

took up a place of observation behind a couple of fuchsia bushes, where he could see without easily being seen.

Johnny's dark and subtle anticipations proved correct—his enemies were not going far; very soon they were perceived to be returning along the road, with all kinds of gambolling and boisterous nonsense. But no sooner did they notice the old hat lying there than they simultaneously made a rush for it, struggling and hauling at each other as to which should have the first kick. By this time Johnny had thrown himself prone on his face, just behind the little parapet of stone supporting the railings which were the garden frontage, where also was a row of fuchsia bushes. He could hear, but he could not see; neither could he be seen—except by Alison, who was a spectator of the whole performance. It was the tallest of the lads—he who had thrown the clod of earth at Johnny—who managed to shake off his two companions and secure the coveted first kick. He came on with a rush; then there was a crack! but instead of the tattered hat flying into the air, behold! a big stone rolled away along the road, while the enraged and astonished youth caught up his leg with both hands, and clinched his teeth outside his underlip in a manner betokening extreme dissatisfaction. Even through the shut window Alison could hear the roars of derision set up by his companions; and she could see that Johnny, lying snug behind the fuchsia bushes, was entirely convulsed with fiendish laughter, rolling and shaking, and digging his elbows into the ground. The injured youth outside regarded the house and its surroundings with malevolent and vindictive eyes; but of course there was no one to be seen. He even limped painfully up to the gate and shook it; and it might have gone hard with Master John if he had been discovered; but the gate was locked. So there was nothing for that lamed and sobered young man but to hobble away back to Fort William—no doubt delighting his companions with his contortions of pain and his curses and vows of vengeance.

But there was harder work than gravel-raking in store for Master Johnny that day. The three cousins had planned an expedition to a little lake far away among the hills—Flora desirous of getting some water-lilies, and Hugh looking forward to an hour or two's fly-fishing; while upon

Johnny devolved the double task of carrying the luncheon basket and rowing the boat. Alison wanted Aunt Gilchrist to accompany them; but the wild escapades which the little dame had been promising herself were being postponed from day to day, through some uneasy suspicion that Periphery was merely asleep with one eye open. Aunt Gilchrist went with them as far as they could drive; then the wagonette set out for home again, carrying her with it; and the three cousins were left to climb the hill toward this solitary tarn, the faithful Johnny struggling manfully upward with the luncheon basket on his shoulder.

The morning was singularly bright and breezy—indeed, Flora was much surer of getting her water-lilies than Hugh was of getting any fly-fishing, for the wind was blowing hard, and there was an abundant sunlight everywhere. When at last they came in sight of the little loch there was a picture before them that would have delighted the eye of anybody but an angler. Set in a cup of the hills, this small tarn was surrounded by soft green slopes, some of them covered with birch and some with bracken; while along the shore ran a circle of tall rushes that were bending and swaying in successive waves; and then another belt of water-lilies, whose broad leaves were all lifting and flapping in the wind, while the big white stars of flowers moved slowly hither and thither. For there was a brisk gale blowing, and the water of the lake, naturally of a deep brown, was driven into a rich purple-blue, that became quite ruddy in the shallows. Everywhere there was a restless change and movement—a universal shimmering and rustling—the fierce gusts striking down on the marshy banks where the sand-brown grass, the tall loosestrife, and the meadowsweet bent before the blast, and then widening out upon the racing and hurrying waves that dashed with a fringe of white along the leeward shore. It was all very bright and beautiful, no doubt—the keen blue sky overhead, the brilliant sunlight, the purple loch amid those fair green slopes; but there was not much prospect of fly-fishing.

In the mean time Johnny was despatched to the other end of the loch to bring across the boat; and a fine sight it was to see him trying to drive that heavy craft against wind and water. For a space it would seem as if he were making prog-