

"A catcher! Grasshoppers! Catch yer grasshoppers for yer?"

Now the Dragon was good-natured, and there was a bright hopefulness in the boy's voice which made him pause.

"Well," he said, thoughtfully, "I am not at all good at catching them myself, so you may come if you like, but, remember, no nonsense." So Harold Crayley and his aunt's arch enemy set forth.

About two miles along the Mangatainoka was a deep pool, Crayley had been recommended to try. When he reached the spot he determined to try his luck. He turned to the little hot figure at his side.

"Now, kid, look sharp with those catches you mentioned."

In a few minutes Timothy was back with a match-box load of grasshoppers. As agile as the lively bait himself, his brown fingers came swiftly and unerringly upon them as they sunned themselves upon the many blackened stumps and logs among the tall, yellow grass.

"Real fat beauties about today," he said, in an affable whisper to Crayley, and then kept out of the way while that gentleman whipped the stream in a manner that almost aroused his admiration. By twelve o'clock thirteen trout had been landed. Crayley left off to inspect the luncheon-basket.

"If I had not an aunt with exaggerated ideas about man's appetite, kid," he said, unpacking rapidly, "I should not have accepted your kind offer about the hoppers, but as matters stand you may wire in and fear not."

Timothy, with an absolute disregard of ceremony, settled down and enjoyed himself. He became communicative. The Dragon, sitting with his back against a giant rata in the shelter of the bush, smoked peacefully. He felt amused at the boy's chatter and his audacity generally. He had been clever with the landing-net once or twice, and his skill with regard to grasshoppers was beyond dispute. Well, he

would tip him at the end of the day, and make him a happy little vagabond.

"What's yer going to do with all yer fish?" enquired Timothy.

Crayley thought seriously for a moment, and then replied complacently:

"I shall dispose of them, kid, as I think fit."

"If they was mine," said Timothy, "I should give 'em all to Miss Wildon."

Crayley sat up with a sudden access of interest.

"Would you, indeed?" he said. "So you are acquainted with Miss Wildon, are you?"

Timothy looked at him with contempt, for his ignorance plainly shined in his brown eyes.

"G'arn!" he said; "she teaches me in school."

"Good Heavens!" said Crayley, "why are you not at school now, you young rascal?" He felt the question to be lame and futile as soon as uttered. So did Timothy. He did not consider it required an answer.

Crayley felt absurdly uncomfortable. What would his little acquaintance of the garden think when she found that he had aided and abetted a truant from her ranks? For some unknown reason he felt as if he could not bear her to think slightly of any action of his. He looked at his watch. Too late to send Timothy packing, even if the little wretch would have gone.

"Look here," said Timothy, quite softened by the perplexity in the Dragon's face, "don't you fret. She won't say nothing to me. She don't jaw a chap much—only looks sorry when he's bad."

Only looks sorry! That he should have anything to do with making her look sorry!

He had listened to Timothy's remarks with much attention, and the little lad was flattered.

"If you was to give me some flowers for her, wouldn't she like it," said he. "Rather!" He shut