The Gold of Fairnilee

by Andrew Lang

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THE GOLD OF FAIRNILEE

By Andrew Lang

TO JEANIE LANG, LARRA

Dear Jeanie,

For you, far away on the other side of the world, I made this little tale of our own country. Your father and I have dug for treasure in the Camp of Rink, with our knives, when we were boys. We did not find it: the story will tell you why.

Are there Fairies as well as Bunyips in Australia? I hope so.

Yours always,

WHUPPITY STOORIE'S SONG IN THIS TALE IS BY THE AUTHOR'S FRIEND, F. De Q. M.

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Chapter One

CHAPTER I.—The Old House

YOU may still see the old Scotch house where Randal was born, so long ago. Nobody lives there now. Most of the roof has fallen in, there is no glass in the windows, and all the doors are open. They were open in the days of Randal's father—nearly four hundred years have passed since then—and everyone who came was welcome to his share of beef and broth and ale. But now the doors are not only open, they are quite gone, and there is nobody within to give you a welcome.

So there is nothing but emptiness in the old house where Randal lived with Jean, three hundred and sixty years or so before you were born. It is a high old house, and wide, with the broken slates still on the roof. At the corner there are little round towers, like pepperboxes, with sharp peaks. The stems of the ivy that covers the walls are as thick as trees. There are many trees crowding all round, and there are hills round it too; and far below you hear the Tweed whispering all day. The house is called Fairnilee, which means "the Fairies' Field;" for people believed in fairies, as you shall hear, when Randal was a boy, and even when my father was a boy.

Randal was all alone in the house when he was a little fellow—alone with his mother, and Nancy the old nurse, and Simon Grieve the butler, who wore a black velvet coat and a big silver chain. Then there were the maids, and the grooms, and the farm folk, who were all friends of Randal's. He was not lonely, and he did not feel unhappy, even before Jean came, as you shall be told. But the grown-up people were sad and silent at Fairnilee. Randal had no father; his mother, Lady Ker, was a widow. She was still quite young, and Randal thought her the most beautiful person in the world. Children think these things about their mothers, and Randal had seen no ladies but his mother only. She had brown hair and brown eyes and red lips, and a grave kind face, which looked serious under her great white widow's cap with the black hood over it. Randal never saw his mother cry; but when he was a very little child indeed, he had heard her crying in the night: this was after his father went away.

Chapter Two

CHAPTER II.—How Randal's Father Came Home

RANDAL remembered his father's going to fight the English, and how he came back again. It was a windy August evening when he went away: the rain had fallen since morning. Randal had watched the white mists driven by the gale down through the black pine-wood that covers the hill opposite Fairnilee. The mist looked like armies of ghosts, he thought, marching, marching through the pines, with their white flags flying and streaming. Then the sun came out red at evening, and Randal's father rode away with all his men. He had a helmet on his head, and a great axe hanging from his neck by a chain, and a spear in his hand. He was riding his big horse, Sir Hugh, and he caught Randal up to the saddle and kissed him many times before he clattered out of the courtyard. All the tenants and men about the farm rode with him, all with spears and a flag embroidered with a crest in gold. His mother

watched them from the tower till they were out of sight. And Randal saw them ride away, not on hard, smooth roads like ours, but along a green grassy track, the water splashing up to their stirrups where they crossed the marshes.

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Then the sky turned as red as blood, in the sunset, and next it grew brown, like the rust on a sword; and the Tweed below, when they rode the ford, was all red and gold and brown.

Then time went on; that seemed a long time to Randal. Only the women were left in the house, and Randal played with the shepherd's children. They sailed boats in the mill-pond, and they went down to the boat-pool and watched to see the big copper-coloured salmon splashing in the still water. One evening Randal looked up suddenly from his play. It was growing dark. He had been building a house with the round stones and wet sand by the river. He looked up, and there was his own father! He was riding all alone, and his horse, Sir Hugh, was very lean and lame, and scarred with the spurs. The spear in his father's hand was broken, and he had no sword; and he looked neither to right nor to left. His eyes were wide open, but he seemed to see nothing.

Randal cried out to him, "Father! Father!" but he never glanced at Randal. He did not look as if he heard him, or knew he was there, and suddenly he seemed to go away, Randal did not know how or where.

Randal was frightened.

He ran into the house, and went to his mother.

"Oh, mother," he said, "I have seen father! He was riding all alone, and he would not look at me. Sir Hugh was lame!"

"Where has he gone?" said Lady Ker, in a strange voice.

"He went away out of sight," said Randal. "I could not see where he went."

Then his mother told him it could not be, that his father would not have come back alone. He would not leave his men behind him in the war.

But Randal was so sure, that she did not scold him. She knew he believed what he said.

He saw that she was not happy.

All that night, which was the Fourth of September, in the year 1513, the day of Flodden fight, Randal's mother did not go to bed. She kept moving about the house. Now she would look from the tower window up Tweed; and now she would go along the gallery and look down Tweed from the other tower. She had lights burning in all the windows. All next day she was never still. She climbed, with two of her maids, to the top of the hill above Yair, on the other side of the river, and she watched the roads down Ettrick and Yarrow. Next night she slept little, and rose early. About noon, Randal saw three or four men riding wearily, with tired horses. They could scarcely cross the ford of Tweed, the horses were so tired. The men were Simon Grieve the butler, and some of the tenants. They looked very pale; some of them had their heads tied up, and there was blood on their faces. Lady Ker and Randal ran to meet them.

Simon Grieve lighted from his horse, and whispered to Randal's mother.

Randal did not hear what he said, but his mother cried, "I knew it! I knew it!" and turned quite white.

"Where is he?" she said.

Simon pointed across the hill. "They are bringing the corp," he said. Randal knew the "corp" meant the dead body.

He began to cry. "Where is my father?" he said, "where is my father?"

His mother led him into the house. She gave him to the old nurse, who cried over him, and kissed him, and offered him cakes, and made him a whistle with a branch

of plane tree, So in a short while Randal only felt puzzled. Then he forgot, and began to play. He was a very little boy.

Lady Ker shut herself up in her own room—her “bower,” the servants called it.

Soon Randal heard heavy steps on the stairs, and whispering. He wanted to run out, and his nurse caught hold of him, and would not have let him go, but he slipped out of her hand, and looked over the staircase.

They were bringing up the body of a man stretched on a shield.

It was Randal’s father.

He had been slain at Flodden, fighting for the king. An arrow had gone through his brain, and he had fallen beside James IV., with many another brave knight, all the best of Scotland, the Flowers of the Forest.

What was it Randal saw, when he thought he met his father in the twilight, three days before?

He never knew. His mother said he must have dreamed it all.

The old nurse used to gossip about it to the maids. “He’s an unco’ bairn, oor Randal; I wush he may na be fey.”

She meant that Randal was a strange child, and that strange things would happen to him.

Chapter Three

CHAPTER III.—How Jean was brought to Fairnlee

THE winter went by very sadly. At first the people about Fairnilee expected the English to cross the Border and march against them. They drove their cattle out on the wild hills, and into marshes where only they knew the firm paths, and raised walls of earth and stones—barmkyns, they called them—round the old house; and made many arrows to shoot out of the narrow windows at the English. Randal used

to like to see the arrow-making beside the fire at! night. He was not afraid; and said he would show the English what he could do with his little bow. But weeks went on and no enemy came. Spring drew near, the snow melted from the hills. One night Randal was awakened by a great noise of shouting; he looked out of the window, and saw bright torches moving about. He heard the cows “routing,” or bellowing, and the women screaming. He thought the English had come. So they had; not the English army, but some robbers from the other side of the Border. At that time the people on the south side of Scotland and the north side of England used to steal each other’s cows time about. When a Scotch squire, or “laird,” like Randal’s father, had been robbed by the neighbouring English, he would wait his chance and drive away cattle from the English side. This time most of Randal’s mother’s herds were seized, by a sudden attack in the night, and were driven away through the Forest to England. Two or three of Lady Ker’s men were hurt by the English, but old Simon Grieve took a prisoner. He did this in a curious way. He shot an arrow after the robbers as they rode off, and the arrow pinned an Englishman’s leg to the saddle, and even into his horse. The horse was hurt and frightened, and ran away right back to Fairnilee, where it was caught, with the rider and all, for of course he could not dismount.

