

Little Archie's First Fish

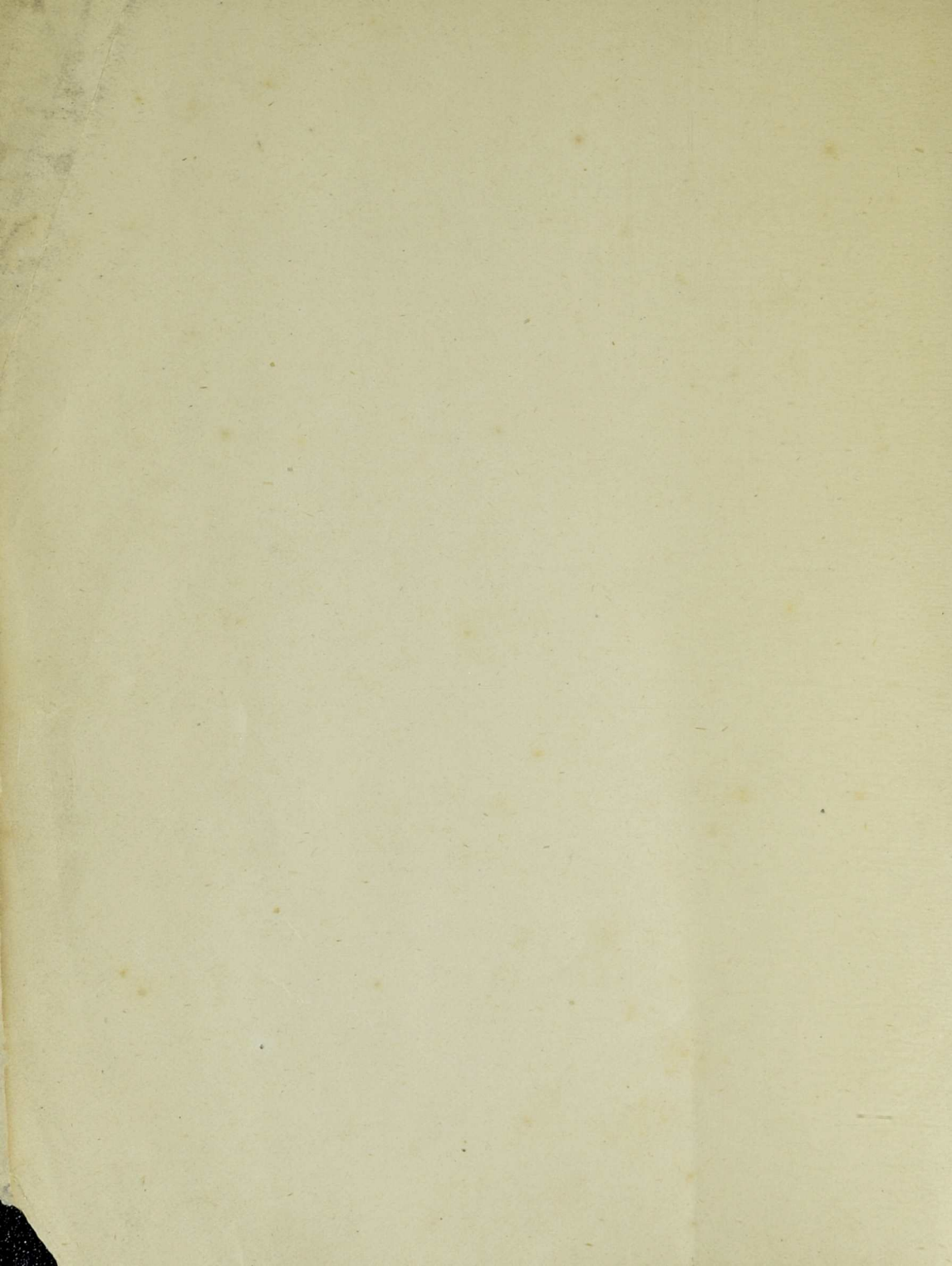
*A BOOK FOR CHILDREN
OF ALL AGES*

BY GANNIE

"Men are but Children of a larger growth."

PRIVATELY PRINTED

1878.



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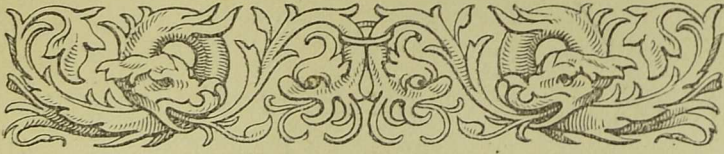
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

TO

Little Archie's Grandpapa

THE LOVING FATHER

OF MY CHILDREN.



CHAPTER I.

LITTLE ARCHIE.

