my version, and tick the howers wi' a killivine." (Underline the bad mistakes with a lead pencil.)

For this is the sort of macaronic speech produced by a few months of college life acting upon a base of rich Galloway Doric.

An hour afterwards, in the great bare study of Alexander Strong, three men sat round a table. Their host was summing up.

"What you have to do is plain. You, Bisset, must keep some of your people on their track from the moment they reach the city. If Walter Mac Walter is a madman, he is most certainly a madman with a plan in his head. The brother of the dead Mary Bisset may have his own idea what that plan is."

"And you, my old college mate," he turned to the Classical Master, "you have also your part to play, in the strength of a man," as Bisset might say, "by the help of God," as I would put it. Right is on your side. We will support you in that right. If Mac Walter shows fight I will bring poor Nick French with me. But he will not fight. At all hazards and at any cost we must get this wronged woman out of his hands."

"Then," said Daniel Bisset, "it is agreed that we go to Sandhaven and take Kit Kennedy and Mary Bisset with us. That is, in the event of Walter Mac Walter taking his wife there."

The others nodded, and then, standing up, they all shook hands solemnly upon their compact.

CHAPTER L. BAXTER'S FOLLY.

The old inn of Port Baxter lies high up on the tall cliffs between Sandhaven and Arbuclie on the east coast of Scotland. The memory of the aboriginal Baxter is not yet quite forgotten. The oldest inhabitant has endless stories to tell of his eccentricity, his startling wealth, and yet more startling tales of how he acquired the latter. Baxter of Baxter's had been an overseer and afterwards a master in the West India plantations in the pre-emancipation days. He was known indifferently as the "Auld whupper-in" and the "Slave-driver."

Nevertheless, his descendants had fallen upon evil times, and the most prominent now drove the Sandhaven dustcart. But a certain awe and respect still accompanied Baxter *tertius* in his rounds. Though not naturally

gave some color to the universal opinion that he had some "slaister o' the tar-brush" about him.

In the days before railways there could have been no safer investment than the inn of Port Baxter. In itself the port was nothing—a mere fringing hamlet along a sandy bay far below; a dozen fishers divided into three quaintly intermarried families, engaged chiefly in producing albinized babies in thatched cottages and cherishing odorous lobster-pots upon a tiny quay. For all that, when first built "Baxter's" little deserved its nickname of "Baxter's Folly."

But, like Baxter's descendants, Baxter had fallen upon evil days. For the coaches had vanished from the roads and the bicycles were not yet. Still there was a certain traffic, carriers between the three notable towns from which Baxters lay about equidistant, shepherds driving to or returning from Fairport market or Falkirk Tryst, many sea bathers in the summer time—an overpress of them indeed, sleeping in tiers in the barn and on the dining-room table of Baxter's, so, at least, they said in Fairport. At all events, custom sufficient there was to make a fairly rich woman of Mistress Meysie Conacher, the plump and rosy hostess, who with her own shapely hands served the liquors in the bar and clinked the money into the till.

It was a dullish December evening that Hoggie Haugh, hostler and factotum of Mistress Conacher, was engaged in sweeping out the stable-yard of Baxter's. Hoggie had obtained his wonderful Christian name ("if shape it could be called that shape had none") upon the ice at the play of the curling stones. He suffered as a player from a chronic inability to pass the "hog-score," a sort of great gulf fixed upon the rink, those failing to overpass which abide in a kind of limbo, unclassed and uncourtaged at the game's ending. As for Hoggie's other name it was seldom heard, but on these occasions was pronounced with the exact sound of some one impolitely clearing his throat.

Now Hoggie was a stout fellow, shrewd, not uncomely to look upon, and accounted to be "far ben" with his mistress. There were those who even paid a kind of provisional court to Hoggie, as not unlikely to stand behind the bar some day himself and rattle the coin into the till, the coppers into one sounding compartment and the tinkling silver into a place by itself.

