Title: Peter Biddulph: The Story of an Australian Settler

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"Peter Biddulph"

Chapter One.

The Settler's Early Days.

From my earliest days to the present time I have been gradually climbing up the ladder towards a comfortable berth on the top; and if a ratlin has given way beneath my feet, I always have had a firm hold above my head. The first step I took was off the mud on to dry ground. I can recollect nothing clearly before that time. I was born on board a river barge, and never left it, winter nor summer, till I was fully six years old. One day the barge took the mud, which is not surprising, considering that I was the only person on deck. I ran to the helm to turn her head off the shore, but it was too late—there she stuck hard and fast. My mother was below, tending my father, and he lay dying. It was the barge's last voyage, and his too. Both had seen much service. The barge never moved again, but went on rotting and rotting till the owner sold her and she was broken up.

Father died that night, and a boat came and took mother and me on shore, with father's body, and such property as we possessed—not much, I fancy,—a kettle and pot, some plates, and knives, and cups, and a few clothes,—we hadn't wanted furniture, and with these mother and I had to begin the world. She said things might have been worse, for she might have had a dozen children instead of one, and debts to pay—and she didn't owe a farthing, which was a great comfort in her affliction.

My mother was indeed, while she lived, a very good mother to me, for she taught me to distinguish right from wrong, to love the former and to hate the latter. As may be supposed, she was very poor, and I was often without a meal. I know, too, that she frequently stinted herself to give me food. She lived on the banks of the Thames somewhere below London, and I very soon found my way down to the mud, where I now and then used to pick up odds and ends, bits of iron and copper, and sometimes even coin, and chips of wood. The first my mother used to sell, and I often got enough in the week to buy us a hearty meal; the last served to boil our kettle when we had any food to cook in it. Few rich people know how the poor live; our way was a strange one. My poor mother used to work with her needle, and go out as a charwoman, and to wash, when she could get any one to wash for, but that was seldom; and toil as hard as she might, a difficult matter she had to pay the rent of the little room in which we lived. She felt sorely the struggle she had to endure with poverty, for she had seen better days—far better, I suspect,—and was not accustomed to it. She was, I have reason to believe, well educated—at all events, much above most persons in the station in life she then occupied; and, young as I was, she taught me to read, and to repeat poetry, and to sing psalms; and though I forget nearly all the events of my life at that time, I remember many of the verses she taught me; they have been a wonderful comfort to me through life. My mother had married unwisely, I have no doubt, and if she ever had any relations, they discarded her; so she was very soon reduced to the condition I have described, aided by an illness which at length terminated in her death.

I was about eight years old when I became an orphan; but my intellects were sharpened by exercise, and I was as precocious as many children double my age. As I was able to do something to gain my own livelihood, the people of the house where we lodged took compassion on me, and, instead of sending me to the workhouse, gave me the corner of a garret to sleep in. I understood the compact, and worked harder than ever.

Young as I was I felt my mother's loss most bitterly. We had been all in all to each other, and I should have broken down altogether with grief, had not my kind host roused me up and advised me to go out and try and do something to gain my livelihood. Hunger is a severe taskmaster; it makes many an idle man work.

I now became a regular mudlark, though I got employment when I could by running on errands and in assisting the boatmen on the river. I was one summer's day, with a number of other boys, wading up to my knees in the water, when a boat with several gentlemen on a pleasure excursion came down the river, and pulled into the shore near where we were. Some of the gentlemen landed, while the others who remained in the boat amused themselves by

throwing halfpence into the water for us to dive after. They scattered them about in every direction, so that many coins were altogether lost; for as the boys rushed after them they drove them into the mud.

At last, as I was standing some way from the other boys, a gentleman threw a penny towards me; but it passed over my head and fell into deep water, and directly afterwards I heard him exclaim—

“Dear me! I’ve lost my ring—my diamond ring, too. I would not have lost it for a hundred pounds.”

As he had been throwing pence in various directions, he had no notion where it had fallen, though he naturally concluded that it had come off at one of those times. As I saw that he was very much annoyed at his loss I felt sorry for him; so I went up to him, and told him that I would hunt about for his ring, and that if I found it I would gladly bring it to him, provided he would tell me where he lived.

“But don’t you bargain for a reward?” asked one of his companions.

“That depends upon how far off the gentleman lives,” I replied. “If near at hand this errand may be only worth a sixpence; but if far off, perhaps he won’t think a shilling too much to give me.”

“I’ll tell you what, my man; I’ll gladly give you ten shillings if you find it; but I fear there is little chance of your so doing,” replied the gentleman, smiling.

“There’s nothing like trying, sir,” I replied; “and if you’ll tell me your name and where you live, if I pick it up you shall have it again.”

“Well, then, you must inquire for Mr Wells, — Street, — Square, London,” said the gentleman.

“If you write it down I shall have less chance of forgetting it,” I replied.

“That would be little use to you, my man,” he observed; “you cannot read, I should suppose.”

“But I can, though,” I replied. “Give me your card, and you will see I speak the truth.”

On this one of the gentlemen drew out a card from his pocket, and wrote some words on it with a pencil, while I washed my hands and dried them in my shirt-sleeves. He then handed me the card. I looked at it and saw that it was in a language I could not understand.

“Those are Latin words, and I did not say I could read any language,” I observed, handing him back his card.

“You are right, my boy,” said the gentleman who had lost his ring; “but here are some lines in English: let us hear if you can read them.”

I looked at the lines attentively: they were at the commencement of a poem my mother had taught me; so I not only read them off fluently, but, to the great surprise of all present, went on repeating the succeeding ones.

“Bravo! bravo!” exclaimed the gentlemen, highly delighted. “You’re a genius, my lad—a perfect marvel. A mudlark spout poetry! Truly the schoolmaster is abroad.”

“Who taught you your learning, my boy?” asked another.

“My mother, sir,” I replied, calmly, and rather surprised at their expressions, for I saw nothing wonderful in my performance.

“I should like to see this mother of yours; she must be out of the common way too,” observed the same person.

“Mother is dead, sir,” I answered, crying; for the very mention of her name wrung my young heart with grief.

“There is something more here than meets the eye,” said Mr Wells. “My poor boy, don’t cry. Come to-morrow to my house, whether you find my ring or not. In the meantime here is half a crown; your poetry deserves it.”

I took the money almost mechanically; for I was thinking of my mother, and was scarcely aware of the amount of wealth I was receiving.

On seeing Mr Wells give me money, the other gentlemen did the same, and some even gave me as much as five shillings; so that I felt as if coin was raining down on me from the skies. My tears dried up, and, for a minute, I felt supremely happy; but on a sudden the thought occurred to me, that if my mother had been alive how happy it would have made her, and I burst forth into tears again.

Mr Wells on this asked me why I cried; so I told him the truth, and he believed me; though I believe, from the expression of some of the other gentlemen’s faces, that they fancied I was crying to gain their compassion: at all events, they gave me no more money, and their companions returning to the boat, they shoved off and continued their course down the river.

As soon as they were gone I began to collect my thoughts, and to consider my best chance of finding the lost ring. As I heard Mr Wells say that he would not have lost it for a hundred pounds, I believed that was its value, and though I had no just conception of how much a hundred pounds was, I knew that it must be a great deal of money. I was therefore very anxious to restore it to the kind gentleman.

Here I benefited by my good mother’s instruction; and I believed her spirit watched over me to keep me from evil; for it never occurred to me, as I am sorry to say it did to some of the other boys who overheard the gentleman’s

observation, that it would be easier if the ring was found to sell it and secure its value, than to trust to the chance of obtaining a small reward by returning it to its proper owner.

I fortunately overheard them plotting to secure the ring for themselves, and I determined to counteract their plan. Though the water was deep where the ring had fallen there was no current, as it was in a little bay in the bank of the river, and what was more, I remembered that the ground was rather harder than that surrounding it, and that it rose slightly outside.

These circumstances gave me hopes of finding the ring; so I sat down at some little distance on the bank, pretending to be counting the money I had received, but in reality watching narrowly the spot where I thought it had fallen.

I do not mean to say that I was indifferent to my good fortune, but I honestly believe I thought much more of the pleasure it would give the poor people who had charitably taken care of me in my destitution, than of the benefit I should myself derive from it.