LITTLE ARCHIE is just four years old. He lives in a dear little house, which is a sight to see for its lovely roses, just above the Pass of Killiecrankie. You cannot see this house from the railway, but if you ever go in the train, puffing up from the south to Killiecrankie station, you may remember that Archie's home is up on the hill on your right hand. Little Archie himself, in an Athole tartan

kilt, or, if the weather is hot, in a sailor's suit, with his hat hanging on the very back of his head, may perhaps be standing on the platform, looking at you with dark solemn eyes, and his mouth open.

Archie often asks his father very puzzling questions, and whenever he does so, his father says, 'Oh, ask your mother;' and when Archie asks his mother, she says, 'Oh, ask your grandmother, child.'

I am Archie's grandmother, and as Archie's little questions are generally such as these, 'How does the moon stick up in the skies?' 'Why for did

God make worms?’ ‘How did you make this carriage?’—or table, or whatever happens to be nearest,—and if you say you did not make it, then, ‘But if you *did* make it, how would you do?’ you must allow that I ought to be a very wise old woman indeed to answer all his questions. I am sorry to say that I am not a very wise old woman, and it is a lucky thing for me, that, when Archie and I get together, he never thinks of these questions at all. We are a great deal too busy for questions.

I will tell you first what we do when I go to see Archie, and then what we do when Archie comes to see me.

It generally rains when I go to see Archie. His father says I bring the rain with me. Last time I was expected, he made so sure of rain, that he boldly told Peter the postman, and Mackintosh the guide, and every one he met, 'We'll have rain to-morrow,' though there was not a cloud in the sky. 'Well, Cornel,' said Peter, 'you *may* be right, but I canna say that I just think it.'

Sure enough, the rain came as soon as I came, and Archie's father was thought by every one to be a great weather prophet.

When it rains, we play at a game

we call Mr. Farmer. Archie is Mr. Farmer and I am Mrs. Farmer, and we 'petend,' as he calls it, to go through all sorts of adventures. We 'petend' that the chairs are trains, and we go 'puff, puff' away to London; and then we 'petend' that the tables are shops, and we buy all sorts of things; and then we pounce upon the sofa, and 'petend' it is a steamboat, and we see the waves, and the sea-birds, and listen to the winds, as we go sailing far away to the diamond-fields in Africa, or to see the temples in Egypt, or the waterfalls in America, or the great hills in India. There is no

end to the wonderful things we hear and see and do. Unfortunately one day his stupid old Gannie 'petended' that the room was a wood, and that Mr. Farmer was going to hunt the wild boar, and the moment she said, pointing to a chair, 'Oh, there it is, behind that big tree,' Mr. Farmer set up a howl, and ran away to his mother, crying out, 'Oh! the pig! the pig!' and the game had to stop. And I am sorry to say, 'Miss,' as Archie calls his nurse, 'Smith,' said it had better stop altogether, as she could never tell what Master Archie really had seen or not seen. Gannie said, 'He is a bit of a

poet ;' but Mama and 'Miss' said that they did not want poets, so poor Mr. and Mrs. Farmer took to dressing dolls, and looking at 'pictur books,' and telling stories instead. And when Gannie felt sorry, and longed for Mr. Farmer, she thought of a day long ago when one of her own babies had told her an old, old story which I will tell you in that baby's words. 'God told Adam and Eve not to eat some fute, cause it wasn't 'ipe. I don't eat when it isn't 'ipe. I wait till it is sweet and soft,' and she thinks, 'Mr. Farmer isn't 'ipe yet.'

But it does not always rain at Killie-

crankie, and when it is fine, oh! how lovely it is, with Corrie Hoolichan and its stately trees in front, and grand old Ben-i-Vreachie brooding over us on the left hand, and the peaceful little garden nestling under Donald's careful fingers on the right, as Archie and I sally forth. He marches me off to the field where the tame black sheep comes to nibble at the bread we give it. He shows me the donkey he rides. He got a fall off this donkey once, because he would not let go of his whip, which had caught in a tree. I told him he was like a navvie who was nearly drowned in a flood of the Spey some

years ago, because he would cling on to his heavy spade ; nothing would induce him to let it go.

In the evening some tame rabbits, which live in a warren under the trees, come out and play on the lawn tennis court, and Baby is always the first to see them, and to seize a handful of grass to give them. They will let Baby come quite near them, but run away when Archie tries to catch them. All animals love Baby, and he is not a bit afraid of any of them, not even of big bouncing Sam when he comes bounding out of his kennel. Baby is only twenty months old, and his lovely

blue eyes know no fear of anything. He waddles off so fast and far all by himself, that one has to be always on the watch for fear of losing sight of him.

When Archie comes to see me, we spend a great deal of time in the woods. We hunt out the little winged seeds which are hidden in the fir-cones, and Archie makes a hole in the ground, and drops in the seed, and pats down the moss upon it, and opens his eyes very wide, when I tell him that God will change that little seed into a large tree some day. Then he tells every one he has been making 'whole pantations.'