Hoggie communed with himself as he swept his besom steadily to and fro—or rather, to be exact, to, but not fro:

"It's saft like, but it's gaun to be safter afore a' be dunc," he confided to the clouds. He looked up at the leaden pall which had spread above and sniffed at the light breeze, which came from the south-east. It smelt moist in his nostrils. And Hoggie soliloquised as he leaned upon his broom: "Snaw," he said, nodding his head sagely; "an' onding o' snaw—wreaths and drifts o' snaw—a close cover for Christmas, a white and seekit New Year. And packs o' vesitors in the hoose, or on their road. Guid send that they be storm-stayed on their way, for I kenna what they will do wi' themselves. It's a blessin' that the mistress has four an' meal, hams in raws and raws, and sixty hens on the baulks—every hen o' them guid layers even in winter time!"

He sniffed the air again. "It's aboot tea-time, Hoggie," he said; "I wish ye could smell the ham fryin'—Lord, here they come!"

As he spoke a high dog-cart whirled past and drew up in the corner of the yard with a spirited catter and a spraying of the sand and gravel from the tense forefeet of the black mare between the shafts.

A tall dark man leaped down, and throwing the reins to Hoggie he turned to assist a veiled lady from the other seat. She was clad in black, and wrapped from the cold in many folds of shawl.

"Here, take the ribbons, don't stand malingering there!" cried the dark man to Hoggie, "and if you don't let her cool slowly and feed her well, I'll tan the hide off you, my good man with the bullet head!"

"The bullet head—very well," said Hoggie, under his breath. "I'll mind that! Tan my hide, master, will ye? Hoggie Haugh kens a gentleman and a gentleman's words. And he neither sees an' or hears the ither."

This to himself, and then with a sympathetic glance at the silent figure standing waiting in the snow he murmured, "Eh, the pair thing, I'll wager she has nane o' her sorrows to seek wi' a black-a-vised Turk like that! Tan my hide, will he? Let him try't, that's a'!"

And Hoggie Haugh, having led the black mare into stable, turned about and "squared up" scientifically at the back of the visitor which was just vanishing into the bar, the silent woman following meekly behind.

"Eh, pair thing!" said Hoggie again.

Hoggie went back to his sweeping, but now with a more perfunctory diligence, owing in about equal measure to the broad flakes of moist snow, which had begun to fall lightly and airily, with many upward liftings and side swirlings in the winds that blew before the snowstorm, and to the fact that Hoggie had an eye to keep on the kitchen of Baxter's and an ear to direct towards the frizzle of the pan. (To be continued.)



Couldn't Gambol if He Did.

"And what is your reason for not gambling?"

"I'm not able to gambol after I do."

Her Preference.

Agent—"Madam, may I sell you an electric washer on thirty days' trial?" Housewife—"No, but I'd like to buy a box of candy that way."

NURSES

The Toronto Hospital for Incurables, in affiliation with Bellevue and Allied Hospitals, New York City, offers a three years' Course of Training to young women, having the required education, and desirous of becoming nurses. This Hospital has adopted the eight-hour system. The pupils receive uniforms of the School, a monthly allowance and traveling expenses to and from New York. For further information apply to the Superintendent.

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"As the Crow Flies."

"As the crow flies"—so runs the saying old
Because the crow flies straightest, I am told.

I think his way must be a pleasant way—

I saw a crow take wing and fly to-day.

From a tall pine upon a mountain-sleep.

He set his course across a chasm deep.

A river in the gorge roared far below—

High in the blue above he soared, the crow.

The gorge divided him from his intent—

Straight on an airpath to his goal he went!

I stood and watched—with all my pulses singing—

As to his far desire the crow went winging.

Swift as an arrow speeding from its quiver,

Across the chasm and the roaring river—

What errand took him only he could know.

He had the will, he had the wings to go!

—Roselle Mercier Montgomery.

When hoarse use Minard's Liniment.

A Bridge Hard to Cross.

Persian followers of Mahomet have slowly but surely devised a very clever scheme by which the unrighteous are sent to the place of eternal torment. This scheme is not in accordance with the teachings of Mahomet but is a natural outgrowth of fanaticisms like those found in every religion of all time.