The tide had only run off a very little when the ring was thrown in, so that I had a considerable time to wait; but though I grew very hungry, and felt that I might enjoy a plentiful meal, I would not quit my post; indeed, I was accustomed to starve, so that did not incommode me much.

Slowly the tide receded, and one after one the other boys went away. At last the bank appeared, and the intervening space was left with very little water over it. I was in hopes that none of the other boys would return to interrupt me in my search; but, to my annoyance, just as the mud was left quite clear, two of them came back, and immediately tucking up their trousers, hurried into the mud.

Chapter Two.

New Friends.

Now it so happened that I had carefully noted where the penny had fallen, and if I had been alone, I could have gone straight to the place. But, wishing to mislead my rivals in the search, I waded into the water at a considerable distance from the spot. Glad of a clue, the other mud-larks came over to me in a hurry, and began hunting about. Leaving them there, I went to another place, and so on till I gradually approached the spot where I thought the ring had fallen. They again followed me, and as I was stooping down I heard one of them cry out, and I thought he had found the treasure, but it was only the penny Mr Wells had thrown me. “Ho! ho!” I thought, “the ring will not have reached as far as that, but I must make haste and find it, or it will be too dark to see anything.” The other boys thought the ring must be close to the penny, and kept turning up the mud in every direction round it, while I worked my way straight on to where the boat had been. I had begun to think that I must have passed it, when I saw something glitter in a little pool of water just under a large stone. I stooped down, and to my joy I found that it was the gold ring. My first impulse was to sing out, but then it struck me that I might run some chance of being robbed of my treasure, and that it would be a just punishment to the naughty boys to keep them still hunting for it; so, instead of saying anything about the matter, I pretended to be groping on as before, and at last, on getting near the shore, I exclaimed that there was no chance of any one finding it that night, and that I should go home. On getting on shore I ran as fast as my legs would carry me, eager to give my charitable friends an account of my good fortune, but with regard to the ring I said not a word. The instinctive caution I possessed taught me that it would be wiser to say nothing, even to them, about it. I told them, as was the case, that the money had been given to me by the gentlemen for repeating poetry to them.

We had a capital supper that night, the best I had ever enjoyed; and giving my wealth to my friends to keep for me, I set off the next morning, my heart beating high with satisfaction, to restore the ring to Mr Wells.

I found his house without much difficulty, although I had never been in that part of London before, but my wits were not at fault on this occasion more than on any other. A domestic opened the door, whom I at first took to be a very great lord, for I had seldom before seen a livery servant; but when he told me that his master was not at home, and he could not say when he would return, and without deigning any further answer slammed the door in my face, I guessed who he was. I accordingly sat down on the steps to wait patiently for the return of Mr Wells. As I had been thinking all night long of my good fortune, I had not slept a wink, and it was therefore not surprising that I fell very fast asleep where I sat. How long I thus remained dreaming of the events of the previous day I do not know, when I was awaked by the sound of a kind voice in my ear, and opening my eyes I saw Mr Wells standing before me.

“Ah, my little poet!” he exclaimed; “you here already!”

“Yes, sir,” I answered, jumping up; “and I have found your ring, and brought it to you too.”

“Have you indeed? That is more than I expected,” he replied. “But come in, and you can then give me the ring, and tell me something about yourself.”

So I went into his house, and he was evidently pleased when he saw the ring, which I had washed and wrapped up carefully in a bit of rag, and it looked clean and bright. He then took me into the parlour, where two ladies were sitting at breakfast, where he made me join them, all untidy as I was, at their meal; after which he desired me to give a full account of myself, and to recite some more poetry, all of which I did, apparently much to the satisfaction of the party present.

“’Twere a pity for the child to grow up neglected and uncared for, as will probably be his fate, till he becomes in no way superior to the uncultivated, ignorant men among whom he will be doomed to live,” observed one of the ladies to Mr Wells, who was, I found, his wife. “Can you do anything for him?”

“I was thinking on the subject, my love,” answered Mr Wells. “The question in my mind is, ‘In what position shall he be placed?’”

“Oh, my dear, that is very easy,” replied the lady, in an eager tone; “send him to a good school, and then make him one of your clerks.”

“That might not prove a real kindness after all,” said her husband; “he has already, by his own exertions and good conduct, made one step up the ladder, and I think it will be wiser to leave him to work his own way upward. He will then be less liable to slip down again. I will keep an eye on him, and give him advice when he requires it.”

This I believe he said for my benefit, that I might not fancy that I had nothing further to do than to wait for the coming of good luck, as is the case too often with certain people, who then grumble and find fault with the world because their luck never comes. I do not mean to say that opportunities do not occur to some men more frequently than to others, but I believe that they visit most of us at some time or other of our lives, and that it is our own fault if we do not take advantage of them.

“But I will learn what the boy himself has to say on the subject,” said Mr Wells.—“What would you like to do, my lad?”

“I want to be a sailor, sir,” I answered, promptly; for such had been the earnest desire of my life; “I wish to go to some of the places the ships I see passing up and down the river visit.”

“You are too young yet to go to sea, but when you are old enough you cannot perhaps do better. The sea requires people of sense more than any other, and yet some persons send the dunce of the family on board ship, and then are surprised that he does not get on. You shall now go back to the friends who have taken care of you, and who seem good people. We must find somebody to whom you may go when you wish to get some more learning, and I dare say you will find some means of earning your bread till you are old enough to go to sea.

“By-the-by, I must not forget the reward I promised you for finding my ring. I will bring it down to you to-morrow or next day, if you will in the meantime trust me.”

He said this smiling, and I felt sure he would not deceive me. At the same time I told him that he had paid me before handsomely, and that I did not want any other reward. He told me that must rest with him, and that I was fairly entitled to it. He then bade me good-bye.

With a joyful heart I returned home to record to my friends all that had happened.

Mr Wells was as good as his word, and the following day I saw him on horseback, inquiring his way to the street where I lived. I went up to him, and led him to the house. He then dismounted, and giving his horse to another boy to hold, he called me in, and told my friends that he had spoken to the curate of the parish about me, and that I might go to him two hours every evening after I had done my work. He then gave me five pounds, advising me to rig myself out neatly; and he told me besides that he had spoken to some of the boatmen in the neighbourhood, who he thought were very likely to employ me if I applied to them. After a few more words of advice the good gentleman took his departure.

Now Mr Wells was a man of sound sense, and his conduct was, I have reason to know, most judicious. He saw that I was accustomed to act for myself, young as I was, and that I should have less chance of slipping off the ladder, if I mounted each ratlin by myself; and he considered that as I was of somewhat a poetical temperament, if my mind received a hot bed forcing at too early an age, I should be unfitted to struggle on in this every-day working world. Had he, as his wife recommended him, sent me to a boarding school, where I should have had everything done for me, I should probably very soon have lost that habit of dependence on my own exertions which has been the great cause of my success in life; and the routine style of education I should there have received would certainly not have compensated for the loss of the other advantage, nor would the amount of knowledge I should have gained have been in all probability in any way equal to that I obtained from my evenings’ study with the good curate, Mr Hamlin.

Depend upon it, after children are shown what is right, the sooner they are taught self-reliance the better. It is the principle I have followed out with my own, and they are now independent men, and are grateful to me for it. I began with them as soon as they were weaned; before that time I did not consider I ought to interfere with my wife. I never let one of them have a meal before he had performed some task for it, nor a new frock or jacket. Sometimes I would set a week’s work, and let them get through it as they liked, provided they had earned their food. I thus very early found out their characters, and the amount of perseverance and energy they possessed, and managed them accordingly. They all got through their work in the set time, but in different ways. One would set to work the moment he knew what he was to do, and toil away till it was completed; another would commence more leisurely, then go to some other occupation or amusement, and then return to his regular labours; a third would take the whole time to complete the undertaking, but it was invariably done well. I taught my own boys the advantages of industry, and they soon learned to like labour for itself. They have never been idle, and consequently have never been vicious.

For six or seven years I lived on with my old friends, spending all the day on the river assisting the boatmen to take care of their boats, and, as I grew bigger, in rowing, till I had saved enough money to get a share of a boat myself, while every evening that Mr Hamlin was able to receive me I paid him a visit. At the time I was fourteen my wish to go to sea, grew stronger than ever, and Mr Wells at once acceded to it, and told me that he would gladly find me a berth in one of his own vessels, for he was, what I forgot before to say, an extensive shipowner. He advised me to sell my share in the boat, and to invest the amount, with my subsequent savings, in the savings bank, telling me that he had such entire confidence in me that he would gladly advance the money for my outfit.