We delight in pulling the brown caps off the lovely green spruce leaves, and in watching the fans of the horse chestnut opening out. We like the hairy-headed mosses. We go down on our knees, to laugh at the jaunty way the little apple moss wears its little cap all on one side; and when we find some who have thrown away their caps, and who are standing looking out with a round red eye, we ask them what they see. We peep into the primroses to see if the lady of that flower is hiding at home, or popping up her head to speak with the ferns and birches. We think she must be a little afraid some-

times that the things, like birds' claws, bending over her are not ferns at all, but Archie tells her it is only that they are not quite awake yet. Sometimes we pick a heartsease to pieces to find the witch who sits in it, with her short shift on, and her long bare legs hanging 'dangling down, O.' But we seldom do this, for Gannie does not care much to pick 'fowers.' She teaches Archie to like to see them in their own homes, in the wood among the uncurling bracken, the oak and the beech ferns, and on mossy banks between the junipers, and among the grass in the parks. There we ask the

milkwort why it does not use its wings and fly away. We shake the living buds off the spikes of the buck-wheat. We tell the starry anemones and winter greens we love them. We watch the daisies going to sleep. We dip the leaves of our Lady's Mantle in water, and when they gleam in the sunshine we see how mantles shine in heaven.

It had been a promise from Aunt Amy and Unky Jack, for some time, that Archie should have a dog. But the first dog that came was not very pretty, and the girl that brought it asked a great deal too much money for it; and the second dog that came was

too game a dog. Unky Tarlie thought it perhaps would not like Baby to poke his fat fingers into its eyes, or to pull its hair, or to come plump down upon its back, and this second doggie was made one of Unky Tarlie's fox-terriers. Archie was very good over all these disappointments. At last, one day, Aunt Amy and Unky Jack went to Glenfeshie, and there, in the house of Fraser the gamekeeper, they found a darling little puppy, which was 'the very thing.' They brought it home in a game-basket. The moment the basket was opened, the puppy jumped out, and ran straight to little Archie,

as if it knew this was its master. It was the greatest fun to see Archie and the puppy. We called it Tip, because it was very like a dear little dog of long ago, which had been 'Unky Tarlie's' first dog. This younger Tip took possession of everything at once. The little impudent thing even ran over Tiny, Aunt Amy's pet Peruvian dog. Tiny is like a ball of white fluff. She has large beautiful eyes, which are almost hidden by the silky hair which hangs over them. She does all sorts of clever things,—begs, and stands on trust with sugar on her nose, pretends to die, and jumps up when she

hears that the Doctor is coming. She will even sit up on her tail, with a cocked hat on her head, and a paper gun held by her fore-paws, and never move (except her little black nose, which twitches all the time), while the parrot takes a lump of sugar from between her hind-legs. She is petted by every one, and told she is lovely from morning till night. Imagine her feelings when the puppy suddenly tumbled into her home, and treated her without any respect. Poor Tiny was angry and jealous. She drew up one little leg, turned up her black nose, and, as stately as a queen, refused

to have anything to do with any of us.

The puppy was here, and there, and everywhere in a moment, and soon took to tearing every one's dress, and to all sorts of mischief. Then, when any one scolded or beat it, Archie came up, and in a very steady voice said, '*I* told it to tear dresses,' '*I* taught it to do that.' Then Gannie seized Archie and kissed him, and said, 'Oh, little Archie, you are a man, you have the heart of a Redeemer;' and Archie knew Gannie was pleased, though he did not understand what she said, and by way of showing he was a man he took to

walking about with his hands behind him, holding up his coat-tails just as he had seen his father do.

Though Archie did not understand what Gannie said, he showed, the very next day, that the old woman was right, as you shall hear.

I must tell you he is afraid of 'Unky Tarlie's' terriers. And no wonder, for there are five of them, and when they are let loose, they rush about in a way which might frighten any scrap of four years old.

Well, Archie and his puppy went the very next day with Unky Tarlie to let out four of these terriers for a run. As

they came near the kennel a very great noise was heard from it, of barking and howling and yelling, and Archie asked in a shaky voice 'Will they hurt us?' Unky Tarlie answered, 'Which would you like the terriers to hurt, Archie,—yourself or Tip?' Archie thought for a minute, and then, with a very red face and trembling lip, he said, 'I would razer they hurt me.' This was really what he said, just as the dreadful time came to let all four terriers loose. The puppy was not a bit afraid, though when it ran at one or another, Bhusto growled, Morag showed her teeth, and Witchoch snapped. All

the time Archie was in great fear, and followed his treasure about, trembling lest it should get hurt ; but it was not hurt, for dear red-haired Callum adopted the frisky thing at once, romped with it, and defended it from the others.