They treated him kindly at Fairnilee, though they laughed at him a good deal. They found out from him where the English had come from. He did not mind telling them, for he was really a gipsy from Yetholm, where the gipsies live, and Scot or Southron was all one to him.

When old Simon Grieve knew who the people were that had taken the cows, he was not long in calling the men together, and trying to get back what he had lost. Early one April morning, a grey morning, with snow in the air, he and his spearmen set out, riding down through the Forest, and so into Liddes-dale. When they came back again, there were great rejoicings at Fairnilee. They drove most of their own cows before them, and a great many other cows that they had not lost; cows of the English farmers. The byres and yards were soon full of cattle, lowing and roaring, very

uneasy, and some of them with marks of the spears that had goaded them across many a ford, and up many a rocky pass in the hills.

Randal jumped downstairs to the great hall, where his mother sat. Simon Grieve was telling her all about it.

“Sae we drave oor ain kye hame, my lady,” he said, “and aiblins some orra anes that was na oor ain. For-bye we raikit a’ the plenishing oot o’ the ha’ o’ Hardriding, and a bonny burden o’ tapestries, and plaids, and gear we hae, to show for our ride.” *

* “We drove our own cattle home, and perhaps some others that were not ours. And we took all the goods out of the hall at Hardriding, and a pretty load of tapestries, and rugs, and other things we have to show for our ride.”

Then he called to some of his men, who came into the hall, and cast down great piles of all sorts of spoil and booty, silver plate, and silken hangings, and a heap of rugs, and carpets, and plaids, such as Randal had never seen before, for the English were much richer than the Scotch.

Randal threw himself on the pile of rugs and began to roll on it.

“Oh, mother,” he cried suddenly, jumping up and looking with wide-open eyes, “there ‘s something living in the heap! Perhaps it’s a doggie, or a rabbit, or a kitten.”

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Then Randal tugged at the cloths, and then they all heard a little shrill cry.

“Why, it’s a bairn!” said Lady Ker, who had sat very grave all the time, pleased to have done the English some harm; for they had killed her husband, and were all her deadly foes. “It’s a bairn!” she cried, and pulled out of the great heap of cloaks and rugs a little beautiful child, in its white nightdress, with its yellow curls all tangled over its blue eyes.

Then Lady Ker and the old nurse could not make too much of the pretty English child that had come here in such a wonderful way.

How did it get mixed up with all the spoil? and how had it been carried so far on horseback without being hurt? Nobody ever knew. It came as if the fairies had sent it. English it was, but the best Scot could not hate such a pretty child. Old Nancy Dryden ran up to the old nursery with it, and laid it in a great wooden tub full of hot water, and was giving it warm milk to drink, and dandling it, almost before the men knew what had happened.

“Yon bairn will be a bonny mate for you, Maister Randal,” said old Simon Grieve. “‘Deed, I dinna think her kin will come speering* after her at Fairnilee. The Red Cock’s crawing ower Hardriding Ha’ this day, and when the womenfolk come back frae the wood, they’ll hae other thing to do for-bye looking for bairns.”

* Asking.

When Simon Grieve said that the Red Cock was crowing over his enemies’ home, he meant that he had set it on fire after the people who lived in it had run away.

Lady Ker grew pale when she heard what he said. She hated the English, to be sure, but she was a woman with a kind heart. She thought of the dreadful danger that the little English girl had escaped, and she went upstairs and helped the nurse to make the child happy.

Chapter Four

CHAPTER IV.—Randal and Jean.

THE little girl soon made everyone at Fairnilee happy. She was far too young to remember her own home, and presently she was crawling up and down the long hall and making friends with Randal. They found out that her name was Jane Musgrave, though she could hardly say Musgrave; and they called her Jean, with their Scotch tongues, or “Jean o’ the Kye,” because she came when the cows were driven home again.

Soon the old nurse came to like her near as well as Randal, “her ain bairn” (her own child), as she called him. In the summer days, Jean, as she grew older, would follow Randal about like a little doggie. They went fishing together, and Randal would pull the trout out of Caddon Burn, or the Burn of Peel; and Jeanie would be very proud of him, and very much alarmed at the big, wide jaws of the yellow trout. And Randal would plait helmets with green rushes for her and him, and make spears of bulrushes, and play at tilts and tournaments. There was peace in the country; or if there was war, it did not come near the quiet valley of the Tweed and the hills that lie round Fairnilee. In summer they were always on the hills and by the burnsides.

You cannot think, if you have not tried, what pleasant company a burn is. It comes out of the deep; black wells in the moss, far away on the tops of the hills, where the sheep feed, and the fox peers from his hole, and the ravens build in the crags. The burn flows down from the lonely places, cutting a way between steep, green banks, tumbling in white waterfalls over rocks, and lying in black, deep pools below the waterfalls. At every turn it does something new, and plays a fresh game with its brown waters. The white pebbles in the water look like gold: often Randal would pick one out and think he had found a gold-mine, till he got it into the sunshine, and then it was only a white stone, what he called a “chucky—stane;” but he kept hoping for better luck next time. In the height of summer, when the streams were very low, he and the shepherd’s boys would build dams of stones and turf across a narrow part of the burn, while Jean sat and watched them on a little round knoll. Then, when plenty of water had collected in the pool, they would break the dam and let it all run downhill in a little flood; they called it a “hurly gush.” And in winter they would slide on the black, smooth ice of the boat-pool, beneath the branches of the alders.

Or they would go out with Yarrow, the shepherd’s dog, and follow the track of wild creatures in the snow. The rabbit makes marks like **, and the hare makes marks like **; but the fox’s track is just as if you had pushed a piece of wood through the snow—a number of cuts in the surface, going straight along.

Tracks of Hare and Fox

When it was very cold, the grouse and black-cocks would come into the trees near the house, and Randal and Jean would put out porridge for them to eat. And the great white swans floated in from the frozen lochs on the hills, and gathered round open reaches and streams of the Tweed. It was pleasant to be a boy then in the North. And at Hallow E'en they would duck for apples in tubs of water, and burn nuts in the fire, and look for the shadow of the lady Randal was to marry, in the mirror; but he only saw Jean looking over his shoulder.

The days were very short in winter, so far North, and they would soon be driven into the house. Then they sat by the nursery fire; and those were almost the pleasantest hours, for the old nurse would tell them old Scotch stories of elves and fairies, and sing them old songs. Jean would crawl close to Randal and hold his hand, for fear the Red Etin, or some other awful bogle, should get her: and in the dancing shadows of the firelight she would think she saw Whuppity Stoorie, the wicked old witch with the spinning-wheel; but it was really nothing but the shadow of the wheel that the old nurse drove with her foot—birr, birr—and that whirred and rattled as she span and told her tale.

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For people span their cloth at home then, instead of buying it from shops; and the old nurse was a great woman for spinning.

She was a great woman for stories, too, and believed in fairies, and "bogles," as she called them. Had not her own cousin, Andrew Tamson, passed the Cauldshiels Loch one New Year morning? And had he not heard a dreadful roaring, as if all the cattle on Faldonside Hill were routing at once? And then did he not see a great black beast roll down the hillside, like a black ball, and run into the loch, which grew white with foam, and the waves leaped up the banks like a tide rising? What could that be except the kelpie that lives in Cauldshiels Loch, and is just a muckle big water bull?

“And what for should there no be water kye, if there ‘s land kye?”

Randal and Jean thought it was very likely there were “kye,” or cattle, in the water. And some Highland people think so still, and believe they have seen the great kelpie come roaring out of the lake; or Shellycoat, whose skin is all crusted like a rock with shells, sitting beside the sea.