I was accordingly entered as an apprentice, and made my first voyage, in the good ship the *Mary Jane*, to the Brazils. The next was round Cape Horn to the coast of Chili and Peru, and on my return I made a trip up the Baltic. Indeed, for many years I was constantly at sea, during which time I visited various parts of the world.

When I was out of my apprenticeship I began to lay by half of my wages, and then to do a little trading on my own account, by which I made money. I at last worked my way from before the mast to the quarter-deck, and became third officer of a fine ship trading to the Cape. I probably should have become master of her in time, but on my return home I fell in love and married. My wife was young, pretty, and well educated according to my taste—that is to say, she had been brought up at home by a good sensible mother, who never thought of letting her learn to play on the piano, nor to dance, nor any accomplishment useless to one in the rank she appeared destined to fill. Her father was the owner and master of a small trader running between London and Ramsgate. After I married I made two more trips to the Cape, and on my return from the second I found my father-in-law on the point of death. He made me promise to remain at home to take care of his widow and daughter, and on these conditions made me over his vessel and the goodwill of his trade. For some years I followed this line with varied success, but I did not save much money, as my family increased rapidly, and my expenses were proportionably heavy. I lost a considerable part of my savings through the failure of my poor friend Mr Wells, in whose hands my money was placed; but I did not repine at this on my own account, for I considered that the lessons he had taught me were of far more value than the amount of my wealth, but I grieved deeply that he should be the sufferer. He was by this time an old man, and his creditors allowed him a comfortable income till his death.

Chapter Three.

The Voyage to Australia.

At length my vessel wore out, and I was compelled to build a new one. She was a fine schooner of nearly sixty tons, and was a capital sea boat. I ran her for about three years, but I found that she was almost too good for the trade she was engaged in. At this time I met with an old shipmate who had made several trips to New South Wales, or, as it was then called commonly, to Botany Bay, and he gave me glowing accounts of the success of some of the free settlers who had gone out there. This made me think about the subject and set to work to collect information from all the people I met who knew anything about the country. One and all combined in asserting that it was a very fine country, and that large fortunes were to be made in one way or another, but they chiefly spoke in praise of the fine pastures for sheep which existed. From what I could pick up, however, I surmised that the sheep in general were of a very inferior quality, and that if some of the best breeds could be introduced, not only would the colony be benefited, but the person who brought them over. For some weeks I turned the subject in my mind. I had plenty of time to think about it in my passages up and down the river when obliged to bring up for the tide, and at last I broached it to my wife, and told her that my opinion was that a far better livelihood might be made in the new country than such people as ourselves could hope for in England.

“You see how it is, my dear Martha,” I said, “for many years your good father toiled on in this trade, and though he lived comfortably and brought you up well, he saved no money; and had he met with any reverse like the loss of his vessel the case might have been different, and he might easily have been ruined. Now, although I have worked harder than he was able to do, and consequently have kept my head above water, with a large family and greater expenses, I also have saved little, and am sadly puzzled to know what to do with our boys, and I shall be unwilling to send our pretty girls out to service; yet if they do not marry I can never expect to leave enough to support them.

“I have been thinking of a hundred different ways of improving our fortune in England, but not one has occurred to me in which the risk of loss has not been too great. Thousands of families are exactly in our position, and the fathers must feel that not only have they no chance of rising in the world, but that when they die they must leave their daughters exposed to all the dangers of a life of dependence. For the boys I fear less; they will if they survive make their own way in life as I have done, and are more fitted to bear its ups and downs. Now, my dear wife, I know you would be ready to follow me to the end of the world, even if it were to penury or death, but I am not going to ask you to do that. I am going to propose to go to a far distant land, where I trust we shall not only gain wealth, but happiness and contentment, and see our family happily settled.”

My wife, as I knew she would be, was ready to enter into my views, though, as she had never been at sea further than Ramsgate, she could not help looking with some dread at the long voyage, and she had read some rather exaggerated accounts of bush-rangers and savages in Botany Bay which were enough to frighten her. I soon, however, quieted all her fears about the voyage as well as about the savages and bush-rangers, and though I did not conceal from her that there were many difficulties to be overcome, and dangers to be encountered, I pictured the future to her in the bright colours it appeared to my own imagination. My eldest boy was at sea, but we expected his return every day, and at all events I determined to wait his arrival. The two next were accustomed to sail with me in the schooner, where I did my beat to give them all the learning I had gained from the good curate, Mr Hamlin, and had since then picked up by my own exertions. Though they were still boys, they were very useful on board, and could take the helm and work the vessel as well as any grownup man. I had eight of them, four boys and four girls, and the two youngest were still children. The elder ones were delighted at my proposal,—the boy, at the thought of making a long sea voyage, of seeing strange lands, and hunting the kangaroo; the girl, at being able to accompany me and their brothers, and having to tend a farm, and live under a bright blue sky. Whether it entered into the calculation of the eldest that she might be able to pick and choose a husband from the number of young men who were certain to be on the shore with speaking-trumpets to beg her to marry them, I do not pretend to say, but it was then the case as now,—no girl could remain in the colony without being asked to wed every day in the week till she made her choice.

Having made up our minds to go, the next thing to be thought of was the way to accomplish our objects. Without hesitation, I determined to perform the voyage in my own vessel. She was a remarkably good sea boat, and a fast sailer, and for her size was very roomy. She was called by a curious coincidence the *May Flower*, which was the name of the vessel which carried over the first pilgrim fathers to America; and certainly, when my vessel was named, I never contemplated attempting to cross the ocean in her. Although she was under sixty tons, I considered that properly handled she was as well calculated to double the Cape as a far larger vessel, and I felt sure from what I had

heard, that if I got her out safe to the colony she would fetch a high price. If, however, she was to be swamped—as my whole family and property would have gone to the bottom at the same time—there would be no one left behind to mourn our loss. I do not mean to say that I for one moment thought we should be lost, but still I knew that it was possible, and I reconciled myself to the chance with that reflection.

The first thing I did was to haul up my vessel, and to give her a thorough repair, then to refit her rigging, and to raise her bulwarks somewhat, so as to make her snugger. As she was from the first fitted so as to be easily handled, her masts were short and very stout; and as her hull was as strong as wood and iron could make it, she was in every way suited for a long sea voyage. As I had made up my mind to attempt to carry out some sheep, I divided her hold into compartments, one as a pen, another for hay and water, a third for implements of agriculture, and a few select goods which I calculated would sell well, and provisions for ourselves. In the after part of the vessel were cabins for my wife, myself, and my daughters, while the boys with the two men who formed the crew were berthed forward.

Just as my preparations were ready my eldest son returned home from sea, and delighted he was to find that his next voyage was to be made with those he loved.

I was fortunate in disposing of my house and the heavier part of my furniture to advantage, and the remainder I stowed away on board. It is extraordinary what number of things the little vessel held. There were numerous casks of water, salted meat, potatoes, bread, rice, and many other sorts of provisions for six or seven months. I had no wish to be starved; then there was the hay for the sheep, which I got pressed into very tight packages in a way since become common, and by the time the sheep came on board there was not much space to spare, I can assure you.

When all was ready for sea, my wife and I and all my children took a last farewell of the house where we had lived, and the neighbours we had known so many years, and we then went to church to pray God for a safe passage, and as soon as service was over we returned on board, and that evening dropped down the Thames. I have not yet said a word about the sheep, for I did not take them on board till afterwards. I was acquainted with a man at Hamburg who understood sheep well, and to him I had written to buy for me the two finest merino rams he could find, and four ewes of the same breed. I calculated that I could not carry hay and water for more. We had fine summer weather and a fair wind to carry us across Channel, and when I put into Hamburg to take the sheep on board, I found that my friend had not disappointed me; he had in truth selected six magnificent animals, and I felt certain that if I could carry them safely to the colony they would fetch a pretty high price. Having filled up one water-cask, we again put to sea, and were now fairly on our voyage.