In all our walks after this wonderful puppy came, nothing else was to be thought of. If Gannie tried anything else, the little man said, just as Unky Tarlie used to say long ago, ‘ Ah ! now let us talk of Tip.’

The crowning delight of all was when this surprising Tip, actually, splashed into the burn, of its own accord, to bring back a stick.

This was bringing two joys together, for the burn, even without Tip splashing in its waters, is an unending delight. We love to scramble along the narrow paths, winding among birches, ferns, and junipers, and to see the dancing waters sparkling and foaming over the stones. There we sail paper boats, and boats of walnut shells ; but though Baby kicks with joy at seeing these whirled away down the tiny waterfalls, Archie cannot bear to see them 'downed,' and for him, Gannie makes harbours, with stones, for the boats to float safely in.

By the burn, Gannie shows her

darling the trees where his Mama sat when she was a little girl to learn her lessons ; the pool where his Aunt Edie once found a little waddling wild-duck ; the bank where, one sad summer when many sheep died, a little lamb was always to be found, because it would never leave the spot where it had last seen its mother ; the fireplace among the junipers, called after Gannie's name, 'The Lydian Hearth,' where many picnics have been long ago. Oh ! there is no end to the stories Gannie tells him by the burn, and on his Mama's birthday the little man had a picnic there himself, when

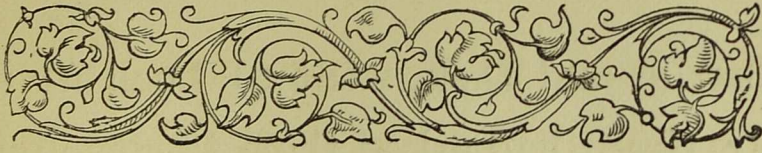
he picked up sticks, made a fire, roasted potatoes, and boiled water for tea, or, if truth must be told, looked on, and ran about, while Robina, Gannie's maid, and Christina, the under-nurse, did these clever things for him.

In the burn we often make a great splashing, throwing in stones to stir the Water Kelpie, and Mama is very good at skimming pebbles along the water.

By the burn, Archie stands, or sits, very patiently, hoping to catch a fish. At first he fished with a crooked hair-pin, which Gannie tied to a string fastened on a stick ; but when his papa

came from Killiecrankie, there came with him a beautiful real fishing-rod, which Dr. Irvine had given to the little boy, and then Archie's pride was something to see. But I must begin another chapter to give you the story of little Archie's first fish.





CHAPTER II.

LITTLE ARCHIE'S FIRST FISH.

STRANGE to say, the lovely real fishing-rod, for a long time, caught no more fish than the crooked hair-pin had caught. But 'long looked for' always, somehow or another, 'comes at last.' A fish was at last found on Archie's hook, and I will tell you about it.

One day, Archie's papa, and his uncles

Charlie and Jack, went to Loch Alvie. Mr. Grant had asked them to come and see a net dragged in the lake for fish. Archie followed after in a carriage with his Mama, and Aunts, and Gannie. Gannie took the fishing-rod. When they arrived at Loch Alvie, it was found that Gannie's dress was tightly caught upon the hooks of that rod. So Gannie really was Archie's first fish ; but while Tom the groom kindly tried to take out the hooks without tearing her dress, Gannie thought, that she hoped Archie would catch something better by and bye.

It was a lovely day. The path down

to the loch was between banks yellow with broom. An old church and manse looked about on everything, from a hill which had run out so far into the sweet waters that it was almost an island. Kinrara woods, with their tall monument to 'The Cock o' the North,'¹ rose on the right hand, and just before us the Grants' great mountain, Craigellachie, stood fast.²

We got plates and tumblers and all we wanted from the manse, and Gannie and Mr. Grant went up there to thank

¹ The last Duke of Gordon.

² The war-cry of the Clan Grant is 'Stand fast, Craigellachie!'

Miss Macdonald, and to ask her about the rare water-lilies which, Gannie thought, might perhaps in the autumn float on Loch Alvie.¹ The working of the net soon began. Some men stood on the shore holding one end of the net. Other men rowed away with the rest of the net, dropping it bit by bit down into the water as they rowed. They took the boat far out, and after a while they began to return to the shore, making a sort of half circle in the water, from the place from which they had gone out, to the place to which

¹ *Nuphar minima* grows in a lake a few miles distant from Loch Alvie. I am afraid it is not found in Loch Alvie.

they returned. When they had landed, both parties of men began at the same time to drag the net out of the waters to the shore, and the men who held the net where it had been taken out, always as they dragged and dragged, came nearer and nearer to those who had carried the net through the waters back to the land, until at last they reached the same place, and then there was great excitement to see what the net had brought. Donald Warren was so eager that he ran right out into the water, though he had on beautiful checked new gaiters, which Gannie had observed him showing to the other

men just a minute before. Little Archie, with a very red face, helped at the dragging, and evidently thought it a most serious business.