The old nurse had other tales, that nobody believes any longer, about Brownies. A Brownie was a very useful creature to have in a house. He was a kind of fairy-man, and he came out in the dark, when everybody had gone to bed, just as mice pop out at night.

He never did anyone any harm, but he sat and warmed himself at the kitchen fire. If any work was unfinished he did it, and made everything tidy that was left out of order. It is a pity there are no such bogles now! If anybody offered the Brownie any payment, even if it was only a silver penny or a new coat, he would take offence and go away.

Other stories the old nurse had, about hidden treasures and buried gold. If you believed her, there was hardly an old stone on the hillside but had gold under it. The very sheep that fed upon the Eildon Hills, which Randal knew well, had yellow teeth because there was so much gold under the grass. Randal had taken two scones, or rolls, in his pocket for dinner, and ridden over to the Eildon Hills. He had seen a rainbow touch one of them, and there he hoped he would find the treasure that always lies at the tail of the rainbow. But he got very soon tired of digging for it with his little dirk, or dagger. It blunted the dagger, and he found nothing. Perhaps he had not marked quite the right place, he thought. But he looked at the teeth of the sheep, and they were yellow; so he had no doubt that there was a gold-mine under the grass, if he could find it.

The old nurse knew that it was very difficult to dig up fairy gold. Generally something happened just when people heard their pick-axes clink on the iron pot

that held the treasure. A dreadful storm of thunder and lightning would break out; or the burn would be flooded, and rush down all red and roaring, sweeping away the tools and drowning the digger; or a strange man, that nobody had ever seen before, would come up, waving his arms, and crying out that the Castle was on fire. Then the people would hurry up to the Castle, and find that it was not on fire at all. When they returned, all the earth would be just as it was before they began, and they would give up in despair. Nobody could ever see the man again that gave the alarm.

“Who could he be, nurse?” Randal asked.

“Just one of the good folk, I ‘m thinking; but it’s no weel to be speaking o’ them.”

Randal knew that the “good folk” meant the fairies. The old nurse called them the good folk for fear of offending them. She would not speak much about them, except now and then, when the servants had been making merry.

“And is there any treasure hidden near Fairnilee, nursie?” asked little Jean.

“Treasure, my bonny doo! Mair than a’ the men about the toon could carry away frae morning till nicht. Do ye no ken the auld rhyme?—

‘Atween the wet ground and the dry The gold of Fairnilee doth lie.’

And there’s the other auld rhyme—

‘Between the Camp o’ Rink And Tweed water clear, Lie nine kings’ ransoms For nine hundred year!’”

Randal and Jean were very glad to hear so much gold was near them as would pay nine kings’ ransoms. They took their small spades and dug little holes in the Camp of Rink, which is a great old circle of stonework, surrounded by a deep ditch, on the top of a hill above the house. But Jean was not a very good digger, and even Randal grew tired. They thought they would wait till they grew bigger, and then find the gold.

Chapter Five

CHAPTER V.—The Good Folk

“EVERYBODY knows there’s fairies,” said the old nurse one night when she was bolder than usual. What she said we will put in English, not Scotch as she spoke it. “But they do not like to be called fairies. So the old rhyme runs:

‘If ye call me imp or elf, . I warn you look well to yourself; If ye call me fairy, Ye ‘ll find me quite contrary; If good neighbour you call me, Then good neighbour I will be; But if you call me kindly sprite, I ‘ll be your friend both day and night.’

So you must always call them ‘good neighbours’ or ‘good folk,’ when you speak of them.”

“Did you ever see a fairy, nurse?” asked Randal.

“Not myself, but my mother knew a woman—they called her Tibby Dickson, and her husband was a shepherd, and she had a bairn, as bonny a bairn as ever you saw. And one day she went to the well to draw water, and as she was coming back she heard a loud scream in her house. Then her heart leaped, and fast she ran and flew to the cradle; and there she saw an awful sight—not her own bairn, but a withered imp, with hands like a mole’s, and a face like a frog’s, and a mouth from ear to ear, and two great staring eyes.”

“What was it?” asked Jeanie, in a trembling voice.

“A fairy’s bairn that had not thriven,” said nurse; “and when their bairns do not thrive, they just steal honest folks’ children and carry them away to their own country.”

“And where’s that?” said Randal.

“It’s under the ground,” said nurse, “and there they have gold and silver and diamonds; and there’s the Queen of them all, that’s as beautiful as the day. She has yellow hair-down to her feet, and she has blue eyes, like the sky on a fine day, and her voice like all the mavises singing in the spring. And she is aye dressed in green,

and all her court in green; and she rides a white horse with golden bells on the bridle."

"I would like to go there and see her," said Randal.

"Oh, never say that, my bairn; you never know who may hear you! And if you go there, how will you come back again? and what will your mother do? and Jean here, and me that's carried you many a time in weary arms when you were a babe?"

"Can't people come back again?" asked Randal.

"Some say 'Yes,' and some say 'No.' There was Tarn Hislop, that vanished away the day before all the lads and your own father went forth to that weary war at Flodden, and the English, for once, by guile, won the day. Well, Tam Hislop, when the news came that all must arm and mount and ride, he could nowhere be found. It was as if the wind had carried him away. High and low they sought him, but there was his clothes and his jack,* and his sword and his spear, but no Tam Hislop. Well, no man heard more of him for seven whole years, not till last year, and then he came back: sore tired he looked, ay, and older than when he was lost. And I met him by the well, and I was frightened; and 'Tam,' I said, 'where have ye been this weary time?' 'I have been with them that I will not speak the name-of,' says he. 'Ye mean the good folk,' said I. 'Ye have said it,' says he. Then I went up to the house, with my heart in my mouth, and I met Simon Grieve. 'Simon,' I says, 'here's Tam Hislop come home from the good folk.' 'I 'll soon send him back to them,' says he. And he takes a great rung** and lays it about Tarn's shoulders, calling him coward loon, that ran away from the fighting. And since then Tam has never been seen about the place. But the Laird's man, of Gala, knows them that say he was in Perth the last seven years, and not in Fairyland at all. But it was Fairyland he told me, and he would not lie to his own mother's half-brother's cousin."

* Jack, a kind of breastplate. ** Rung, a staff.

Randal did not care much for the story of Tam Hislop. A fellow who would let old

Simon Grieve beat him could not be worthy of the Fairy Queen.

Randal was about thirteen now, a tall boy, with dark eyes, black hair, a brown face with the red on his cheeks. He had grown up in a country where everything was magical and haunted; where fairy knights rode on the leas after dark, and challenged men to battle. Every castle had its tale of Redcap, the sly spirit, or of the woman of the hairy hand. Every old mound was thought to cover hidden gold. And all was so lonely; the green hills rolling between river and river, with no men on them, nothing but sheep, and grouse, and plover. No wonder that Randal lived in a kind of dream. He would lie and watch the long grass till it locked like a forest, and he thought he could see elves dancing between the green grass stems, that were like fairy trees. He kept wishing that he, too, might meet the Fairy Queen, and be taken into that other world where everything was beautiful.

Chapter Six

CHAPTER VI.—The Wishing Well

“JEAN,” said Randal one midsummer day, “I am going to the Wishing Well.”

“Oh, Randal,” said Jean, “it is so far away!”

“I can walk it,” said Randal, “and you must come, too; I want you, Jeanie. It ‘s not so very far.”

“But mother says it is wrong to go to Wishing Wells,” Jean answered.

“Why is it wrong?” said Randal, switching at the tall foxgloves with a stick.

“Oh, she says it is a wicked thing, and forbidden by the Church. People who go to wish there, sacrifice to the spirits of the well; and Father Francis told her that it was very wrong.”

“Father Francis is a shaveling,” said Randal. “I heard Simon Grieve say so.”

“What’s a shaveling, Randal?”

“I don’t know: a man that does not fight, I think. I don’t care what a shaveling says: so I mean just to go and wish, and I won’t sacrifice anything. There can’t be any harm in that!”

