CHAPTER X

**Mr. Mervel’s Veesit Tae Iping**

Efter the first strang fear wis bye, Iping becam quanter. Disbelief o a suddenty heistit its heid--raither nervous disbelief, nae at aa siccar, bit disbelief nivertheless. It’s sae muckle easier nae tae believe in an inveesible cheil; an fowk fa’d raelly seen him mell intae air, or felt the virr o his airm, could be coontit on the fingers o twa hauns. An o thon witnesses Mr. Wadgers wis tint eenoo, haein hidden secure ahin the snibs an snecks o his ain hoose, an Jaffers wis sprauchled dumfounert in the parlour o the "Cairraige an Shelts." Gran an fey notions ayont the kent aften hae less effeck upon cheils an weemen than smaaer, mair solid ferlies. Iping wis blythe wi buntin, an aabody wis in

gala rigoot. Whit Monday hid bin luikit forrit tae fur a month or mair. Bi the efterneen even thon fa believed in the Unkent wir stertin tae restert their wee ploys in a blate wey, on the notion that he’d gaen awa, an wi the unbelievers he wis already a joke. Bit fowk, unbelievers an believers baith, wir unca frienly aa thon day.

Heysman's ley wis blythe wi a tent, far Mrs. Buntin an ither wifies wir makkin tea, while, ootbye, the Sabbath-skweel bairns ran races an played gemmes unner the lood guidance o the meenister an the Lassies Cuss an Sackbut. Nae doot there wis a slicht uneasiness aboot, bit fowk fur the maist pairt hid the mense tae hap fitever inbye flegs they hid. On the clachan girse a booed strang towe, doon which, clingin betimes tae a pulley-flang haunle, ane could be haived wi virr agin a pyoke at the ither eyn, cam in fur conseederable likin amang the

halflins, as weel as the swings an the cocoanut shies. There wis waukin aboot, an the steam organ fixed tae a wee merriematanzie fulled the air wi a strang guff o ile an wi unca lood music. Memmers o the club, fa’d gaen tae kirk in the mornin, wir braw in badges o pink an emerant, an puckles o the blyther-harned hid titivated their bowler hats wi bricht-coloured nippicks o ribbon. Auld Fletcher, fas notions o holiday-makkin wir, sterk wis veesible throwe the jasmine aboot his windae or throwe the lowsed yett (fitiver wey ye chuse tae luik), stude cannily on a plank upheld bi twa chairs, an fitewashin the reef o his front chaumer.

Aboot fower o'clock a fremmit body cam inno the clachan frae the airt doonbye. He wis a wee, stoot birkie in a byordnar bumshayvelt hat, an he luikit tae be verra ooto braith. His chikks wir betimes dweeble an tichtly puffed. His blotchy face wis fearfu, an he meeved wi a kinno latchy zeal. He turned the neuk o the kirk, an direckit his wey tae the "Cairraige an Shelts." Amang ithers auld Fletcher mynds seein him, an fegs, the auld cheil wis sae bumbazed bi his fey steer that he alloued a rowth o fitewash tae run doon the brush inno the sleeve o his jaiket while regairdin him.

This fremmit body, tae the kennin o the ainer o the cocoanut shy, luikit tae be spikkin tae himsel, an Mr. Huxter remairked the same ferlie. He devauled at the fit o the "Cairraiges an Shelts" steps, an, accordin tae Mr. Huxter, luikit tae unnergae a hard internal tyauve afore he could lat hissel tae gyang intae the hoose. At the hinnereyn he merched up the steps, an wis seen bi Mr. Huxter tae turn tae the left an unsteek the yett o the parlour. Mr. Huxter lippent tae voyces frae inbye the chaumer an frae the bar tellin the cheil o his mistak."Thon chaumer's private!" quo Hall, an the fremmit body caad tee the yett awkward like an gaed intae the howff.

In the coorse o a fyew meenits he reappeared, dichtin his moo wi the back o his haun wi an air o quaet pleisur that somewey struck Mr. Huxter as pit on. He stude luikin aboot him fur some meenits, an syne Mr. Huxter saw him wauk in an unca sleekit mainner tae the yetts o the yaird, upon which the parlour windae unsteekit. The fremmit body, efter some switherin, leant agin ane o the yett-posts, tuik oot a sma clay pipe, an stertit tae stap it. His fingers fummlit while daein sae. He kinnlit it clumsy-like, an fauldin his airms stertit tae rikk it in a latchy wey, a wey that his antrin keeks up the yaird aategither belied.

Aa this Mr. Huxter saw ower the canisters o the tobaccay windae, an the feyness o the cheil's weys gart him keep luikin.

Sune the fremmit body stude up smertly an pit his pipe in his pooch. Syne he vanished inno the yaird. Straicht aff Mr. Huxter, jelousin he wis witness o some tippence-haepenny chorin, lowpin roon his coonter an ran oot inno the road tae catch the thief. As he did sae, Mr. Mervel reappeared, his hat sweejee, a muckle bunnle in a blae brod-cloot in ae haun, an three buiks rowed thegether--as it pruved eftir wi the meenister’s galluses--in the ither. Finiver he saw Huxter he gaed a kinno sough, an turnin sherply tae the left, stertit tae rin. "Devaul, thief!" cried Huxter, an set aff efter him. Mr. Huxter's feelins wir strang bit brief. He saw the cheil jist afore him breengin faist fur the kirk neuk an the knowe road. He saw the clachan flags an pliskies ayont, an a face or sae turned tae him. He skreiched, "Devaul!" again. He’d scarce gaen ten strides afore his cweet wis catched in some fey wey, an he wis nae langer rinnin, bit fleein wi unca speed ben the air. He saw the grun o a suddenty nearhaun his face. The warld seemed tae brakk inno a million furlin spirks o licht, an ither ongauns interestit him nae mair.