We had a beautiful run down Channel, and indeed from first to last Providence watched over us, nothing went wrong, and everything prospered far more than we could have expected. My wife and daughters turned out capital sailors, and soon learned to take their turn at the helm, to relieve my boys and our two men. Both of these were characters in their way. Old Bob Hunt had sailed with me for many years in the coasting trade, and a trusty hand he was, but he knew no more of the broad seas than the child unborn, or of geography either; and when I told him that I was thinking of going out to New Holland, he asked if I expected to make the place in a week or so, as he supposed it wasn't very far from Old Holland, where the people speak Dutch. And when I told him that the natives were as black as his shoe, and spoke a language no Christian man could understand, he would scarcely believe me.

"Never mind," he said, after a moment's thought, "no one shall say I deserted you because you were bound on a long voyage; if we were to be a year about getting there I would go with you. I shall leave behind no more kith nor kin than you do, so that's settled."

Old Bob was a capital seaman, but what is strange, he never touched liquor, nor smoked, nor over chewed tobacco. He ate, too, as little as any man I ever saw at his meals; and as for sleeping, it was difficult to find him with his eyes shut. The least noise would awake him, and if the breeze freshened up a bit he was sure to be on deck in a moment to see that all was right. He was a most invaluable hand, and worth any two other men I ever had. In spite of his age Bob was active as a monkey, and short and thin, and so occupied wonderfully little space in the small craft; which was convenient, as also for another reason, for his companion, Dick Nailor, was one of the biggest men I ever met, a perfect giant, but gentle as a lamb, and with an excellent temper. He used to say that he and Bob together only took up their fair amount of room. If Bob was never seen asleep Dick was seldom found broad awake, but he was keeping a bright look-out notwithstanding, and when roused up he was active enough, and strong as a lion. The children were very fond of him. He could take them all up in his arms and dance a hornpipe with them hanging about him, as lightly as a young lady in satin shoes.

My eldest boy, Peter, named after me, was one of the steadiest fellows I ever met. At eighteen he was second officer of a ship, and might have been entrusted with the command. I was sorry to take him away from the line he was following, and yet it was a great thing to have all my family together. He wished to come, and did not disappoint my expectation.

Mark and John, my next boys, were always together, and yet very different. Mark was one of the merriest chaps you ever saw, and up to all sorts of harmless pranks. John looked like gravity itself, but that arose from his eyes and the shape of his mouth; give him anything to laugh at and he would indeed laugh heartily. Mark was his chief object of admiration. He thought no one his equal, yet many people liked John the most. He was so humble and gentle, and never thought a thing about himself.

My eldest girl, Mary, was like her elder brother as to steadiness and discretion, just what an elder sister should be; so good-natured and kind, too, it was pleasant to see her standing all the bothering the young ones gave her without a word of complaint. It was a valuable quality in a person who was to be shut up for four or five months in a small craft with a number of youngsters. She was next to Peter in age, and then came Susan, as kind-hearted, industrious a little creature as ever lived, not very bright, but wanting to do right; and then the two boys, and then Margaret, a bright-eyed, fair child, such a little dear; then another boy, Tommy, always in a mess because he didn't know how to keep out of one; and one more girl, Sarah Ann, and there you have the whole lot of them; they, with their mother, a good

woman if any one ever deserved the name, with the two men and myself, made up the complement of the human souls embarked on board the *May Flower*.

Then we had a dog, *Steadfast*, and a cat, *Duchess*, the only thing of much rank aboard us; two fine cocks and ten hens for laying eggs, besides a couple of dozen other fowls, to be eaten by my wife and the girls. We had a pair of pigeons, a pair of robins and sparrows, and a hen lark—her mate died just as we were going on board—belonging to Mark and John. I don't think we had much else. Yes, we had some primrose, violets, snowdrops, daisies, and other roots and small plants, which took up little space, to remind us of old England.

We sailed in the autumn, so as to arrive in the summer, and to get housed before the rains set in. We took our departure from Ashanto, and shaped a course for Rio Janeiro, in the Brazils, there to take in a further supply of water and fresh provisions. Thence I hoped to carry the trade wind across the Atlantic, and round the Cape, though I thought it possible that I might have to touch at the Cape, unless we had an unusually fast run, for water. You see our little craft couldn't carry enough for ourselves and the sheep for as long a time as we could have wished, and yet you may depend on it we wasted none. I have often thought of the story of the poor Arab who, wishing to make the caliph the most valuable present in his power, took him a skin bottle full of muddy water from the desert. He, when journeying across the desert esteemed it of more value than silver, gold, or precious stones. We, too, learned how to value fresh water, and I would not have filled up my cask with wine instead of it, had I been offered the finest in the world. We were especially favoured with fine weather and a fair wind, and we made good use of our time, for every one on board was as busy as a bee from morning till night. We had prayers regularly morning and evening out of the Prayer-book, and on a Sunday I read out of Galpin's sermons, and that the lessons it taught might not be forgotten I used to talk about them every day for the week which the Sunday began, and asked the young people questions about it. Then I set them their lessons, and Mary or Peter heard them, and they got on famously. They gave their mind to the work, do you see, and did it well.

Chapter Four.

The Rescued Stranger.

We made the Desertas off Rio without having had one day on which my wife and the children couldn't be on deck with comfort. They were tried somewhat by the heat, for it was hot in our little cabin with the sun striking down on the deck all day, but they didn't mind that much. I was most anxious about the sheep. I had made up my mind that we were to do great things with them, and I dreaded any of them dying. We used to have them up on deck every day to walk about, two at a time, and they all became as tame as lambs; indeed, they lived like aldermen, and grew as sleek and fat, for we kept them well washed and clean, for I couldn't help thinking that would be conducive to their health.

It was necessary to go into Rio, but I was sorry to have to do it on one account. It is so beautiful a place that I thought my wife and daughter might think meanly of our future home after it. It is a beautiful country, with its magnificent harbour, and surrounding hills, and tropical trees and villas, and the city looks very fine till you get into it. I hoped not to be detained there more than three days, so as soon as Peter had returned from the shore where he went to order our provisions, and to learn where we could get the best water, I took my wife and Mary and the rest of the children there, that they might see what a foreign city is like.

Scarcely had we set foot on shore than we saw collected on the quay nearly two hundred black people all huddled together, men and women, young girls and boys, and little children, with hardly a rag to cover them, looking wretched and startled and wild, very little like human beings. Mary drew closer to me.

"Oh, father, what are they?" she asked.

"Those are negroes just landed from a slave ship," said I, for in those days the Brazilians had no law against slaving. "They are on their way to a shed, to be washed, fed, and dressed a little may be, and then sent up to the slave market, where they will be sold one by one, or a lot together, just as buyers may require, as a farmer sells his sheep and cattle to a butcher or a grazier, to kill or fatten."

"And those poor people have souls just as we have," exclaimed Mary. "How dreadful!"

As we walked on we passed numbers of negroes grunting under heavy loads, some working for their owners, others let out to hire like beasts of burden, but none labouring for themselves. A little further on we passed a shrine, a little house open in front, with a figure in it, and ornamented with flowers, and candles burning; and some people, women and old men, were kneeling down before it, and muttering words as quickly as their lips could move, and counting on necklaces with small and large beads, and a cross at the end; and suddenly, as soon as they had done, it seemed, up they jumped, and walked on, and other people passing just made a bow and the sign of the cross, and hurried away.

"Is that an idol, father?" asked Mary; "I didn't know these people were heathen."

I thereon told her that the figure was that of a saint, and that the people in their ignorance had got to worship the figure instead of saying prayers to the saint, though even that to our notion was very bad, as Christ had taught us to pray to God only. I saw that my dear wife, and Mary and Susan, were greatly shocked at this, but they were to see something worse, for before long we espied a great crowd moving towards us, and we got up into a porch to avoid them. Presently there came by first some men holding up a rich silken canopy, under which walked a priest in magnificent robes all gold and silver, and he had something in his hand; and as soon as the people saw him, whites and blacks alike fell down on their knees and worshipped him, or rather, as we were afterwards told, what he carried in his hands, which was the host. This is a wafer and some wine, which the people believe is turned into the real body and blood of Christ. After him came a number of people with masks on their faces, and large cloaks on, so that they

could not be known, bearing on their shoulders a huge figure of the Virgin Mary, and the infant Jesus in her arms. She was dressed in robes of silk with a crown of gold on her head, and numberless jewels glittering on her shoulders. Many other figures followed—one of Christ bearing the cross, and of various saints; and there were little boys looking like girls dressed up in pink and blue silk, and gold and silver dresses all stuck out with glittering wings; and there were big boys or priests in red and white gowns swinging censers, and others ringing bells and chanting; and lastly there came regiments of soldiers with bands playing before them, and the procession went on through a number of streets, and at last into a church, when the soldiers marched away in different directions. We were told that it was a religious procession, though we could not understand how it was to advance the cause of religion; indeed, we were particularly struck by the indifference with which all the people looked on, and those especially who walked in the procession. The men in black masks and hoods who carried the figures were, we were told, doing penance for their sins, and that they believed that they were thus washing away all the sins they had committed for the year past; they, poor people, were not told by their priests that the blood of Christ can alone cleanse men from sin. We saw many other things, some of which we admired, for the city has some fine squares, and open places, and broad streets, and handsome buildings. I need not have been afraid of my wife wishing to remain in the country, for she was in a hurry to get on board again, and declared that no money would tempt her to live among people who held their fellow-creatures in slavery, and practised such wicked mummeries and idolatries.