“But, oh Randal, you’ve got your green doublet on!”

“Well! why not?”

“Do you not know it angers the fair—I mean the good folk,—that anyone should wear green on the hill but themselves?”

“I cannot help it,” said Randal. “If I go in and change my doublet, they will ask what I do that for. I ‘ll chance it, green or grey, and wish my wish for all that.”

“And what are you going to wish?”

“I ‘m going to wish to meet the Fairy Queen! Just think how beautiful she must be! dressed all in green, with gold bells on her bridle, and riding a white horse shod with gold! I think I see her galloping through the woods and out across the hill, over the heather.’

“But you will go away with her, and never see me any more,” said Jean.

“No, I won’t; or if I do, I ‘ll come back, with such a horse, and a sword with a gold handle. I’m going to the Wishing Well. Come on!”

Jean did not like to say “No,” and off they went.

Randal and Jean started without taking anything with them to eat. They were afraid to go back to the house for food. Randal said they would be sure to find something somewhere. The Wishing Well was on the top of a hill between Yarrow and Tweed. So they took off their shoes, and waded the Tweed at the shallowest part, and then they walked up the green grassy bank on the other side, till they came to the burn of Peel. Here they passed the old square tower of Peel, and the shepherd dogs came out and barked at them. Randal threw a stone at them, and they ran away with their tails between their legs.

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“Don’t you think we had better go into Peel, and get some bannocks to eat on the way, Randal?” said Jean.

But Randal said he was not hungry; and, besides, the people at Peel would tell the Fairnilee people where they had gone.

“We’ll wish for things to eat when we get to the Wishing Well,” said Randal. “All sorts of good things—cold venison pasty, and everything you like.”

So they began climbing the hill, and they followed the Peel burn. It ran in and out, winding this way and that, and when they did get to the top of the hill, Jean was very tired and very hungry. And she was very disappointed. For she expected to see some wonderful new country at her feet, and there was only a low strip of sunburnt grass and heather, and then another hill-top! So Jean sat down, and the hot sun blazed on her, and the flies buzzed about her and tormented her.

“Come on, Jean,” said Randal; “it must be over the next hill!”

So poor Jean got up and followed him, but he walked far too fast for her. When she reached the crest of the next hill, she found a great cairn, or pile of grey stones; and beneath her lay, far, far below, a deep valley covered with woods, and a stream running through it that she had never seen before.

That stream was the Yarrow.

Randal was nowhere in sight, and she did not know where to look for the Wishing Well. If she had walked straight forward through the trees she would have come to it; but she was so tired, and so hungry, and so hot, that she sat down at the foot of the cairn and cried as if her heart would break.

Then she fell asleep.

When Jean woke, it was as dark as it ever is on a midsummer night in Scotland.

It was a soft, cloudy night; not a clear night with a silver sky.

Jeanie heard a loud roaring close to her, and the red light of a great fire was in her sleepy eyes.

In the firelight she saw strange black beasts, with horns, plunging and leaping and bellowing, and dark figures rushing about the flames. It was the beasts that made the roaring. They were bounding about close to the fire, and sometimes in it, and were all mixed in the smoke.

Jeanie was dreadfully frightened, too frightened to scream.

Presently she heard the voices of men shouting on the hill below her. The shouts and the barking of dogs came nearer and nearer.

Then a dog ran up to her, and licked her face, and jumped about her.

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It was her own sheepdog, Yarrow.

He ran back to the men who were following him, and came again with one of them.

It was old Simon Grieve, very tired, and so much out of breath that he could scarcely speak.

Jean was very glad to see him, and not frightened any longer.

“Oh, Jeanie, my doo’,” said Simon, “where hae ye been? A muckle gliff ye hae gien us, and a weary spiel up the weary braes.”

Jean told him all about it: how she had come with Randal to see the Wishing Well, and how she had lost him, and fallen asleep.

“And sic a nicht for you bairns to wander on the hill,” said Simon. “It’s the nicht o’ St. John, when the guid folk hae power. And there’s a’ the lads burning the Bel fires, and driving the nowt* through them: nae less will serve them. Sic a nicht!”

* Nowt, cattle.

This was the cause of the fire Jean saw, and of the noise of the cattle. On midsummer’s night the country people used to light these fires, and drive the cattle

through them. It was an old, old custom come down from heathen times.

Now the other men from Fairnilee had gathered round Jean. Lady Ker had sent them out to look for Randal and her on the hills. They had heard from the good wife at Peel that the children had gone up the burn, and Yarrow had tracked them till Jean was found.

Chapter Seven

CHAPTER VII.—Where is Randal?

JEAN was found, but where was Randal? She told the men who had come out to look for her, that Randal had gone on to look for the Wishing Well. So they rolled her up in a big shepherd's plaid, and two of them carried Jean home in the plaid, while all the rest, with lighted torches in their hands, went to look for Randal through the wood.

Jean was so tired that she fell asleep again in her plaid before they reached Fairnilee. She was wakened by the men shouting as they drew near the house, to show that they were coming home. Lady Ker was waiting at the gate, and the old nurse ran down the grassy path to meet them.

"Where's my bairn?" she cried as soon as she was within call.

The men said, "Here 's Mistress Jean, and Randal will be here soon; they have gone to look for him."

"Where are they looking?" cried nurse.

"Just about the Wishing Well."

The nurse gave a scream, and hobbled back to Lady Ker.

"Ma bairn's tint!"* she cried, "ma bairn's tint! They 'll find him never. The good folk have stolen him away from that weary Wishing Well!"

* Tint, lost.

“Hush, nurse,” said Lady Ker, “do not frighten Jean.”

She spoke to the men, who had no doubt that Randal would soon be found and brought home.

So Jean was put to bed, where she forgot all her troubles; and Lady Ker waited, waited, all night, till the grey light began to come in, about two in the morning.

Lady Ker kept very still and quiet, telling her beads, and praying. But the old nurse would never be still, but was always wandering out, down to the river’s edge, listening for the shouts of the shepherds coming home. Then she would come back again, and moan and wring her hands, crying for “her bairn.”

About six o’clock, when it was broad daylight and all the birds were singing, the men returned from the hill.

But Randal did not come with them.

Then the old nurse set up a great cry, as the country people do over the bed of someone who has just died.

Lady Ker sent her away, and called Simon Grieve to her own room.

“You have not found the boy yet?” she said, very stately and pale. “He must have wandered over into Yarrow; perhaps he has gone as far as Newark, and passed the night at the castle, or with the shepherd at Foulshiels.”

“No, my Lady,” said Simon Grieve, “some o’ the men went over to Newark, and some to Foulshiels, and other some down to Sir John Murray’s at Philiphaugh; but there’s never a word o’ Randal in a’ the country-side.”

“Did you find no trace of him?” said Lady Ker, sitting down suddenly in the great armchair.

“We went first through the wood, my Lady, by the path to the Wishing Well. And he had been there, for the whip he carried in his hand was lying on the grass. And we found this.”

He put his hand in his pouch, and brought out a little silver crucifix, that Randal used always to wear round his neck on a chain.

“This was lying on the grass beside the Wishing Well, my Lady—”

Then he stopped, for Lady Ker had swooned away. She was worn out with watching and with anxiety about Randal.

Simon went and called the maids, and they brought water and wine, and soon Lady Ker came back to herself, with the little silver crucifix in her hand.

The old nurse was crying, and making a great noise.

“The good folk have taken ma bairn,” she said, “this nicht o’ a’ the nichts in the year, when the fairy folk—preserve us frae them!—-have power. But they could nae take the blessed rood o’ grace; it was beyond their strength. If gipsies, or robber folk frae the Debatable Land, had carried away the bairn, they would hae taken him, cross and a’. But the guid folk have gotten him, and Randal Ker will never, never mair come hame to bonny Fairnilee.”

What the old nurse said was what everybody thought. Even Simon Grieve shook his head, and did not like it.

