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opening extract from

The Famous Five: Five go to Smuggler's Top

written by

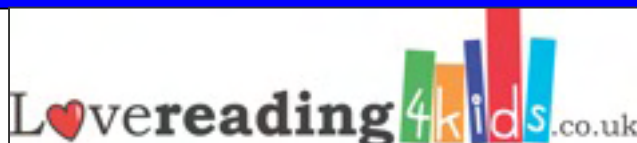
Enid Blyton

published by

Hachette Children's Books

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Back to Kirrin Cottage

One fine day, right at the beginning of the Easter holidays, four children and a dog travelled by train together.

‘Soon be there now,’ said Julian, a tall strong boy, with a determined face.

‘Woof,’ said Timothy the dog, getting excited, and trying to look out of the window too.

‘Get down, Tim,’ said Julian. ‘Let Anne have a look.’

Anne was his younger sister. She put her head out of the window. ‘We’re coming into Kirrin Station!’ she said. ‘I do hope Aunt Fanny will be there to meet us.’

‘Of course she will!’ said Georgina, her cousin. She looked more like a boy than a girl, for she wore her hair very short, and it curled close about her head. She too had a determined face, like Julian. She pushed Anne away and looked out of the window.

‘It’s nice to be going home,’ she said. ‘I love school – but it will be fun to be at Kirrin Cottage and perhaps sail out to Kirrin Island and visit the castle there. We haven’t been since last summer.’

‘Dick’s turn to look out now,’ said Julian, turning to his younger brother, a boy with a pleasant face, sitting reading in a corner. ‘We’re just coming into sight of Kirrin, Dick. Can’t you stop reading for a second?’

‘It’s such an exciting book,’ said Dick, and shut it with a clap. ‘The most exciting adventure story I’ve ever read!’

‘Pooh! I bet it’s not as exciting as some of the adventures *we’ve* had!’ said Anne, at once.

It was quite true that the five of them, counting in Timmy the dog, who always shared everything with them, had had the most amazing adventures together. But now it looked as if they were going to have nice quiet holidays, going for long walks over the cliffs, and perhaps sailing out in George’s boat to their island of Kirrin.

‘I’ve worked jolly hard at school this term,’ said Julian. ‘I could do with a holiday!’

‘You’ve gone thin,’ said Georgina. Nobody called her that. They all called her George. She would never answer to any other name. Julian grinned.

‘Well, I’ll soon get fat at Kirrin Cottage, don’t you worry! Aunt Fanny will see to that. She’s a great one for trying to fatten people up. It will be nice to see your mother again, George. She’s an awfully good sort.’

‘Yes. I hope Father will be in a good temper these hols,’ said George. ‘He ought to be because he has just finished some new experiments, Mother says, which have been quite successful.’

George’s father was a scientist, always working out new ideas. He liked to be quiet, and sometimes he flew into a temper when he could not get the peace he needed or things did not go exactly as he wanted them to. The children often thought that hot-tempered Georgina was very like her father! She too could fly into fierce tempers when things did not go right for her.

Aunt Fanny was there to meet them. The four children jumped out on the platform and rushed to hug her. George got there first. She was very fond of her gentle mother, who

had so often tried to shield her when her father got angry with her. Timmy pranced round, barking in delight. He adored George's mother.

She patted him, and he tried to stand up and lick her face. 'Timmy's bigger than ever!' she said, laughing. 'Down, old boy! You'll knock me over.'

Timmy was certainly a big dog. All the children loved him, for he was loyal, loving and faithful. His brown eyes looked from one to the other, enjoying the children's excitement. Timmy shared in it, as he shared in everything.

But the person he loved most, of course, was his mistress, George. She had had him since he was a small puppy. She took him to school with her each term, for she and Anne went to a boarding-school that allowed pets. Otherwise George would most certainly have refused to go!

They set off to Kirrin in the pony-trap. It was very windy and cold, and the children shivered and pulled their coats tightly round them.

'It's awfully cold,' said Anne, her teeth beginning to chatter. 'Colder than in the winter!'

'It's the wind,' said her aunt, and tucked a rug round her. 'It's been getting very strong the last day or two. The fishermen have pulled their boats high up the beach for fear of a big storm.'

The children saw the boats pulled right up as they passed the beach where they had bathed so often. They did not feel like bathing now. It made them shiver even to think of it.

The wind howled over the sea. Great scudding clouds raced overhead. The waves pounded on the beach and made a terrific noise. It excited Timmy, who began to bark.

'Be quiet, Tim,' said George, patting him. 'You will have to learn to be a good quiet dog now we are home again, or Father will be cross with you. Is Father very busy, Mother?'

'Very,' said her mother. 'But he's going to do very little work now you are coming home. He thought he would like to go for walks with you, or go out in the boat, if the weather calms down.'

The children looked at one another. Uncle Quentin was not the best of companions. He had no sense of humour, and when the children went off into fits of laughter, as they did twenty times a day or more, he could not see the joke at all.