Gannie looked on, thinking of another net she had heard of, and wondering how near to another they who had given out that net, and they who had brought it in, were now getting, and how soon fish who fancied themselves free would feel that they were caught,¹ when she heard herself called to come and see if Archie's fishing-rod had caught anything.

¹ The kingdom of the heavens is that net (Matt. xiii.), and men and women are the fish.

Uncle Charlie and Uncle Jack had set the rod on the bank, with the hook hanging down in the water. Archie took the rod, and began to wind up the reel, and, as the line shortened, what should he see but a little fish on the hook ! As the fish rose out of the water, Papa rolled about laughing loudly, Mama and Aunts made many exclamations, Uncles Charlie and Jack consulted together over Archie's head as to what the weight of that wonderful fish would be, and Mr. Grant looked on with a quiet smile. Gannie saw her boy very red and very quiet. Never a word said he, but he took the

fish in his hands, with a sort of gasp, and turned it round and round, looking at it all over.

Presently some one said, 'Archie must have that for his supper to-night,' and he looked eagerly up, and asked, 'Wat sall I dive it for supper to-night?'

The moment he understood that it was not a question of the little fish having supper, but of its being eaten for his own supper, Archie began to cry.

He said he would never eat that fish, he would take that fish to bed with him, he would keep that fish always, till he died.

No one dared to speak again of cooking that fish.

After awhile Archie crept up to Gannie and said, 'Gannie, *is it real?*' and Gannie said, 'It is a real fish, darling.' 'Gannie, *was it on my fishing-rod?*' and Gannie said, 'You found it on your rod, darling.'

Papa had the little fish rolled up in paper, and a string tied round it, for Archie to carry it himself in the carriage, and all the way home Mama tried to coax him to have the little fish cooked for 'Miss's' supper. Archie is so fond of his good nurse, we thought he might give for her supper what he

would not take for his own, but the very thought of ever parting with that fish was too painful. He looked so miserable about it that his foolish old Gannie could not bear it, and she said, 'Well, my pet, Gannie will do all she can to keep your little fish'—meaning to take it to Macfarlane the saddler, to see if his clever fingers could stuff even a little thin-skinned trout.

The minute Archie got home, he popped his little fish into a tub of water, and every now and then he came to assure his Gannie that the fish was very happy, and was 'dinking the water.'

Everybody thought Gannie very silly

for her wish to have that little fish stuffed. Even Mama said it was 'too absurd,' and as for Smith, she looked at Gannie with such grave pity in her eyes, and so solemnly showed her thoughts of Gannie's foolishness, that Gannie could not help laughing.

Alas! Gannie could not go out the day that Archie left, and no one else, not even Mama, would face Macfarlane's sparkling eyes with that little fish come to be stuffed.

Gannie was left very unhappy about her promise. And first she gave herself a dreadful scolding. She said to herself, 'You old goose, you are always

forgetting that it is not enough to love, you must have a body which can do what love wishes. If you had been Macfarlane now, you might have promised to preserve that fish. But you knew you could do nothing of that kind yourself. Why did you promise it? Little Archie will never believe you again.'

When Gannie scolds herself for promising more than she can do, she always thinks of a man who lived long ago, who did the same. And she walked about for some days, thinking, and thinking about this man, whose name was Simon Peter. And one day

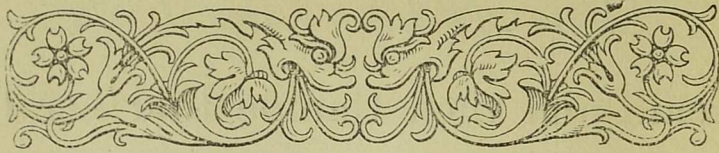
Aunt Amy said to her, 'Mother, do you know I always fancied that when Jesus Christ said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these?" He meant, more than all that load of fish. It would not be like Jesus to taunt Peter with having boasted of loving Him more than the other disciples did, especially when Peter had already wept so bitterly.' And Gannie said, 'Good gracious, that is just what I wanted ; you are right ; and now I can, after all, thanks to you, preserve little Archie's fish.'¹ And

¹ Though this thought came fresh to me from Aunt Amy, as if I had never heard it before, it has been held by some scholars.

