



A RAMBLE BY THE SHORE

SISTERS-IN-LOVE

BY

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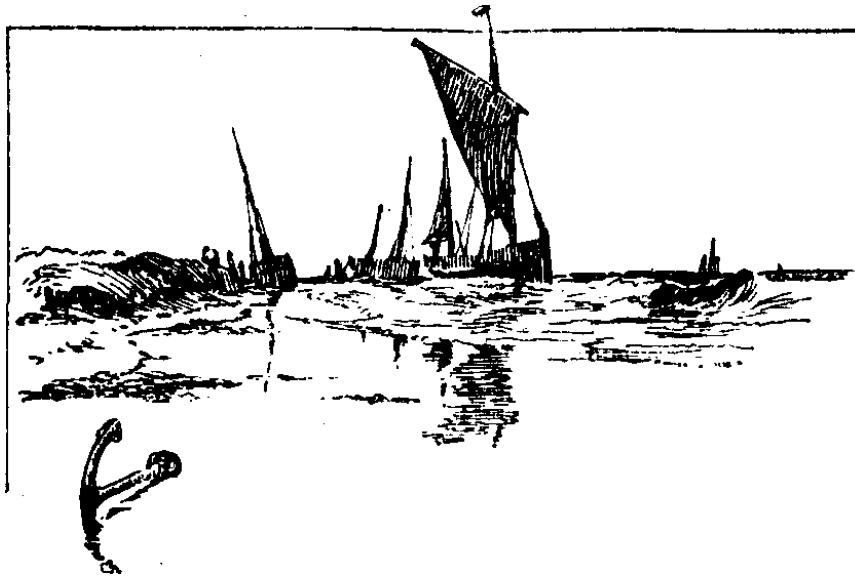
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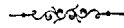
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SISTERS-IN-LOVE.



CHAPTER I.

"A WILD BIRD SCABCELY FLEDGED."

IF you had peeped into the parlour of Glenogle Manse one summer evening you would have seen a pretty sight, and heard a curious sound — something like the tinkling of mountain burns and the cooing of doves blended together. Occasionally there would break on the combined melody a stifled cackle as of suppressed mirth struggling with its bonds, and then there would be a rustle and hiss as of ripened grain when the breezes pass over it. As that "hush-h-h" echoed through the room, a number of bright eyes would be turned towards the door, and a bevy of young, pretty faces would break into smiles, while *one* would be suffused with blushes.

I said you would have seen a pretty sight in that homely room of a homely house. Is there anything in nature more beautiful than a girl in the bloom of her youth? And when you have seven girls picturesquely grouped together—seven sisters differing very much from one another in appearance as well as in character, yet all nice-looking, and all carrying the nameless charm of family resemblance, can you imagine anything more likely to attract admiration?

The eldest was not more than twenty, the youngest about seven. Their abundant hair was of every shade of brown, from the rich dusky hue of newly-ploughed soil to the golden-red tint of bracken in late autumn. Their eyes were every shade of blue, from that of grey mist to that of spring violets. As for their mouths, noses, complexions, and figures, I dare not try to describe these, beyond repeating that collectively they helped to make up a pretty, even charming picture.

Perhaps it may help us to individualize the girls better if I point out their positions, for, after all, mere cataloguing of features doesn't tell much. The eldest, Mary by name, was on the sofa, with Janie, a shy, pale mite of ten, on her knee; Peggy, next herself in age, was sitting in a very dignified attitude by her side; Mary's hand was around Nelly, who was perched on the sofa arm, with a sweet blush on her face and a graceful droop of the head, which gave a new charm to her whole appearance. Up to that date Nelly had been regarded as the tomboy of the family, and I must admit had acted up to the character, although she had reached the age of seventeen. Katie was kneeling in front of the sofa, with her elbows on Mary's lap, and Nancy was sitting on a footstool with her head laid back, so that she could gaze into Mary's face. The baby of the family, whose Christian name of Eva had been lost in many pet names, was noiselessly rolling among the skirts and hands of her sisters, and occasionally startling them by some quaint or shrewd question. She is steadying herself on Nancy's shoulder, as we look in upon the group, preparatory to making a remark. Let us listen. "Will Nelly have to go away with Mr. Moidart—away from *us*, Mamie?" Eva asked, and at her question Mary's arm drew Nelly closer, and her eyes filled with tears as she turned a most motherly gaze on her blushing sister.

"Nonsense, Baby," Nelly exclaimed, growing more red still; "what are you talking about?"

"But that's what happens when girls are engaged," said Katie, the quick-ideaed sister, three years younger than Nelly, but far ahead of her in book-lore. "Girls have to go away with the men they marry."