But Lady Ker did not give up hope. She sent horsemen through all the country-side: up Tweed to the Crook, and to Talla; up Yarrow, past Catslack Tower, and on to the Loch of Saint Mary; up Ettrick to Thirlestane and Buccleugh, and over to Gala, and to Branxholme in Teviotdale; and even to Hermitage Castle, far away by Liddel water.

They rode far and rode fast, and at every cottage and every tower they asked “had anyone seen a boy in green?” But nobody had seen Randal through all the country-side. Only a shepherd lad, on Foulshiels hill, had heard bells ringing in the night, and a sound of laughter go past him, like a breeze of wind over the heather.

Days went by, and all the country, was out to look for Randal. Down in Yetholme

they sought him, among the gipsies; and across the Eden in merry Carlisle; and through the Land Debatable, where the robber Armstrongs and Grahames lived; and far down Tweed, past Melrose, and up Jed water, far into the Cheviot hills.

But there never came any word of Randal. He had vanished as if the earth had opened and swallowed him. Father Francis came from Melrose Abbey, and prayed with Lady Ker, and gave her all the comfort he could. He shook his head when he heard of the Wishing Well, but he said that no spirit of earth or air could have power for ever over a Christian soul. But, even when he spoke, he remembered that, once in seven years, the fairy folk have to pay a dreadful tax, one of themselves, to the King of a terrible country of Darkness; and what if they had stolen Randal, to pay the tax with him!

This was what troubled good Father Francis, though, like a wise man, he said nothing about it, and even put the thought away out of his own mind.

But you may be sure that the old nurse had thought of this tax on the fairies too, and that she did not hold her peace about it, but spoke to everyone that would listen to her, and would have spoken to the mistress if she had been allowed. But when she tried to begin, Lady Ker told her that she had put her own trust in Heaven, and in the Saints. And she gave the nurse such a look when she said that, “if ever Jean heard of this, she would send nurse away from Fairnilee, out of the country,” that the old woman was afraid, and was quiet.

As for poor Jean, she was perhaps the most unhappy of them all. She thought to herself, if she had refused to go with Randal to the Wishing Well, and had run in and told Lady Ker, then Randal would never have started to find the Wishing Well. And she put herself in great danger, as she fancied, to find him. She wandered alone on the hills, seeking all the places that were believed to be haunted by fairies.

At every Fairy Knowe, as the country people called the little round green knolls in the midst of the heather, Jean would stoop her ear to the ground, trying to hear the

voices of the fairies within. For it was believed that you might hear the sound of their speech, and the trampling of their horses, and the shouts of the fairy children. But no sound came, except the song of the burn flowing by, and the hum of gnats in the air, and the gock, gock, the cry of the grouse, when you frighten him in the heather.

Then Jeanie would try another way of meeting the fairies, and finding Randal. She would walk nine times round a Fairy Knowe, beginning from the left side, because then it was fancied that the hill-side would open, like a door, and show a path into Fairyland. But the hill-side never opened, and she never saw a single fairy; not even old Whuppity Stoorie sit with her spinning-wheel in a green glen, spinning grass into gold, and singing her fairy song:—

“I once was young and fair, My eyes were bright and blue, As if the sun shone through, And golden was my hair. “Down to my feet it rolled Ruddy and ripe like corn, Upon an autumn morn, In heavy waves of gold. “Now am I grey and old, And so I sit and spin, With trembling hand and thin, This metal bright and cold. “I would give all the gain, These heaps of wealth untold Of hard and glittering gold, Could I be young again!”

Chapter Eight

CHAPTER VIII.—The Ill Years

SO autumn came, and all the hill-sides were golden with the heather; and the red coral berries of the rowan trees hung from the boughs, and were wet with the spray of the waterfalls in the burns. And days grew shorter, and winter came with snow, but Randal never came back to Fairnilee. Season after season passed, and year after year. Lady Ker’s hair grew white like snow, and her face thin and pale—for she fasted often, as was the rule of her Church; all this was before the Reformation. And she slept little, praying half the night for Randal’s sake. And she went on

pilgrimages to many shrines of the Saints: to St. Boswell and St. Rule's, hard by the great Cathedral of St. Andrew's on the sea. Nay, she went across the Border as far as the Abbey of St. Alban's, and even to St. Thomas's shrine of Canterbury, taking Jean with her. Many a weary mile they rode over hill and dale, and many an adventure they had, and ran many dangers from robbers, and soldiers disbanded from the wars.

But at last they had to come back to Fairnilee; and a sad place it was, and silent without the sound of Randal's voice in the hall, and the noise of his hunting-horn in the woods. None of the people wore mourning for him, though they mourned in their hearts. For to put on black would look as if they had given up all hope. Perhaps most of them thought they would never see him again, but Jeanie was not one who despaired.

The years that had turned Lady Ker's hair white, had made Jean a tall, slim lass—"very bonny," everyone said; and the country people called her the Flower of Tweed. The Yarrow folk had their Flower of Yarrow, and why not the folk of Tweedside? It was now six years since Randal had been lost, and Jeanie was grown a young woman, about seventeen years old. She had always kept a hope that if Randal was with the Fairy Queen he would return perhaps in the seventh year. People said on the country-side that many a man and woman had escaped out of Fairyland after seven years' imprisonment there.

Now the sixth year since Randal's disappearance began very badly, and got worse as it went on. Just when spring should have been beginning, in the end of February, there came the most dreadful snowstorm. It blew and snowed, and blew again, and the snow was as fine as the dust on a road in summer. The strongest shepherds could not hold their own against the tempest, and were "smoored" (or smothered) in the waste. The flocks moved down from the hill-sides, down and down, till all the sheep on a farm would be gathered together in a crowd, under the shelter of a wood in

some deep dip of the hills. The storm seemed as if it would never cease; for thirteen days the snow drifted and the wind blew. There was nothing for the sheep to eat, and if there had been hay enough, it would have been impossible to carry it to them. The poor beasts bit at the wool on each other's backs, and so many of them died that the shepherds built walls with the dead bodies to keep the wind and snow away from those that were left alive.

There could be little work done on the farm that spring; and summer came in so cold and wet that the corn could not ripen, but was levelled to the ground. Then autumn was rainy, and the green sheaves lay out in the fields, and sprouted and rotted; so that little corn was reaped, and little flour could be made that year. Then in winter, and as spring came on, the people began to starve. They had no grain, and there were no potatoes in those days, and no rice; nor could corn be brought in from foreign countries. So men and women and children might be seen in the fields, with white pinched faces, gathering nettles to make soup, and digging for roots that were often little better than poison. They ground the bark of the fir trees, and mixed it with the little flour they could get; and they ate such beasts as never are eaten except in time of famine.

It is said that one very poor woman and her daughter always looked healthy and plump in these dreadful times, till people began to suspect them of being witches. And they were taken, and charged before the Sheriff with living by witchcraft, and very likely they would have been burned. So they confessed that they had fed ever since the famine began—on snails! But there were not snails enough for all the country-side, even if people had cared to eat them. So many men and women died, and more were very weak and ill.

Lady Ker spent all her money in buying food for her people. Jean and she lived on as little as they could, and were as careful as they could be. They sold all the beautiful silver plate, except the cup that Randal's father used to drink out of long

ago. But almost everything else was sold to buy corn.

So the weary year went on, and Midsummer Night came round—the seventh since the night when Randal was lost.

Then Jean did what she had always meant to do. In the afternoon she slipped out of the house of Fairnilee, taking a little bread in a basket, and saying that she, would go to see the farmer's wife at Peel, which was on the other side of Tweed. But her mind was to go to the Wishing Well.

There she would wish for Randal back again, to help his mother in the evil times. And if she, too, passed away as he had passed out of sight and hearing, then at least she might meet him in that land where he had been carried.

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How strange it seemed to Jean to be doing everything over again that she had done seven years before. Then she had been a little girl, and it had been hard work for her to climb up the side of the Peel burn. Now she walked lightly and quickly, for she was tall and well-grown. Soon she reached the crest of the first hill, and remembered how she had sat down there and cried, when she was a child, and how the flies had tormented her. They were buzzing and teasing still; for good times or bad make no difference to them, as long as the sun shines. Then she reached the cairn at the top of the next hill, and far below her lay the forest, and deep within it ran Yarrow, glittering like silver.

