

**WILLIAM, ALLAIR;  
OR, RUNNING  
AWAY TO SEA**

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William, Allair; or, Running away to sea by Mrs. Henry Wood

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**MRS. HENRY WOOD**

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HARRY CASE'S INTERVIEW WITH WILLIAM TELL.

WILLIAM ALLAIR;  
OR,  
RUNNING AWAY TO SEA.

BY  
MRS HENRY WOOD,  
AUTHOR OF "EAST LYONS," "THE CHANNINGS," ETC., ETC.

FRONTISPIECE FROM A DRAWING BY F. GILBERT.

LONDON:  
GRIFFITH AND FARRAN,  
(SUCCESSORS TO NEWBERRY AND HARRIS)  
CORNER OF ST PAUL'S CHURCHYARD,  
MDCCCLXIV.

WILLIAM ALLAIR;  
OR,  
RUNNING AWAY TO SEA.

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CHAPTER I.

THE TWENTY-SIXTH OF MAY.

I LIKE writing for boys, and I am going to tell them a story of real life. I hope all those who are especially inclined to be scapegraces will learn it by heart.

Never was there a pleasanter village than that of Whittermead, situated in a charming nook of old England. It had its colony of gentlemen's houses, its clustering cottages, its farm homesteads. An aristocratic village it was pleased to call itself, and a loyal village, too; which was the cause, possibly, why sundry old-fashioned customs, that had become obsolete in most places, reigned there still in triumph. Its enemies were apt to ridicule the place, and reproach it as being, in reference to the world in general, "a day behind the fair."

Two days in the year were kept as public holidays, and Whittermead, in its ultra loyalty, prided itself upon the fact. The days were the twenty-ninth of May, and

the fifth of November. Had the show on the one day, and the Guy Fawkeses and fireworks on the other, been done away with, the boys would have broken out into open rebellion; more particularly, the scholars of Dr Robertson's school, a semi-public school of renown in the county. It is with the twenty-ninth of May that we have to do; but not a very recent one; I am telling you of years ago.

In the heart of the town there stood a white, detached house. It was inhabited by a gentleman of the name of Allair; a solicitor of good practice for a small local place. His eldest son, William, gives the title to this book.

On the morning spoken of, the church bells rang out a merry peal, heralding in the holiday; so early, that few people were awake to hear them. Their sound aroused many,—amongst others, William Allair. He started from his pillow, a good-looking, fair boy of fifteen, and stared around him.

"The bells already!" cried he, winking and blinking his blue eyes between sleep and wake. "And—if I don't believe it's a fine morning!"

Taking a flying leap from his bed, he pulled aside the window curtain, and the glorious beauty of a bright morning burst upon his delighted view—all the more beautiful from its contrast to many preceding days. The weather had been dull and gloomy up to the very last night, and bets were pending that the twenty-ninth would be the same. Boys ought not to bet; but they *do*: and I see no use to ignore the fact, when writing of them. It was a lovely landscape that met William's sight, as he looked forth; for this house of Mr Allair,



built on a gentle eminence, commanded a view of the surrounding country. The blue sky, dark and serene, was without a cloud; the grass, fresh with the bright green of spring, glittered with dew drops; the hedges were gay with the white and pink-flowering May; the early birds were singing sweetly; and the many coloured flowers were opening to the morning sun. William Allair took it all in with greedy eyes, with a rapt movement of half-disbelieving delight.

"What a stupid I was, not to take Jenniker's bet that the day would be a bad one!"

He glanced at his watch, and found that it had stopped. In his flurry of anticipation the night before, he had forgotten to wind it up. Perhaps it was already late! Bursting out of the room with dismay at the thought, *en chemise-de-nuit*, as he was, he sprang across the corridor, and drummed sharply on the opposite door.

"Who's there? What is it?" cried a drowsy voice from the inside—that of his sister Alice.

He opened the door, and thrust in his head. "Now, you girls! Are you going to sleep all day? I knew what your boast was worth—that you'd be up first and call me."

"Is it late?" asked Alice, turning her head upon the pillow: while a pretty little face beside her rose up and stared.

"I am afraid it is. I forgot to wind up my watch. Of course! that's sure to be the case—the only morning I cared to know the time."

"I do believe it is fine!" exclaimed Alice. "Is it William?"

"If you get up, you'll see. It's not pouring cats and

dogs. Get up, Rose. I'll give you ten minutes to dress in. Shall I call Edmund?"

"No," replied Alice Allair. "Mamma forbid it last night. She said he was never well throughout the day if aroused up early. And it is true. If you'll shut the door, William, we will soon dress."

Bent upon a congenial expedition, they were not long preparing themselves for it. They were going out to observe the custom of the place on the twenty-ninth of May—that of starting abroad with the sun, to gather and gild oak-balls.

The clock struck six as they went out—William, Alice, and Rose Allair. Quiet enough looked the village in the early morning, but few shutters being open or blinds undrawn. The publicans had been abroad earlier, however; for great branches of oak, nearly as large as trees, were already raised in triumph over their several signs.

"I wonder whether the Vanes are ready, or whether we shall have to wait?" said Alice, as they were approaching a handsome white house, its portico supported by Corinthian pillars. "I hope they will not have turned lie-a-beds!"

"Trust to Harry Vane for that," was William's answer. "*He* is never behindhand."

Scarcely were the words spoken, when the door of the house opened, and out leaped an agile, active boy, somewhat younger than William. It was Harry Vane. A dark-eyed, noble, fine boy, careless and random in manner, somewhat too sanguine; but good at heart, truthful, generous. Caroline Vane followed; a handsome girl. But she descended the steps decorously; not, as her brother did, in a flying leap.

"Halloa! how are you?" shouted out Harry Vaue, catching sight of them in the distance.

"Halloa!" came the response from William. "I say! is it not prime to see this splendid morning?" he added, as they came nearer.

"First-rate!" was Harry Vaue's answer. "Oh, I said we should have it," he carelessly added. "Some of you croakers prophesied it would be wet. *I* knew better. As if we should get anything but sunshine on the twenty-ninth of May!"

"You always do look on the bright side of things," said William, as they all went on in a heap. The manner of their walking could be called nothing else.

"And you on the dark."

"At any rate, we were justified in croaking, in this instance," returned William. "The rain threatened us yesterday; and had been threatening us for days past."

"The more reason for its changing to fine," argued Harry Vaue. "The longest and darkest night gets morning at the end of it. Summer will come in brightly now. You'll see."

"It is to be hoped it will; we have had a pretty good share of all that's dull," remarked William. "The grass wants fine weather. The farmers are complaining."

"Did you ever know the farmers do anything but complain?" returned Harry Vaue. "Some of them will be found to find fault with to-day. In fine weather they want it wet; and in wet weather, they grumble that it is not dry. I say, have you met any of the fellows on your road?"

"Not one. Perhaps Robertson's man has turned crusty, and won't let the boarders out!"