Gannie went to a meeting of ladies in Kingussie, which she calls 'the Dorcas,' but which the people call 'the Dorkings,' and there she told the story of Archie's and of Simon Peter's fish. And the next day at church, there was a new preacher called Mr. Dey, and he preached a beautiful sermon, and what should he preach about, but Simon Peter, and Gannie stayed all the afternoon at the Kingussie manse to tell him the story of Archie's and of Simon Peter's fish, and just as she was beginning, in came lovely little Bessie Mackenzie, the flower of the manse, and she is not much older than little

Archie, and then Gannie told her the story instead, and little Bessie seemed to like the story ; so now Gannie thinks, perhaps, you and some other little children may like it too. She has told you about Archie's first fish already, and will now go on to tell you about Simon Peter's fish, in hopes that, some day, her own darling boy will like to find his little fish living in Gannie's mind and heart, and living in your mind and heart too.





CHAPTER III.

SIMON PETER'S FISH.

ONCE upon a time there was a man called Simon Peter, and Jesus Christ lived in his house, and Simon loved Jesus very much, and knew that Jesus was the Son of God. One day Jesus seemed very sad, and He told His friends that the time was very near when wicked men would seize Him, and dreadfully ill-treat Him, and put Him to death ; and Jesus said

He knew all these, His friends, would then run away and leave Him. When Simon heard this he cried out, 'Though all men should leave Thee, yet will I never leave Thee ; I will follow Thee to prison and to death.' But Jesus knew that though Simon did indeed love Him, yet that love had no right body fitted for it yet. He knew poor Simon's heart would feel afraid, and his tongue would say foolish things, when the time came for love to show itself strong and true. Jesus knew that a great spirit, called 'The Enemy,' had heard Simon's boasting promises, and had asked to try what his love was

worth, and had been told by God that he might do as he wished ; and Jesus looked at Simon and said, 'The cock shall not crow twice, before thou hast denied Me thrice.' The cock, you know, crows in the early morning ; so this meant that, that very night, Simon Peter would say he did not even know Jesus.

So it happened. Wicked men did lay hold of Jesus, and Simon Peter followed into the house where they took Jesus, and while they shamefully ill-treated Jesus, Simon Peter stood by a fire in another part of the same room warming himself. And some servants

who were standing about said to Simon Peter, 'Surely we have seen you with that man Jesus?' And he began to curse and to swear, and to declare that he never knew Jesus. Oh! was not that a dreadful thing for a man to do who loved Jesus, and who had promised to die for Jesus?

And just as Simon was saying that he had never known Jesus, the cock crew, and Jesus turned and looked at Simon, and Simon felt as if his heart would break with grief and shame, and he went out and wept bitterly.

Jesus was put to death by wicked men. He died, and was buried. But

Jesus was the Son of God, and the grave could not hold Him. After three days He rose again alive upon the earth. He had allowed wicked men to kill Him, just because He loved us, you and me, who must die. He loved us, and went into the prison of the grave that He might break that prison open, and bring all who die back again to life. Because He came down from God to die with us, we, you, and I shall rise up to God to live with Him.

After Jesus rose again from the dead He showed Himself often to His friends.

One day Simon, and some others, went to fish in a large lake called 'the Sea

of Tiberias,¹ and they worked with their nets all night long, and caught nothing. When the morning came, they saw a Man standing far off, on the shore, and He called out across the water to them, 'Children, have you any fish?'² and they shouted back

¹ *Note for Children of a larger growth.*—Called so in the story of the casting into the waters of that net which 'brake not,' though great was its load of fish, I think, because that was its name as under the Roman power, to show to those who have eyes to see, that the net, which is the kingdom of the heavens, is cast out in the time of the fourth kingdom, which is of iron, and will in that time gather strongly without breaking—gather fish of every kind into the power of angels of judgment; and also for the reason given in note to page 50.

² The word in the original really means anything to be eaten *in addition to bread.* I think, O children of a larger growth, for whom I write these notes, that I have heard that question asked of us, who do desire, and often labour all in vain for some creature life to add to that living bread, Jesus Christ,

that they had none. And the Man called out to them to cast the net on the right side of the ship, and when they did this they got such a quantity of fish that they could scarcely drag the net, it was so heavy. Then John, one of the fishermen, whom Jesus loved, knew that Man was Jesus, and he said to Simon, 'It is the Lord.' And Simon threw himself out of the ship to go on the water to Jesus. He had once before tried to walk on the water to Jesus, and had sunk, and been

by whom we live. I think our answer is often, too often, that we have no fish. But to me it is precious to believe that that sad answer goes across the waters to One who can, and who will, in His own time, give us plenty of fish to add to the living Bread.

obliged to cry for help. Now he did what then he tried to do,¹—walked on the water to meet Jesus.

The other fishermen came in the ship drawing the net to land. As soon as they came to land they saw a fire of coals there, and one fish laid upon the fire, and one loaf of bread,² and Jesus standing there, told them to bring of the small fishes they had caught. Then Simon went and drew

¹ Alford gives this as Whately's reading of the passage. Simon Peter is said to have *put on* his fisher's coat before he threw himself out of the ship ; men do not *put on* their coats to swim, and the preposition translated *into* may rather be translated *upon*. He put on his fisher's coat, and threw himself *upon* the water.