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Jean paused a few moments, and then struck into a green path which led through the wood. The path wound beneath dark pines; their topmost branches, were red in the evening light, but the shade was black beneath them. Soon the path reached a little grassy glade, and there among cold, wet grasses was the Wishing Well. It was almost hidden by the grass, and looked very black, and cool, and deep. A tiny trickle of water flowed out of it, flowed down to join the Yarrow. The trees about it had

scraps of rags and other things pinned to them, offerings made by the country people to the spirits of the well.

Chapter Nine

CHAPTER IX.—The White Roses

JEANIE sat down beside the well. She wished her three wishes: to see Randal, to win him back from Fairyland, and to help the people in the famine. Then she knelt on the grass, and looked down into the well-water. At first she saw nothing but the smooth black water, with little waves trembling in it. Then the water began to grow bright within, as if the sun was shining far, far below. Then it grew as clear as crystal, and she saw through it, like a glass, into a new country—a beautiful country with a wide green plain, and in the midst of the plain a great castle, with golden flags floating from the tops of all the towers. Then she heard a curious whispering noise that thrilled and murmured, as if the music of all the trees that the wind blows through the world were in her ears, as if the noise of all the waves of every sea, and the rustling of heather-bells on every hill, and the singing of all birds were sounding, low and sweet, far, far away. Then she saw a great company of knights and ladies, dressed in green, ride up to the castle; and one knight rode apart from the rest, on a milk-white steed. They all went into the castle gates; but this knight rode slowly and sadly behind the others, with his head bowed on his breast.

Then the musical sounds were still, and the castle and the plain seemed to wave in the water. Next they quite vanished, and the well grew dim, and then grew dark and black and smooth as it had been before. Still she looked, and the little well bubbled up with sparkling foam, and so became still again, like a mirror, till Jeanie could see her own face in it, and beside her face came the reflection of another face, a young man’s, dark, and sad, and beautiful. The lips smiled at her, and then Jeanie knew it was Randal. She thought he must be looking over her shoulder, and she leaped up

with a cry, and glanced round.

But she was all alone, and the wood about her was empty and silent. The light had gone out of the sky, which was pale like silver, and overhead she saw the evening star.

Then Jeanie thought all was over. She had seen Randal as if it had been in a glass, and she hardly knew him: he was so much older, and his face was so sad. She sighed, and turned to go away over the hills, back, to Fairnilee.

But her feet did not seem to carry her the way she wanted to go. It seemed as if something within her were moving her in a kind of dream. She felt herself going on through the forest, she did not know where. Deeper into the wood she went, and now it grew so dark that she saw scarce anything; only she felt the fragrance of briar roses, and it seemed to her that she was guided towards these roses. Then she knew there was a hand in her hand, though she saw nobody, and the hand seemed to lead her on. And she came to an open place in the forest, and there the silver light fell clear from the sky, and she saw a great shadowy rose tree, covered with white wild roses.

The hand was still in her hand, and Jeanie began to wish for nothing so much in the world as to gather some of these roses. She put out her hand and she plucked one, and there before her stood a strange creature—a dwarf, dressed in yellow and red, with a very angry face.

“Who are you,” he cried, “that pluck my roses without my will?”

“And who are you?” said Jeanie, trembling, “and what right have you on the hills of this world?”

Then she made the holy sign of the cross, and the face of the elf grew black, and the light went out of the sky.

She only saw the faint glimmer of the white flowers, and a kind of shadow standing where the dwarf stood.

“I bid you tell me,” said Jeanie, “whether you are a Christian man, or a spirit that dreads the holy sign,” and she crossed him again.

Now all grew dark as the darkest winter’s night. The air was warm and deadly still, and heavy with the scent of the fairy flowers.

In the blackness and the silence, Jeanie made the sacred sign for the third time. Then a clear fresh wind blew on her face, and the forest boughs were shaken, and the silver light grew and gained on the darkness, and she began to see a shape standing where the dwarf had stood. It was far taller than the dwarf and the light grew and grew, and a star looked down out of the night, and Jean saw Randal standing by her. And she kissed him, and he kissed her, and he put his hand in hers, and they went out of the wood together. They came to the crest of the hill and the cairn. Far below them they saw the Tweed shining through an opening among the trees, and the lights in the farm of Peel, and they heard the nightbirds crying, and the bells of the sheep ringing musically as they wandered through the fragrant heather on the hills.

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Chapter Ten

CHAPTER X.—Out of fairyland

YOU may fancy, if you can, what joy there was in Fairnilee when Randal came home. They quite forgot the hunger and the hard times, and the old nurse laughed and cried over her bairn that had grown into a tall, strong young man. And to Lady Ker it was all one as if her husband had come again, as he was when first she knew him long ago; for Randal had his face, and his eyes, and the very sound of his voice. They could hardly believe he was not a spirit, and they clasped his hands, and hung on his neck, and could not keep their eyes off him. This was the end of all their sorrow, and it was as if Randal had come back from the dead; so that no people in the world were ever so happy as they were next day, when the sun shone down on

the Tweed and the green trees that rustle in the wind round Fairnilee. But in the evening, when the old nurse was out of the way, Randal sat between his mother and Jean, and they each held his hands, as if they could not let him go, for fear he should vanish away from them again. And they would turn round anxiously if anything stirred, for fear it should be the two white deer that sometimes were said to come for people escaped from Fairyland, and then these people must rise and follow them, and never return any more. But the white deer never came for Randal.

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So he told them all his adventures, and all that had happened to him since that midsummer night, seven long years ago.

It had been with him as it was with Jean He had gone to the Wishing Well, and wished to see the Fairy Queen and Fairyland. And he had seen the beautiful castle in the well, and a beautiful woman's face had floated up to meet his on the water. Then he had gathered the white roses, and then he heard a great sound of horses' feet, and of bells jingling, and a lady rode up, the very lady he had seen in the well. She had a white horse, and she was dressed in green, and she beckoned to Randal to mount on her horse, with her before him on the pillion. And the bells on the bridle rang, and the horse flew faster than the wind.

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So they rode and rode through the summer night, and they came to a desert place, and living lands were left far behind. Then the Fairy Queen showed him three paths, one steep and narrow, and beset with briars and thorns: that was the road to goodness and happiness, but it was little trodden or marked with the feet of people that had come and gone.

And there was a wide smooth road that went through fields of lilies, and that was the path of easy living and pleasure.

The third path wound about the wild hillside, through ferns and heather, and that

was the way to Elfland, and that way they rode. And still they rode through a country of dark night, and they crossed great black rivers, and they saw neither sun nor moon, but they heard the roaring of the sea. From that country they came into the light, and into the beautiful garden that lies round the castle of the Fairy Queen. There they lived in a noble company of gallant knights and fair ladies. All seemed very mirthful, and they rode, and hunted, and danced; and it was never dark night, nor broad daylight, but like early summer dawn before the sun has risen.

There Randal said that he had quite forgotten his mother and Jean, and the world where he was born, and Fairnilee.

But one day he happened to see a beautiful golden bottle of a strange shape, all set with diamonds, and he opened it. There was in it a sweet-smelling water, as clear as crystal, and he poured it into his hand, and passed his hand over his eyes. Now this water had the power to destroy the “glamour” in Fairyland, and make people see it as it really was. And when Randal touched his eyes with it, lo, everything was changed in a moment. He saw that nothing was what it had seemed. The gold vanished from the embroidered curtains, the light grew dim and wretched like a misty winter day.