“No,” she exclaimed, “let me live where I can have a parish church, in which all pray and sing praises to God together in our own language, and hear a simple sermon which we can understand, reminding us of our duties, and admonishing us of our faults. That’s what I call public worship.”

“And that’s what I hope we shall get, dear wife, in time, out where we are going, but I doubt whether we have much chance of it yet,” said I; for I knew that people when they get away from England are too apt to grow careless about their church, and their religion also.

We quickly got on board our water, and fuel, and fresh provisions, and some green stuff, and hay for the sheep, and corn for the fowls. The two boys went on shore with their brothers and brought off a bowl of gold and silver fish, as they said, to make amends for the lark and one of the robins which had died. Once more the little *May Flower* was ploughing the ocean with her head to the east. People at Rio were very much astonished when they heard of the long voyage we were making.

“I would rather be in that little craft with a clear conscience, than in many a ship ten times her size which I have met at sea,” I answered, and it was proved that I was right.

As we were losing sight of the coast of South America, my wife, looking back at it again, expressed her thankfulness that we were not compelled to live among its inhabitants.

“But,” said I, “it’s a beautiful place, Martha. So is this world a very beautiful world, but it’s man that mars it. If man were free from sin, it would be next to heaven itself.”

For ten days or more we had a beautiful run to the eastward. I never saw the little craft go along so fast; it was difficult to believe that, with the smooth sea we now had, we were out in mid-ocean, hundreds of miles from any land.

We were in the latitude of the Cape of Good Hope, and expected to make the land in a few days, when the weather gave signs of changing. We had hitherto been greatly favoured, and I had, with the rest, begun to believe that we should escape bad weather altogether. The sea got up, and the wind went on increasing, but we got the schooner under snug canvas in good time. As we were undermanned, it was necessary to be very careful in that respect. I told my wife and children that they must look out for a regular gale, such as they had not been accustomed to, and make everything fast in the cabins. We got the sheep slung, so as to prevent them being knocked over, and then at last battened down the hatches, intending to heave the vessel to, should the gale not abate.

I had been well accustomed to face bad weather in the Channel in my little vessel, and so had my boys; and I knew well what she would do; but when they saw the heavy seas now rolling up towards us, their young cheeks turned pale with alarm. It certainly did look as if one of those heavy, moving, dark green, watery hills rising up on every side, with the spoon-drift flying from their summits, must ere long engulf us; but the tight little craft, buoyant as a cork, with her stout masts and strong new canvas, every rope well served, and not a strand even chafed, rose up, and then sunk down the steep slopes into the wide valleys between the seas, not one breaking aboard us, though we were every now and then pretty well blinded with the showers of spray which drove across the deck. Still we could not tell what might happen, and the time was an anxious one. At last, when I found how beautifully the schooner was behaving, I determined to call my wife and daughters up, that they might witness a sight which I certainly hoped they might never have to look on again. I slid back the companion hatch and called them. My wife would not venture to move, but Mary and Susan came up. They stood for a minute or more with their eyes opening and very pale; Mary holding my arm, Susan her brother’s.

“I called you girls to show you what the ocean is like sometimes, happily not very often.”

Mary continued silent for some time. At last she gasped out, “Oh, father, what nothings we are!”

“That’s what many a seaman feels, even on board a line-of-battle ship, when in a sea like this, though he doesn’t say it,” I remarked. “Yes, Mary, we are indeed nothing, but we are in the hands of God, and He it is with His wise laws governs the movement of every one of those vast mountain billows. Let but one of them in our track go out of its course, and this little craft, ay, and the biggest afloat, would be utterly overwhelmed and driven down by the tremendous weight of water which would fall over her.”

Mary stood gazing, lost in wonder, and not a little fear also, and unable to speak. However, when I proposed her going below again, she was very unwilling to quit the deck. “I shall dream of this for many a night,” she said.

While I was speaking, I caught sight of a sail to the eastward. I looked for her again, as we rose to the top of the next sea, and pointed her out to Peter. “Yes, father, sure enough there is a sail, and a large craft too, though she has but little canvas set: we are nearing her, I fancy.”

The stranger was, however, nearing us, and as we occasionally got a glimpse of her through our glasses, we saw that she had carried away her main-topmast and mizzenmast, and that she was labouring much, running before the wind with only a close-reefed fore-topsail set. As far as we could judge she looked indeed in some distress. On she came towards us. The wind now again increased, and the seas became more dangerous. Fearing that one might break over us, I sent Mary and Susan and the boys below again, and secured the hatches over them; which done, we passed life lines fore and aft, to give us a holdfast in case of accidents. The stranger drew nearer and nearer. We now saw how deep she was in the water, and how terribly she was labouring. I watched her with double anxiety, on her account as well as on our own. In another ten minutes she would be down upon us, and from the course she was steering, it would be a miracle if we escaped destruction. Just then a signal of distress was run up, but the flag was instantly blown away, and the next minute she gave a plunge forward, and before she rose her remaining mast went over the bows, where the spars hung seemingly engaged in battering them in. Scarcely had this occurred than she broached to, and lay like a helpless log in the trough of the seas. Still she was fearfully near, and I was far from satisfied that she would not drive down upon us, and if so, inevitably with one touch send us to the bottom. Our only chance of escape was to make sail, but the alternative was a dangerous one. I was preparing to do this when we saw those on board stretching out their hands towards us imploring help. It was a piteous sight, for none could we afford, and all her own boats had, we saw, been washed away. Now, as we mounted to the summit of a sea, she began, it seemed, to climb up another watery height, but a still vaster billow came rolling on, and thundering over her deck; down she went beneath it, and the next moment, when we looked, not a trace of her was to be seen except a few planks and spars, which rose to the surface out of the vortex she formed as she sank. Yes, as we continued to gaze, between us and where she had been floated a grating, and to it clung a human form. He was alive, for he turned his head towards us, as if beseeching us to save him. It is strange that we felt more eager to do so than we had been to save all the poor beings who had just gone down before our eyes. The reason was plain; in the first instance we knew that we could not help them; there seemed a possibility that we might rescue the person now floating so close to us. He was being cast by the sea nearer and nearer to us. We got ropes ready at either end of the vessel to heave to him. Peter fastened one round his own waist. “Take care, Peter,” said I.

“He may not be able to seize a rope, father, as he drives by, and I may have a chance of getting hold of him,” he answered.

I couldn’t deny him, but I trembled for my son’s safety; still, when a right thing is to be done, when life is to be saved, we must not be too nice about calculating the loss we may suffer. Now we thought that the stranger would be driven away from us, now again he was washed towards the schooner; if our feelings of anxiety were intense, how much greater must his have been? Now he appeared on the foaming summit of a sea far above us, then he went sinking down deep into the gulf below. Truly there seemed to be a power above guiding him. I can have no doubt there was. Suddenly a sea drove him close to the schooner; I thought for a moment that it would have actually washed him on board. “Hold on,” cried Peter, springing into the foaming water; and before the drowning man was carried away again he had grasped him by the shoulders, the man still holding to the raft. Thus together they were towed alongside, and Peter holding on to the man with a strength which I scarcely supposed he possessed, they were hauled up on deck. The stranger immediately fainted, and Peter was in a very little better condition for a short time; however, he soon recovered. The stranger we took below, and by rubbing his body with hot flannels, putting bags of sand made hot to his feet and hands, and pouring a little weak brandy and water down his throat, he at length, to our great satisfaction, came round. He remained in bed all that day and the next, and I wouldn’t let him say anything, not even to tell us who he was, greatly to the disappointment of my wife and daughters, who were naturally curious to know.