When the end comes, according to this Persian plan, all the dead are forced to cross a long bridge and this bridge crosses directly over the mouth of the headquarters of the devil.

The bridge is like the sharp edge of a sword and walking over it is like doing a long stretch of tight rope walking.

Persons who have lived according to the best rules and regulations cross this sharp bridge without a tremor, but the sinners knowing they have been bad, become giddy and slip off into brimstone, fire and such things.

Ammonia.

"Have you any pneumonia in the house, ma'am? It's excellent for cleaning paints," said Maggie, to her mistress, the other day.

"You mean ammonia, don't you, Maggie?" replied the lady.

"No, indade, ma'am; I mane what I say. I have had an education as well as another body," vigorously answered the domestic, as the flat-iron came down on the shirt-bosom with renewed vigor.

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Note how it relieves that stuffy feeling after hearty eating.
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The Courtesies of the Road.

The motorist was quite certain he had not been exceeding the speed limit, says the Motor Magazine, and so he was astonished when the village policeman held up his hand and brought him to a standstill.

"Say," protested the driver, "I wasn't doing more than ten miles an hour—I swear it."

"Oh, that's all right!" replied the officer. "But I'd be obliged if you'd lend me a few drops of gasoline. I'm going to a wedding to-morrow and I'm going to clean my gloves."

A matchmaker often gets her fingers burned.

"DIAMOND DYES"

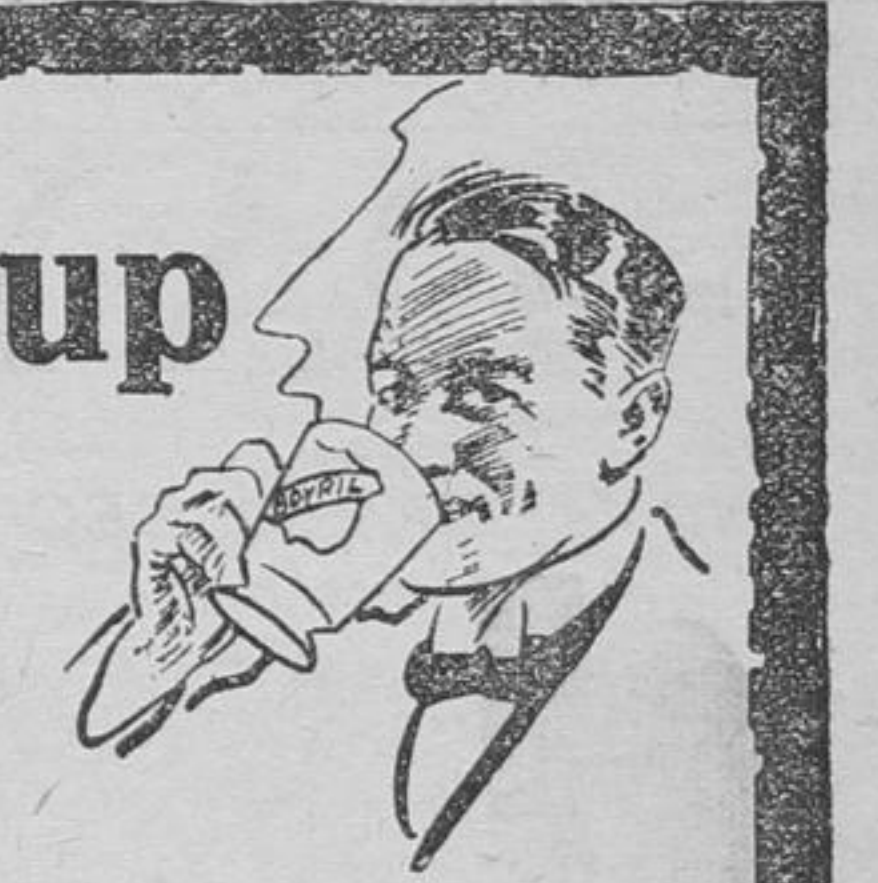
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