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The Fairy Queen, that had seemed so happy and beautiful in her bright dress, was a weary, pale woman in black, with a melancholy face and melancholy eyes. She looked as if she had been there for thousands of years, always longing for the sunlight and the earth, and the wind and rain. There were sleepy poppies twisted in her hair, instead of a golden crown. And the knights and ladies were changed. They looked but half alive; and some, in place of their gay green robes, were dressed in rusty mail, pierced with spears and stained with blood. And some were in burial robes of white, and some in dresses torn or dripping with water, or marked with the burning of fire. All were dressed strangely in some ancient fashion; their weapons

were old-fashioned, too, unlike any that Randal had ever seen on earth. And their festivals were not of dainty meats, but of cold, tasteless flesh, and of beans, and pulse, and such things as the old heathens, before the coming of the Gospel, used to offer to the dead. It was dreadful to see them at such feasts, and dancing, and riding, and pretending to be merry with hollow faces and unhappy eyes.

And Randal wearied of Fairyland, which now that he saw it clearly looked like a great unending stretch of sand and barren grassy country, beside a grey sea where there was no tide. All the woods were of black cypress trees and poplar, and a wind from the sea drove a sea-mist through them, white and cold, and it blew through the open courts of the fairy castle.

So Randal longed more and more for the old earth he had left, and the changes of summer and autumn? and the streams of Tweed, and the hills, and his friends. Then the voice of Jeanie had come down to him, sounding from far away. And he was sent up by the Fairy Queen in a fairy form, as a hideous dwarf, to frighten her away from the white roses in the enchanted forest.

But her goodness and her courage had saved him, for he was a christened knight, and not a man of the fairy world. And he had taken his own form again beneath her hand, when she signed him with the Cross, and here he was, safe and happy, at home at Fairnilee.

Chapter Eleven

CHAPTER XI.—The Fairy Bottle

WE soon grow used to the greatest changes, and almost forget the things that we were accustomed to before. In a day or two, Randal had nearly forgotten what a dull life he had lived in Fairyland, after he had touched his eyes with the strange water in the fairy bottle. He remembered the long, grey sands, and the cold mist, and the white faces of the strange people, and the gloomy queen, no more than you

remember the dream you dreamed a week ago. But he did notice that Fairnilee was not the happy place it had been before he went away. Here, too, the faces were pinched and white, and the people looked hungry. And he missed many things that he remembered: the silver cups, and plates, and tankards. And the dinners were not like what they had been, but only a little thin soup, and some oatmeal cakes, and trout taken from the Tweed. The beef and ale of old times were not to be found, even in the houses of the richer people.

Very soon Randal heard all about the famine; you may be sure the old nurse was ready to tell him all the saddest stories.

“Full many a place in evil case Where joy was wont afore, oh! Wi’ Humes that dwell in Leader braes, And Scotts that dwell in Yarrow!”

And the old woman would croon her old prophecies, and tell them how Thomas the Rhymer, that lived in Ercildoune, had foretold all this. And she would wish they could find these hidden treasures that the rhymes were full of, and that maybe were lying—who knew?—quite near them on their own lands.

“Where is the Gold of Fairnilee?” she would cry; “and, oh, Randal! can you no dig for it, and find it, and buy corn out of England for the poor folk that are dying at your doors?

‘Atween the wet ground and the dry The Gold o’ Fairnilee doth lie.’

There it is, with the sun never glinting on it; there it may bide till the Judgment-day, and no man the better for it.

‘Between the Camp o’ Rink And Tweed water clear, Lie nine kings’ ransoms For nine hundred year.’”

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“I doubt it’s fairy gold, nurse,” said Randal, “and would all turn black when it saw the sun. It would just be like this bottle, the only thing I brought with me out of

Fairyland.”

Then Randal put his hand in his velvet pouch, and brought out a curious small bottle.* It was shaped like this,

and was made of something that none of them had ever seen before. It was black, and you could see the light through it, and there were green and yellow spots and streaks on it.

* In bottles like this, the old Romans used to keep their tears for their dead friends.

“That ugly bottle looked like gold and diamonds when I found it in Fairyland,” said Randal, “and the water in it smelled as sweet as roses. But when I touched my eyes with it, a drop that ran into my mouth was as salt as the sea, and immediately everything changed: the gold bottle became this glass thing, and the fairies became like folk dead, and the sky grew grey, and all turned waste and ugly. That’s the way with fairy gold, nurse; and if you found it, even, it would all be dry leaves and black bits of coal before the sun set.”

“Maybe so, and maybe no,” said the old nurse. “The Gold o’ Fairnilee may no be fairy gold, but just wealth o’ this world that folk buried here lang syne. But noo, Randal, ma bairn, I maun gang out and see ma sister’s son’s dochter, that’s lying sair sick o’ the kincough* at Rink, and take her some of the physic that I gae you and Jean when you were bairns.”

* Kincough, whooping cough.

So the old nurse went out, and Randal and Jean began to be sorry for the child she was going to visit. For they remembered the taste of the physic that the old nurse made by boiling the bark of elder-tree branches; and I remember it too, for it was the very nastiest thing that ever was tasted, and did nobody any good after all.

Then Randal and Jean walked out, strolling along without much noticing where they went, and talking about the pleasant days when they were children.

Chapter Twelve

CHAPTER XII.—At the Catrail

THEY had climbed up the slope of a hill, and they came to a broad old ditch, beneath the shade of a wood of pine trees. Below them was a wide marsh, all yellow with marsh flowers, and above them was a steep slope made of stones. Now the dry ditch, where they sat down on the grass, looking towards the Tweed, with their backs to the hill, was called the Catrail. It ran all through that country, and must have been made by men very long ago. Nobody knows who made it, nor why. They did not know in Randal's time, and they do not know now. They do not even know what the name Catrail means, but that is what it has always been called. The steep slope of stone above them was named the Camp of Rink; it is a round place, like a ring, and no doubt it was built by the old Britons, when they fought against the Romans, many hundreds of years ago. The stones of which it is built are so large that we cannot tell how men moved them. But it is a very pleasant, happy place on a warm summer day, like the day when Randal and Jean sat there, with the daisies at their feet, and the wild doves cooing above their heads, and the rabbits running in and out among the ferns.

Jean and Randal talked about this and that, chiefly of how some money could be got to buy corn and cattle for the people. Randal was in favour of crossing the Border at night, and driving away cattle from the English side, according to the usual custom.

"Every day I expect to see a pair of spurs in a dish for all our dinner," said Randal.

That was the sign the lady of the house in the Forest used to give her men, when all the beef was done, and more had to be got by fighting.

But Jeanie would not hear of Randal taking spear and jack, and putting himself in danger by fighting the English. They were her own people after all, though she could not remember them and the days before she was carried out of England by Simon

Grieve.

“Then,” said Randal, “am I to go back to Fairyland, and fetch more gold like this ugly thing?” and he felt in his pocket for the fairy bottle.

But it was not in his pocket.

“What have I done with my fairy treasure?” cried Randal, jumping up. Then he stood still quite suddenly, as if he saw something strange.

He touched Jean on the shoulder, making a sign to her not to speak.

Jean rose quietly, and looked where Randal pointed, and this was what she saw.

She looked over a corner of the old grassy ditch, just where the marsh and the yellow flowers came nearest to it.

Here there stood three tall grey stones, each about as high as a man. Between them, with her back to the single stone, and between the two others facing Randal and Jean, the old nurse was kneeling.

If she had looked up, she could hardly have seen Randal and Jean, for they were within the ditch, and only their eyes were on the level of the rampart.

Besides, she did not look up; she was groping in the breast of her dress for something, and her eyes were on the ground.

“What can the old woman be doing?” whispered Randal. “Why, she has got my fairy bottle in her hand!”

Then he remembered how he had shown her the bottle, and how she had gone out without giving it back to him.

Jean and he watched, and kept very quiet.

They saw the old nurse, still kneeling, take the stopper out of the black strange bottle, and turn the open mouth gently on her hand. Then she carefully put in the stopper, and rubbed her eyes with the palm of her hand. Then she crawled along in their direction, very slowly, as if she were looking for something in the grass.

Then she stopped, still looking very closely at the grass.