Chapter Five.

Charley White.

One thought the stranger was a cabin passenger—another, an officer of the ship—another, a seaman; and Mary observed, that supposing he was a steerage passenger without a farthing in the world, it was equally our duty to take the best care we could of him.

“I hope that he isn’t quite a gentleman,” said Susan, “because, if he is, he’ll be thinking himself above us.”

“Not if he has right feeling,” remarked Mary. “I cannot see why we should fancy that people are always considering whether they are above or below each other, or better or worse than one another. I know that the Bible tells us to consider each person better than ourselves, and, in another place, not to mind high things, but to condescend to men of low estate. If people obeyed that rule, there wouldn’t be the disputes and quarrels there are between neighbours. I wonder if we shall find that sort of thing out in Australia.”

“I am afraid that a voyage half round the world won’t change people’s hearts,” said I; “the only difference is, that people have so much to do and think of, they have no time to attend to the private concerns of others; and so I hope that they keep on good terms at all events with their neighbours.”

“Do you think, father, that a voyage quite round the world, or twice round, would change a man’s heart?” asked John; “I should think it ought.”

“No, John, I am very certain that it would not,” remarked his mother, now first joining in the conversation; “there is but one way by which a man’s heart can change, and that is through God’s Holy Spirit, to be obtained through His grace by earnest prayer.”

My wife knew the truth, and showed that she did, not only by her words but by her life.

“Well, sisters, to relieve your minds about the young stranger whom I hauled out of the water,” said Peter; “I’m pretty certain that he is a gentleman, judging by a few words he uttered as I caught hold of him. His first object seemed to be to thank me for the risk I was running to save him. However, we shall see.”

The young stranger recovered sufficiently to talk without risk before the gale was over, and he then told us that his name was Charles White, that he was fourth officer of the ship we had seen go down—a homeward bound Indiaman—that he was an orphan, with very few friends in England or anywhere else; “Indeed,” he added, “had I shared the fate of my shipmates, there would have been but a small quantity of salt tears shed or crape worn for me; but I am wrong,—there is one who would have mourned for me; oh, if you knew her, such a good creature—Aunt Priscilla; she was my mother’s aunt; she has never married; Miss Beamish she is called. I believe that I am the only human male-being she cares for, except two tom cats and a dog, and one of them isn’t a tom; at least, it had kittens, and they are not human either. Whenever I go home, I always go and see Aunt Priscilla, and carry her all sorts of things, and feed the cats, and take the little dog out to walk; but when I went, I never intended to stay there long, because, you see, she and I are not much of companions to each other, and yet, somehow or other, what with telling her my adventures, and reading to her, and playing backgammon and such like things, we used to get on wonderfully well together. Then my coming was always a signal for her to give a series of tea-parties; they were not very large ones, because her room wouldn’t hold many people at a time, and then I used to have to tell my stories to each set of guests. Aunt Priscilla was never tired of listening to them, and I found out by the way she corrected me if I made the slightest variation. I had, therefore, to be very particular the first time I told a story, so that I might not afterwards be caught tripping. Yes; dear, good Aunt Priscilla, I am sure that she will be anxious when she finds that the old tea-chest hasn’t arrived at the time expected. There’s one comfort, I shall be able to give her notice of my safety before she hears positively of the fate of the ship.”

Though Charley White did not talk of himself, I was able to form a very fair judgment of his character from the way he spoke of the old lady, and I found afterwards that I was correct. We found him a very pleasant addition to our family party on board, and I soon got to look on him like one of my own sons; he was, besides, of great assistance to us in navigating the little schooner. The gale at length ceased, and we stood for Table Bay. I was afraid of venturing the run across the Indian Ocean without landing at Cape Town, lest we might get short of water; a want, which besides exposing us to suffering, would have caused the destruction of all our sheep. We remained but a few days at Cape Town. Charley White wrote home an account of the loss of the ship, and sent a letter to his Aunt Priscilla assuring her of his safety. I expected, and thought of it with much regret, that he would here leave us. I invited him, however, to cast in his fortunes with ours, and without hesitation, much to the satisfaction of all our party, he accepted my offer. “You know,” he said, “when we get settled, I can send home for Aunt Priscilla, or go and fetch her, and I think that she would like the life. It would be much more satisfactory than her round of tea-parties, and give her something to think of besides her cats and dog, and I am sure that you would all like her.”

We of course said that we had no doubt we should, though Susan remarked afterwards, that a real lady, as she supposed she was, from her giving tea-parties and having two cats and a poodle, would scarcely like to come out and live in the bush with such homely people as we were. I will tell you by and by what came of it.

The people at the Cape, when they saw the size of the *May Flower* and the way she was laden, were surprised at our having come so far in safety, and some chose to declare that we should never reach the end of our voyage. I replied that they did not know the qualities of the little craft; that many a big ship had gone down when small ones had floated; that it was not so much the size of a vessel as the way she was put together, and the quality of her gear, which made her safe or unsafe, and moreover, that the same Providence which had protected us hitherto was not sleeping. That was the feeling which kept me up from first to last throughout our undertaking.

We heard at the Cape some news which gave me more concern than anything else. It was, that war was again about to break out between England and France, and that as many other nations were likely to be leagued with France in arms against our country, we should have no small number of enemies among whom to run the gauntlet. My chief hope was that we should arrive at our destination before the news of the actual commencement of hostilities could reach the enemy’s cruisers in the Eastern seas. One thing, however, I remembered; it was, that bad news travels fast, and I have come to the conclusion that no news is worse than that which tells of two civilised nations going to war.

Earthquakes, fires, floods, disasters at sea, are very bad; but war means that thousands of the flowers of manhood are to be cut down in their prime, or maimed, or wounded; that numbers of children are to be made orphans; wives are to become widows; and fruitful lands laid desolate. Such is war; ah! such is war.

I had made up my mind to go on to Australia, though I had many tempting offers to remain at the Cape. I daresay that we should have found a happy home there, and it is a fine colony; but I have reason to be thankful that we persevered. My children enjoyed their visit to the shore, and the fresh bread and butter, and the fruit and vegetables; but after all, they said that there was nothing like home (meaning the little schooner), and they were glad to get back to her, thus showing that they were not tired of the voyage. Our old dog, Steadfast, made himself particularly happy, frisking and scampering about in every conceivable manner, till he looked, the children said, as if he would tumble to pieces in the exuberance of his spirits. They tried to induce our cat, the Duchess, to accompany them, but she had learned to look on the schooner as her home and wouldn’t go. Whenever they tried to catch her, she ran up the rigging, though on other occasions she allowed them to handle her as much as they liked. Curious as it may seem, the circumstance had a great effect on Bob Hunt and Dick Nailor, who were, like many seamen, very superstitious.

“She knows it’s all right aboard here, and that we shan’t come to no harm,” observed Bob to his mate.

“Oh, course,” answered Dick; “I never knowed a cat stick to a ship, if she could get away, which was to go down. They are wonderful wise creatures, and knows all sorts of things as is going to happen. To be sure they can scratch a

bit when they fancies."

Cats will certainly stick to vessels whether they are to be wrecked or not. I remember falling in with an abandoned ship, the only living thing on board being a cat; we took her off, and the vessel soon afterwards went to pieces.

Once more we were at sea. A westerly wind, which I was afraid we might lose if we stood to the southward, induced me to run along the coast closer in than I might otherwise have ventured. The weather had hitherto been very fine, and I persuaded myself that there was no risk. I was wrong. Suddenly, the wind shifted to the southwest of west, and blowing strong, and though we hauled up immediately, before we got a good offing it blew a strong gale from the southward directly on shore, and a heavy rolling sea came tumbling in. We could not venture to heave to, and yet there was more sea and wind than the little craft could well bear. All we could do was to keep sail on her, and to steer as close to the wind as she would lie. I watched the coast with deep anxiety, and couldn't help feeling that the foaming, raging waters, which now dashed impetuously against it, might prove my grave and that of all dear to me.