'It looks as if these hols won't be quite so jolly if Uncle Quentin parks himself on us most of the time,' said Dick in a low voice to Julian.

'Sh,' said Julian, afraid that his aunt would hear, and be hurt. George frowned.

'Oh Mother! Father will be bored stiff if he comes with us – and we'll be bored too.'

George was very outspoken, and could never learn to keep a guard on her tongue. Her mother sighed. 'Don't talk like that, dear. I daresay your father will get tired of going with you after a bit. But it does him good to have a bit of young life about him.'

'Here we are!' said Julian, as the trap stopped outside an old house. 'Kirrin Cottage! My word, how the wind is howling round it, Aunt Fanny!'

'Yes. It made a terrible noise last night,' said his aunt. 'You take the trap round to the back, Julian, when we've got the things out. Oh, here's your uncle to help!'

Uncle Quentin came out, a tall, clever-looking man, with rather frowning eyebrows. He smiled at the children and kissed George and Anne.

‘Welcome to Kirrin Cottage!’ he said. ‘I’m quite glad your mother and father are away, Anne, because now we shall have you all here once again!’

Soon they were sitting round the table eating a big tea. Aunt Fanny always got ready a fine meal for their first one, for she knew they were very hungry after their long journey on the train.

Even George was satisfied at last, and leaned back in her chair, wishing she could manage just one more of her mother’s delicious new-made buns.

Timmy sat close to her. He was not supposed to be fed at meal-times but it was really surprising how many tit-bits found their way to him under the table!

The wind howled round the house. The windows rattled, the doors shook, and the mats lifted themselves up and down as the draught got under them.

‘They look as if they’ve got snakes wriggling underneath them,’ said Anne. Timmy watched them and growled. He was a clever dog, but he did not know why the mats wriggled in such a strange way.

‘I hope the wind will die down tonight,’ said Aunt Fanny. ‘It kept me awake last night. Julian dear, you look rather thin. Have you been working hard? I must fatten you up.’

The children laughed. ‘Just what we thought you’d say, Mother!’ said George. ‘Goodness, what’s that?’

They all sat still, startled. There was a loud bumping noise on the roof, and Timmy put up his ears and growled fiercely.

‘A tile off the roof,’ said Uncle Quentin. ‘How tiresome! We shall have to get the loose tiles seen to, Fanny, when the storm is over, or the rain will come in.’

The children rather hoped that their uncle would retire to his study after tea, as he usually did, but this time he didn’t. They wanted to play a game, but it wasn’t much good with Uncle Quentin there. He really wasn’t any good at all, not even at such a simple game as snap.

‘Do you know a boy called Pierre Lenoir?’ Uncle Quentin suddenly asked, taking a letter from his pocket. ‘I believe he goes to your school and Dick’s, Julian.’

Oh you mean old Sooty,’ said Julian. ‘Yes – he’s in Dick’s form. Mad as a hatter.’

‘Sooty! Now why do you call him that?’ said Uncle Quentin. ‘It seems a silly name for a boy.’

‘If you saw him you wouldn’t think so,’ said Dick, with a laugh. ‘He’s very dark! Hair as black as soot, eyes like bits of coal, eyebrows that look as if they’ve been put in with charcoal. And his name means “The black one”, doesn’t it? Le-noir – that’s French for black.’

‘Yes. Quite true. But what a name to give anyone – *Sooty*!’ said Uncle Quentin. ‘Well, I’ve been having quite a lot of correspondence with this boy’s father. He and I are interested in the same scientific matters. In fact, I’ve asked him whether he wouldn’t like to come and stay with me for a few days – and bring his boy, Pierre.’

‘Oh really!’ said Dick, looking quite pleased. ‘Well it wouldn’t be bad sport to have old Sooty here, Uncle. But he’s quite mad. He never does as he’s told, he climbs like a monkey, and he can be awfully cheeky. I don’t know if you’d like him much.’

Uncle Quentin looked sorry he had asked Sooty after he had heard what Dick had to say. He didn’t like cheeky boys. Nor did he like mad ones.

'Hm,' he said, putting the letter away. 'I wish I'd asked you about the boy first, before suggesting to his father that he might bring him with him. But perhaps I can prevent him coming.'

'No, don't, Father,' said George, who rather liked the sound of Sooty Lenoir. 'Let's have him. He could come out with us and liven things up!'

'We'll see,' said her father, who had already made up his mind on no account to have the boy at Kirrin Cottage, if he was mad, climbed everywhere, and was cheeky. George was enough of a handful without a devil of a boy egging her on!

Much to the children's relief Uncle Quentin retired to read by himself about eight o'clock. Aunt Fanny looked at the clock.

'Time for Anne to go to bed,' she said. 'And you too, George.'

'Just one good game of Slap-Down Patience, all of us playing it together, Mother!' said George. 'Come on – you play it too. It's our first evening at home. Anyway, I shan't sleep for ages, with this gale howling round! Come on, Mother – one good game, then we'll go to bed. Julian's been yawning like anything already!'