² I love the thought of the creature life caught by Christ Himself, of which the angels of judgment have no handling, but which is singly for the delight of the Lord.

the net to land, full of great fishes,¹ one of every kind of fish, a hundred and fifty and three,² and though there were so many, yet was the net not broken, none of the fish could escape. Jesus said to the fishermen, 'Come and dine,' and He Himself gave them fish and bread. When they had dined, Jesus pointed to the great net full of great fishes, and said to Simon Peter: 'Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these?' Now, why do you

¹ Original has this distinction, of the gift which, seeming small in the eyes of the giver, was found great in all its parts by the receivers.

² The idea of the times was, with what truth it remains to be seen, that 153 was the number of kinds of fish that exist in nature. The net which is the kingdom of the heavens gathers of *every* kind—Matt. xiii. 47; Ezek. xlvi. 9.

think Jesus asked Simon so strange a question? Simon was a fisherman. To catch many fish was to succeed in his own life's work. It is very dear to men to succeed in their own work, to do that work well, and to make money by it. Even a little child knows that feeling. Even my little four-year-old Archie felt the little fish, which was found on his own rod, more precious to him than all his toys and treasures which had been given to him, without any fishing of his very own hands. To love Jesus more than he loved a great load of fish, was for a fisherman to love Him very much. Now, Simon Peter had shown

that he did so love Jesus, as I will tell you.

Three years before, in the time when Simon first knew Jesus, Simon had gone out one night upon that same lake to fish.¹ And he and the other fishermen with him had worked hard all night, and had got nothing. And in the

¹ In that first fishing called the Sea of Galilee and the Lake of Gennesaret—names of the land as belonging to the Jews—contrasted with the name *Sea of Tiberias*, as under power of Rome, in the second fishing. The net dragging in the dispensation of the *Seeking* Lover God, broke. That is the period of the *weakness* of God, and it is possible for the creature to exercise free will against the will of God, even after entrance into the kingdom of the heavens, and for awhile to return to the paths of the sea. But human empire is a sign and symbol of the Heavenly Empire, and though its act in crucifying the Christ seemed the destroying of all the power of God, the net cast in its waters *cannot* be broken. There is a power catching the sons of men which they *cannot* escape.

morning, tired and disappointed, they came back to shore. On the shore they found a great crowd of people, who were all pressing eagerly round one Man who was speaking to them. The fishermen knew this Man. It was Jesus. They had heard and seen wonderful things of Jesus. They had sometimes followed Him.¹ But now, tired and disappointed, they were in no mood to listen to His words. They set about washing their nets. And while they

¹ There were, I think, three distinct times of their being called to follow Jesus :—*first*, they went after Him on the witness of another, as shown in John i. ; *secondly*, on His own call, as spoken of by Matthew and Mark ; and *thirdly*, by their own hearts' impulse, as related by Luke (chap. v.). Many, if not all of us, pass through a like threefold call.

were busy doing this, Jesus got into one of the ships, and called Simon, and begged him to push the boat out a little from the shore. He asked it as a favour, for He knew He was asking what a man, tired with a long night's wasted work, would find it disagreeable to do ; and Jesus sat in the boat and taught the people. And when He had done speaking, He said to Simon, 'Launch out now into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.' And Simon answered, 'Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing ; nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the net.' And

when they drew the nets, they found there were such a number of fish in the net, that the net was breaking with the weight of them. And they beckoned to their partners, who were still washing their nets on the shore, to come and help them, and they filled both the boats with fish, in such quantities that the boats were ready to sink with the load. When Simon Peter saw this wonderful success given him in the very hour when he had felt his own heart so cold towards Jesus, that he had taken to washing nets rather than to listening to Jesus, he felt ashamed and afraid of Jesus, and fell

on his knees before Jesus, and said he was not fit to be with Jesus. But Jesus told him not to fear, for He would make him able to catch not only fish, but men also, that is, that Jesus would give him power to bring men to listen to his words, and to obey him. When the fishermen brought their ships to land, they left all and followed Jesus. What? *All that load of fish?* Yes, all that load of fish, and that was something for fishermen to do who had been fishing in vain all night. It was a great thing for Peter to do, for Peter had the heart of a child, and I am sure that even as

my little Archie, after long trying to catch a fish in vain, cared more for the one little fish that had been on his own rod than for all the treasures that had been given him, so Peter would feel such preciousness in such a plentiful haul after such long work, as made his leaving it to follow Jesus really a splendid thing.¹ And it was this that Jesus, tender, loving, friend Jesus, wished Simon Peter to remember. He called him by his name Simon, the name by which he was known in those

¹ In our version this is touched with the subtle finger of truth when it is written of Matthew that he *left* all, but of the fishermen that they *forsook* all. Matthew's leaving of the table of money gain lacked the *personal* touch, the *forsaking* of the haul of fish.

early days, as one of my Dorcas ladies said, to make him the better live again in the memory of that day when he had shown that he loved Jesus, when he had acted as if he loved Jesus. He called him by his name Simon, and He pointed to the great net, full of great fishes, and He said, 'Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these?' that Simon might, with all truth, let that great Enemy, of whom I told you, hear him answer, 'Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee.'

