

**THE STORY OF THE BEACON-
FIRE; OR, "TRUST IN GOD,
AND DO THE RIGHT." A TALE
OF THE CORNISH COAST**

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The Story of the Beacon-Fire; Or, "Trust in God, and Do the Right." a Tale of the Cornish Coast by Naomi

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NAOMI

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BY

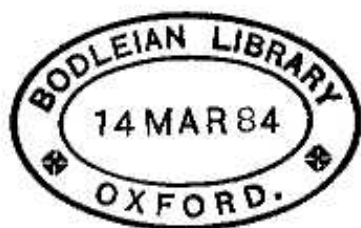
NAOMI.

“The Lord is on my side; I will not fear:
What can man do unto me?”
Psalms cxviii. 6.

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1882.

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Contents.

I. LITTLE NELL'S HOME,	9
II. NELL'S TEACHER,	16
III. A QUESTION ANSWERED,	20
IV. NELL MAKES UP HER MIND,	26
V. PETER'S SCHOLAR,	36
VI. ADAM NILE,	41
VII. A HAPPY INTERVIEW,	46
VIII. IN TROUBLE,	53
IX. A BRAVE MAID,	61
X. A NIGHT AT SEA,	68
XI. THE RED CLOAK,	72
XII. PETER'S AWAKING,	81
XIII. A FLYING,	92
XIV. MISTRESS MARGERY'S HOME,	99
XV. PETER ENTERTAINS ADAM,	110
XVI. A STRANGE GUEST AT THE INN,	117
XVII. WAS IT A FOOL'S ERRAND?	127
XVIII. MORE GUESTS AT THE FLYING SEA-GULL,	133



THE STORY OF THE BEACON-FIRE.

CHAPTER I.

LITTLE NELL'S HOME.



NELL was a child of the sea. All the year round her tawny hair was blown by foam-laden breezes about her sunburnt face. A brave, active child, she had little fear of anything save the angry violence of the rough men among whom she lived; for her home was with the fisher people of a lonely coast, and times were ruder then than they are now. The wildest sea that broke upon that shore was scarcely more pitiless than were some of the men who dwelt there; there were hearts among them hard and cruel as the rocks upon which so many a vessel had been driven to destruction.

Nell did not live in the fishing-village. Higher up the cliff, and about half a mile from the village, there was a group of cottages, and in one of these lived Nell with her mother, her uncle, and his son. The men in these cottages kept fishing-boats, but they did not

fish so often or so diligently as the men of the village. They took the work carelessly ; and yet they had no scarcity, for the most part, either of money or goods. Even in times when fish were scarce, and the rough men of the village had but scant food to eat, the rougher men on the cliff still indulged in feasting and rioting, and in drink that made them yet fiercer and more wicked than they were by nature. Money gained by smuggling—quickly got and quickly gone.

But smuggling, carried on as it was silently on dark calm nights, was not the only source of their unlawful riches. There were nights and days in winter, and during the spring and autumn gales, when the sea ran high up on the rocks, and the people within the dreary, ill-kept cottages could scarcely hear each other speak for the roar of the wind and the water ; when at the cry of "A wreck! a wreck!" all the inhabitants of the place—men, women, and even children—made their way, in the teeth of the wind and the blinding foam, down by steep paths to the fatal rocks, not to render help to the passengers and crew of the driven vessel, but to gather there an unholy harvest of plunder.

Nell could remember one or two such scenes. She was but a little girl still, and had pity in her heart, and more than once the glare of a torch on one of those terrible nights had shown her sights that she would gladly have forgotten ; but they haunted her long after, and many a night when she heard the wind rising and the waves breaking heavily on the shore, she dreaded above all things to hear the cry, "A wreck! a wreck!"—a cry for which some of those about her were listening intently.