Of course my son and Charley White and the two seamen saw our danger as clearly as I did, but we did not communicate our ideas to each other, and I was anxious not to alarm my dear wife and daughters. The little craft looked up bravely however, and my hopes revived; again they sank, for the gale came down stronger than ever on us, and I saw that we were driving closer and closer towards the shore. A large ship might possibly, by cutting away her masts have ridden out the gale at her anchors; we, had we made the attempt, should have foundered. My wife and Mary and Susan had one after the other appeared at the companion hatch, and with pale faces, as they saw the state of things, had gone below again. I hadn't the heart even to tell them my fears. Bob Hunt and Dick Nailor took matters very coolly.

"The Duchess don't think anything will come of it," observed Bob to Dick, pointing to the cat who was sitting on a coil of rope on the head of a water cask lashed to the weather bulwarks.

"May be not, but she may be mistaken once in a way, Bob," answered Dick, who, seeing the imminent danger in which we were placed, lost his confidence in the fore-knowledge of the cat.

From what may sound ridiculous, but was not really so, I must turn to a more serious matter. I suspected that my wife and daughters knew our danger, though I had not told them of it.

We had driven still nearer to the land, and wishing to ascertain exactly on what part of the coast we were, that I might, if possible, run the vessel on shore on some spot where we might have a chance of saving our lives I went below to examine the chart.

Chapter Six.

In Smooth Water.

The cabin was very dark, from the skylight being covered over and battened down. The schooner was however so tight and strong, that provided the hatches were on, I knew that she might almost roll over and over, and yet not fill. This gave me great confidence as long as we kept to the open sea; but driven on rocks or quicksands, with such a gale as was then blowing, there could have been no hope for the stoutest ship that ever floated on the salt ocean. As I was saying, I went into the cabin; although gloomy enough on deck, it was still darker below; for the gleam of light which came down the companion-hatch scarcely found its way beyond the foot of the ladder. I looked about me, and at first thought that my wife and daughters had, in their terror, turned into their berths; but soon, amid the creaking of the bulkheads, and the rattling of the rigging, and the roaring of the storm, a gentle, sweet voice reached my ears. It was that of my daughter Susan. She had not heard me enter. She was on her knees praying, so were her mother and sisters, all round the table in the cabin. She was lifting up her voice to our loving, merciful Father in Heaven;—to the same God who stilled the raging of the storm on Gennesaret, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still." She was praying, dear girl, for me especially, that I might be preserved, even though the vessel were dashed to pieces; but, that if it was His will, that the schooner and all on board might be saved.

I cannot tell you how much confidence the prayer of that dear child gave me; I am sure—I was then sure—that God hears such prayers. The rest of the family too had been praying; they were not prayers forced out by fear, but just such trusting, hopeful prayers as God loves to honour. I stood for a few moments till Susan ceased, and when she did, I uttered a low "Amen." The dear ones heard me, and looked up, but did not rise from their knees; indeed, the vessel was tumbling about so much, that it was with difficulty they could hold on. I told them what I was come down for, and striking a light, I took down my chart from the beckets in which it hung, and spread it out on the table. I anxiously marked down the position in which, by my calculations, I believed the schooner then was. A league or more to the eastward there was, I found, an island with a bay inside it, affording anchorage for small vessels. For a large ship it would have been utterly useless. Here, again, was an advantage which my humble little schooner possessed over a bigger craft. Giving a parting kiss to my wife and daughters, I leaped again on deck.

It was a question whether we should be able to keep off the shore till we could reach the island. I could see the surf breaking furiously on the rocks to leeward, and the gale blew as heavily as ever. A slight shift of wind might save us. If the wind held as it then did, I had no hopes for the little *May Flower*.

The day was drawing to a close. Every instant the danger increased. The gale, instead of breaking, raged more furiously than ever. Closer and closer the schooner drifted towards the shore. It would have been madness to carry more sail; for already her lee bulwarks were under water, and yet I dared not take any off her with the slightest hopes of being able to claw off shore. The seas came breaking on board, deluging our decks, and, had not the hatches been firmly secured, would quickly have swamped us. I was at the helm, with Charley White by my side, my boys and the two men having lashed themselves to the weather rigging. No one appeared to be terror-stricken, and

yet the youngest, as well as old Bob Hunt, knew perfectly well that there was every probability of our being in a few short minutes overwhelmed among the foaming breakers under our lee. Anxiously I looked out for the island; and the wind blew fiercer and fiercer.

Suddenly there was a lull; but it was of no advantage to us, as the huge rollers were literally throwing us rapidly towards the rocks. Again the gale came down on us, but its direction was altered. It blew nearer from the westward, by several points, than it had before done. Already the schooner was heading off from the shore, but very slowly; and I was doubtful how far she would make way against the rollers, which sent her bodily back towards it. Still there was hope, and I could venture to slide back the hatch and to sing out to the dear ones below that the wind had changed. “Thank God for His mercy,” was the reply from below, for I had speedily to shut the hatch again. Just afterwards I saw an opening in the land to the westward, and I knew that it must be the passage between the island and the main. There was a hillock and a peculiar rock, which prevented me from having any doubt about the matter. What a comfort to feel sure that we were steering a right course for a safe harbour! I could now venture to keep away again a little.

The entrance to the sound became more and more distinct as we advanced. The various landmarks noted in the chart, appeared one after the other, and in half an hour we ran into a beautiful little harbour, with the water as smooth as a mill-pond. Our first care, directly the anchor was dropped, was to take off the hatches and give air to our poor sheep. The boys jumped below to ascertain if they had suffered.

“All the animals are alive,” they cried out; “but send us down a bucket of water.” The creatures sucked it up quickly. They probably would not have held out many hours longer; but we lifted them up, two at a time, on deck, and the fresh air soon revived them. We had only just light enough to see our way into the harbour, but we hoped in the morning to get on shore and to cut some grass, which would do them more good than the fresh air.

I should have said that directly we were in smooth water my wife and daughters came on deck, and, as they gazed on the sheltering shore under which we were running, they lifted up their hands in earnest thankfulness to that merciful God who had brought us into a haven of rest.

On sounding the well, we found that, notwithstanding all the tossing we had gone through, the stout little craft had not made a drop of water. We spent two very busy days in Refuge harbour, cutting grass and wood, and filling up our water casks. All this time no natives were seen. There are indeed but few on that part of the coast. Short-sighted mortals that we are—we had been inclined to complain of our detention, but we had reason to be thankful that we had gone into Refuge harbour.

As soon as we had filled up with wood and water, we got under weigh, and stood out through the eastern end of the sound. Before, however, we had got from under the shelter of the island—a long, low sandy point intervening between us and the ocean—we saw to the southward a dark bank of clouds coming, like an army in close rank, rapidly up towards us.

The breeze was light, and the sea comparatively calm, but underneath the cloud there came a line of white foam, beyond which the whole ocean seemed a mass of tossing seas. I knew what to expect, and, going about, stood back to our snug little bay. Scarcely had we dropped our anchor and furled sails than the hurricane burst above the island, and we could see the breakers dashing furiously on the opposite shore. For nearly three days the tempest—one of the most violent ever known on that coast—continued raging. Many a big ship went down, and many a stout one was cast upon the rooks and dashed to pieces.

We waited—grateful for our escape—till the wind moderated and the sea went down, and then once again sailed for our final destination. In our small vessel we had to economise fresh water, fodder for the animals, and fuel; and it was very important that we should have a quick passage. We had, therefore, again filled up with those necessary articles, and in every corner we had stowed away all the fresh grass we could cut. This, mixed with the hay, kept the sheep in excellent condition. We had ere long to be thankful that we had not neglected to prepare for all contingencies.

Chapter Seven.

Fresh Water.

We had for some time very fine weather, which confirmed Bob Hunt in his opinion that the cat, Duchess, was as wise as he had at first believed.

“She knowed it,” he observed, looking sagaciously at Dick Nailor, who was sitting on the capstan with his arms folded across his broad chest, looking out ahead, “she knowed it, and she’ll stick by this craft till we get safe into Port Jackson, you’ll see that.”

“As to that, I see that the cat is there, and that our little craft is afloat, and every prospect of remaining so!” answered Dick. It was seldom he uttered so long an expression. “You don’t even say that the cat has had any hand in keeping her afloat; and to my mind, it’s just this: she found the craft tight and wholesome, she was fond of us, and she saw that we didn’t leave her, and so she didn’t. No, no, Bob, the old Duchess had nothing to do with the matter. There’s one aloft who took care of us, and if the cat had fallen overboard, or gone ashore and been left behind, it would have made no manner of difference.”