Jesus asked three times, 'Lovest thou Me?' Now Jesus had lived in

Simon Peter's house, and had also travelled about much, with Simon Peter, for three years. When, beginning with that day when leaving all his fish he had followed Jesus, Simon Peter's memory was three times touched by the memory of Jesus, I think that, one year after another, three years would come back to him, full of little deeds of love which he had done for Jesus, and of great sights, and wonderful words, which Jesus had shown and said to him, and which He never could have shown or said to him, unless He had known that there was love indeed.

And at last, Simon Peter's memory, touched by the loving, lovely memory of that friend Jesus, who never forgets any kindness, felt so sure, so very sure, that he had always loved Jesus, that he was grieved when for the third time Jesus asked, 'Lovest thou Me?' grieved as if no one had the right to doubt that he did indeed love the Lord.

And yet, you know that there was the dreadful fact that he had indeed three times denied Jesus, and that he had been a coward, and false to his friend Jesus, just at the very time when a friend should be true, in the time of Jesus' suffering.

When three times Jesus asked, 'Lovest thou Me?' Simon Peter's memory must have spoken of that dreadful night when, he had three times said, he did not even know Jesus; but, do you know, I think it was just the memory of that night which made Simon Peter so bold as to say, 'Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee;' and I will show you how.

It was a dreadful time for Simon Peter, when his whole life broke down in hideous fault, and his whole love could not keep him from being a fool and a coward; but in that hour was

seen, what never could have been seen without Simon Peter's cruel words, that look from the eyes of Jesus, when as the cock crew, He turned and looked on Peter. Now, if Peter had not loved Jesus more than he loved himself, he would have liked that dreadful hour quite forgotten by every one. But I feel sure that, touched by the sweet knowledge of Jesus, Simon Peter knew that he would rather have all his own good deeds forgotten by God and by men, than he would have that dreadful hour forgotten, and with it, forgotten that look of Jesus. I am sure he felt that, to him, that one look from the

dear eyes of Jesus was worth more than much praise from many men. Then he felt that, even as at the first, he had shown that he loved Jesus more than he loved to succeed in his fishing, so at the last he had shown, before all the great spirits of God who can see and read the heart, that he loved Jesus more than he loved his own life—more than he loved his own success.

Do you not think that from that time, whenever the cock crew, instead of cruel shame there would come, upon Simon Peter's heart, glad thoughts of Jesus, as 'the day star,'¹ as the Sun of

¹ 2 Pet. i. 19.

Righteousness, who calls us 'out of darkness into His marvellous light'?¹

I hope every time you hear the cock crow you will remember, as I do, how terrible that cock crowing would sound, if it awakened us to a fresh sense of shame and grief for things we had wrongly done, and that, if the morning light does ever so make us sad and ashamed, there is for us, as for Simon Peter, a friend Christ Jesus, a loving God to whom we can look, by love, and be saved.

'His coming like the dawn shall be,
Like morning songs His voice.'

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 9.

But the oftener that Gannie hears the cock crow, and thinks of the loving Friend whose loving look changed that sound, from one of dreadful accusing into a song of the morning, the more she feels that she longs never to do a wrong thing. She thinks, that Simon Peter too must have longed to feel sure that he would, after all, show that he loved Jesus, by really dying for his sake.

That life of his with Jesus, which had begun with his leaving the first great haul of fish, had ended in a shameful fault. Instead of dying with Jesus, he had, when the time came,

denied Jesus. Now, when with another haul of fish, Jesus called him to begin again another life with Jesus, how would this end ?

Jesus answered that thought; He told Simon Peter that He would not leave him to fail again ; He told Simon Peter that when he was a young man he had been free to walk where he liked. Just as the net he had then thrown into the waters had broken, and some of the fish had gone away again into the waters, so in those early days, that net, which is the kingdom of the heavens, which is the power of love, had indeed caught Peter, but had not

had power to hold him unto the end. But even as the net he had now cast was not broken, and no fish had escaped, so the power of the kingdom of the heavens which had now come upon men would hold him, and by a strong hand keep him faithful to the end ; and though in himself he might shrink from suffering, yet he would by that great power be carried, and brought even by death to glorify God.



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