Next she jumped to her feet with a shrill cry, clapping her hands; and then she turned, and was actually running along the edge of the marsh, towards Fairnilee.

“Nurse!” shouted Randal, and she stopped suddenly, in a fright, and let the fairy bottle fall.

It struck on a stone, and broke to pieces with a jingling sound, and the few drops of strange water in it ran away into the grass.

“Oh, ma bairns, ma bairns, what have you made me do?” cried the old nurse pitifully. “The fairy gift is broken, and maybe the Gold of Fairnilee, that my eyes have looked on, will ne’er be seen again.”

Chapter Thirteen

CHAPTER XIII.—The Gold of Fairnilee.

RANDAL and Jean went to the old woman and comforted her, though they could not understand what she meant. She cried and sobbed, and threw her arms about; but, by degrees, they found out all the story. When Randal had told her how all he saw in Fairyland was changed after he had touched his eyes with the water from the bottle, the old woman remembered many tales that she had heard about some charm known to the fairies, which helped them to find things hidden, and to see through walls and stones. Then she had got the bottle from Randal, and had stolen out, meaning to touch her eyes with the water, and try whether that was the charm and whether she could find the treasure spoken of in the old rhymes. She went

“Between the Camp o’ Rink And Tweed water clear,”

and to the place which lay

“Between the wet land and the dry,”

that is, between the marsh and the Catrail.

Here she had noticed the three great Stones; which made a kind of chamber on the hill-side, and here she had anointed her eyes with the salt water of the bottle of tears.

Then she had seen through the grass, she declared, and through the upper soil, and she had beheld great quantities of gold. And she was running with the bottle to tell Randal, and to touch his eyes with the water that he might see it also. But, out of Fairyland, the strange water only had its magical power while it was still wet on the eyelashes. This the old nurse soon found; for she went back to the three standing stones, and looked and saw nothing, only grass and daisies. And the fairy bottle was broken, and all the water spilt.

This was her story, and Randal did not know what to believe. But so many strange things had happened to him, that one more did not seem impossible. So he and Jean took the old nurse home, and made her comfortable in her room, and Jean put her to bed, and got her a little wine and an oat-cake.

Then Randal very quietly locked the door outside, and put the key in his pocket. It would have been of no use to tell the old nurse to be quiet about what she thought she had seen.

By this time it was late and growing dark. But that night there would be a moon.

After supper, of which there was very little, Lady Ker went to bed. But Randal and Jean slipped out into the moonlight. They took a sack with them, and Randal carried a pickaxe and a spade. They walked quickly to the three great stones, and waited for a while to hear if all was quiet. Then Jean threw a white cloak round her, and stole about the edges of the camp and the wood. She knew that if any wandering man came by, he would not stay long where such a figure was walking. The night was cool, the dew lay on the deep fern; there was a sweet smell from the grass and from the pine wood.

In the meantime, Randal was digging a long trench with his pickaxe, above the place where the old woman had knelt, as far as he could remember it.

He worked very hard, and when he was in the trench up to his knees, his pickaxe struck against a stone. He dug round it with the spade, and came to a layer of black burnt ashes of bones. Beneath these, which he scraped away, was the large flat stone on which his pick had struck. It was a wide slab of red sandstone, and Randal soon saw that it was the lid of a great stone coffin, such as the ploughshare sometimes strikes against when men are ploughing the fields in the Border country.

Randal had seen these before, when he was a boy, and he knew that there was never much in them, except ashes and one or two rough pots of burnt clay.

He was much disappointed.

It had seemed as if he was really coming to something, and, behold, it was only an old stone coffin!

However, he worked on till he had cleared the whole of the stone coffin-lid. It was a very large stone chest, and must have been made, Randal thought, for the body of a very big man.

With the point of his pickaxe he raised the lid.

In the moonlight he saw something of a strange shape.

He put down his hand, and pulled it out.

It was an image, in metal, about a foot high, and represented a beautiful woman, with wings on her shoulders, sitting on a wheel.

Randal had never seen an image like this; but in an old book, which belonged to the Monks of Melrose, he had seen, when he was a boy, a picture of such a woman.

The Monks had told him that she was Fortune, with her swift wings that carry her from one person to another, as luck changes, and with her wheel that she turns with the turning of chance in the world.

The image was very heavy. Randal rubbed some of the dirt and red clay off, and found that the metal was yellow. He cut it with his knife; it was soft. He cleaned a

piece, which shone bright and unrusted in the moonlight, and touched it with his tongue. Then he had no doubt any more. The image was gold!

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Randal knew now that the old nurse had not been mistaken. With the help of the fairy water she had seen The Gold of Fairnilee. He called very softly to Jeanie, who came glimmering in her white robes through the wood, looking herself like a fairy. He put the image in her hand, and set his finger on his lips to show that she must not speak.

Then he went back to the great stone coffin, and began to grope in it with his hands. There was much earth in it that had slowly sifted through during the many years that it, had been buried. But there was also a great round bowl of metal and a square box.

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Randal got out the bowl first. It was covered with a green rust, and had a lid; in short, it was a large ancient kettle, such as soldiers use in camp. Randal got the lid off, and, behold, it was all full of very ancient gold coins, not Greek nor Roman, but like such in use in Briton before Julius Caesar came.

The box was of iron. On the lid, in the moonshine, Jeanie could read the letters S. P. Q. R., but she did not know what they meant. The box had been locked, and chained, and clamped with iron bars. But all was so rusty that the bars were easily broken, and the lid torn off.

Then the moon shone on bars of gold, and on great plates and dishes of gold and silver, marked with letters, and with what Randal thought were crests. Many of the cups were studded with red and green and blue stones. And there were beautiful plates and dishes, purple, gold, and green; and one of these fell, and broke into a thousand pieces, for it was of some strange kind of glass. There were three gold sword-hilts, carved wonderfully into the figures of strange beasts with wings, and heads like lions.

Randal and Jean looked at it and marvelled, and Jean sang in a low, sweet voice:

“Between the Camp o’ Rink And Tweed water clear, Lie nine kings’ ransoms For nine hundred year.” *

Nobody ever saw so much treasure in all broad Scotland.

Jean and Randal passed the rest of the night in hiding what they had found. Part they hid in the secret chamber of Fairnilee, of which only Jean and Lady Ker and Randal knew the secret. The rest they stowed away in various places. Then Randal filled the earth into the trench, and cast wood on the place, and set fire to the wood, so that next day there was nothing there but ashes and charred earth.

You will not need to be told what Randal did, now that he had treasure in plenty. Some he sold in France, to the king, Henry II., and some in Rome, to the Pope; and with the money which they gave him he bought corn and cattle in England, enough to feed all his neighbours, and stock the farms, and sow the fields for next year. And Fairnilee became a very rich and fortunate house, for Randal married Jean, and soon their children were playing on the banks of the Tweed, and rolling down the grassy slope to the river, to bathe on hot days. And the old nurse lived long and happy among her new bairns, and often she told them how it was she who really found the Gold of Fairnilee.

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You may wonder what the gold was, and how it came there? Probably Father Francis, the good Melrose Monk, was right. He said that the iron box and the gold image of Fortune, and the kettle full of coins, had belonged to some regiment of the Roman army: the kettle and the coins, they must have taken from the Britons; the box and all the plate were their own, and brought from Italy. Then they, in their turn, must have been defeated by some of the fierce tribes beyond the Roman wall, and must have lost all their treasure. That must have been buried by the victorious enemy; and they, again, must have been driven from their strong camp at Rink,

either by some foes from the north, or by a new Roman army from the south. So all the gold lay at Fairnilee for many hundred years, never quite forgotten, as the old rhyme showed, but never found till it was discovered, in their sore need, by the old nurse and Randal and Jean.

As for Randal and Jean, they lived to be old, and died on one day, and they are buried at Dryburgh in one tomb, and a green tree grows over them; and the Tweed goes murmuring past their grave, and past the grave of Sir Walter Scott.

THE END.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE GOLD OF FAIRNILEE ***

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