“Then, I suppose you mean to say that there is no such person as the Flying Dutchman?” observed Bob; “everybody who has rounded the Cape has heard of him.”

“There might have been some villain of a Dutchman who swore that he’d beat about the seas till the Day of

Judgment; but depend on it, if he ever did utter such an oath, he's gone to answer for it long ago—far away from this world," said Dick Nailor, solemnly. "I've heard many, many men talk of the Flying Dutchman, but I never yet met with one who had seen him."

Neither had Bob Hunt, and so he had nothing to answer to this—indeed, talkative as he was, he always had to knock under to Dick's sturdy, matter-of-fact arguments, or to his pertinacious silence, if no argument was forthcoming.

The quaint fellow would fold his arms, sit down, and look a picture of stolidity.

I have not said much about how my children passed their time during the voyage. The boys were generally employed in sailing the vessel, or about the rigging; for my object was not only to keep the vessel in good order during the voyage, but to take her into Port Jackson looking as fresh as I could. However, the boys had time to practice writing and to study their books, and both Peter and Charles White were able to help them. The girls had plenty of work to do, as my wife had laid in a store of all sorts of things to make up. They also were not idle with regard to their books; and they had several pleasant ones to read. I found also that Charley White was very happy to help them forward in their studies, and Susan took it into her head that she should very much like to learn navigation. She, however, gave up that idea, and took to singing, as Charley, who knew something about music, thought he could help her, and it was likely to prove a more amusing study, and quite as useful to her. I may safely say that no one was idle on board; and what is more, that not a real quarrel, and scarcely a dispute of any sort occurred among the inhabitants of our little world. If one differed in opinion from another, it was always good naturedly, and all discussions were finished amicably. People in families on shore would always be able to do the same if they kept a watch over their tempers, and did not allow envy, jealousy, and pride to spring up and hold dominion in their hearts.

Our tempers were occasionally tried. When within a week's sail of the western shores of Australia the wind fell to a dead calm. The sea was smooth as glass, and the hot sun came down with fearful force on our heads, while the reflection of his rays from the glittering sea almost blinded our eyes. Long as I had ploughed the salt ocean, I had never felt the heat greater. For two or three days it was endurable, but after that every one began to complain; even Duchess looked out for a shady place, under the sail or bulwarks, to lie down in, and poor Steadfast went panting about the deck with his tongue out, the fowls hung down their heads, and the merry robins and sparrows ceased to chirp. If a chip or a feather was thrown overboard, it lay motionless alongside, though the schooner herself kept moving round, with her head towards all the points of the compass.

The heat created a violent thirst: everybody was thirsty—the men, my children, my wife and I, and the poor animals; they required water more than we did, for they got no moisture out of the packed hay. We gave them as much as we dared, and, as soon as the sun was down, had them on deck to give them fresh air.

We were not alone in our misfortunes, however, for when the sun rose, on the first morning of the calm, his rays fell on the white canvas of a ship, just rising out of the western horizon. After some time she disappeared, either because her sails had been clewed up, or that she was too far off to be seen unless the sun was shining directly on them. We had many discussions as to what she was. I need scarcely say that she caused us no little uneasiness.

Still the calm continued. Day after day the sun went down in the calm ocean, and rose again to cast a ruddy glow over its mirror-like surface, and there in the distance lay the stranger, though only sharp eyes could have detected her.

I began to be very anxious about the sheep. The success of the undertaking depended in a great measure on their being kept alive, still, we had to put them on an allowance, as we had ourselves. Little Margaret and Tommy couldn't understand why they shouldn't have as much water as they wanted, when there was plenty alongside. They could not understand that salt water was worse than no water at all; nor could the poor sheep, probably, when they were brought up on deck, and gazed out on the glittering ocean around them.

When matters had come to this pass, I began for the first time to lose heart. I was sitting with my head bowed down, resting on my hand, when my boy Peter said to me— "Father I have an idea—I have heard that fresh water may be got out of salt, and I think I can manage it, if you do not mind expending our fuel."

These words restored my spirits. We had laid in a large supply of fuel at the Cape; water was of more consequence than anything else. It would be better to break up all the spare cases, and even the bulkheads and cabin furniture, than to go without it. Peter soon explained his plan; I agreed to try it. We, after a search among the cargo, found two large camp kettles. Soldering down their lids, we bored a hole in the top of one and in the side of the other, and joined the two with a piece of piping, three feet long. The one with a hole in the top we placed on the fire. We fitted a funnel to the spout, through which we poured in water; the other kettle was fixed on a stand, and we soldered a small pipe in at the bottom. Above the outside kettle we slung a bucket full of water also, with a small pipe in it, and the top of the kettle we covered over with cloths, which, by the means of the bucket, were kept constantly wet. The kettle on the fire was filled, the fire blazed up, and, as the water boiled, we watched with anxiety the result of the process. Some drops at length fell from the lower kettle, and a jug was ready to catch them. Peter eagerly poured the water into a mug, and, putting it to his lips, with a triumphant smile passed it round to us all. It was deliciously cool and perfectly sweet. It now came pouring out quickly, and we got up an empty cask to contain it. We all knelt down and thanked God that we had obtained the means for sustaining life, should our supply of water altogether fail. It took a long time, and used up a large quantity of fuel to produce even a gallon of fresh water, yet a gallon was sufficient liquid for everybody on board for a couple of days, and we might thus give a larger share to the sheep.

You might not think so, but the gale off the Cape did not cause me as much anxiety as this long calm. I ought, I confess, to have remembered that in both instances God was watching over us. In the one, I trusted to my stout little craft and my seamanship; in the other, my seamanship was of no avail—the stoutest ship would not have prevented all on board dying a frightful death had the calm continued. Here was my human folly: on both occasions, had I thrown all my care on God, I should have saved myself from all the anxiety I had suffered. This was increased by the

uncertainty I felt as to the character of the sail we saw in the distance. I was in my own mind persuaded that she was a French privateer, and if we were discovered, her boats would probably pay us a visit, even if she did not.

We were all seated languidly about on the deck, under an awning rigged to give us some shade, when Peter started up, exclaiming, “There comes the breeze.” Some downy feathers, fastened by a silk thread to the after backstay, had, he thought, moved for a moment though the vane quickly dropped again. We were speedily on foot, but the first glance at the glowing, tranquil ocean, like some huge mirror on which we were resting, made me fear that my son had been mistaken. I shook my head, and a sigh escaped from several of our party, as they sank down again on their seats. Just then, however, I caught sight of a light cat’s-paw skimming over the water in the distance, and Peter, springing at the same moment into the rigging and pointing westward, exclaimed, “Here it comes, father, no mistake about it now.” I followed him up the rigging, and saw in the far west a wide-extending dark blue line moving quickly on towards us. Peter and I sprang back on deck, got the awning stowed, the head sails set, and the big square-sail ready for hoisting. The cat’s-paws came thicker and thicker, the dark blue line increasing in width, till in a short time we were staggering away before as brisk a breeze as the little craft could desire. All languor quickly vanished, and we served out an additional supply of water to our poor sheep. My anxiety, however, did not cease, for just afterwards, as I was sweeping the horizon with my telescope, I saw, rising above it, the royals of a square-rigged ship, the same, I concluded, which I had seen at the commencement of the calm. She might be a friend, or an English ship, and be ready to supply us with any necessaries we might require: but I had taken it into my head that she was an enemy, and I could not tell to what treatment we might be subjected. Sometimes French officers behaved very kindly to passengers captured by them, but during the republican period many of those in command were brutal men, who outraged all the laws of humanity when they got the crews and passengers of an English ship into their power. I, of course, said nothing of this to my wife or children. I, however consulted with Charley White and Peter, and we agreed that it would be more prudent to alter our course to the northward for a few hours, so as to allow the ship to pass us during the night. Though we were not now visible to her, when the sun came to set in the west she would have got so far nearer to us that his rays falling on our canvas, we should be probably seen from her tops.

This plan we followed. Charley White had become even more anxious than I was, and he was constantly going aloft to watch the stranger. Half an hour before sunset, we could see half way down her topsails from the deck. Though they looked no bigger than a small pocket handkerchief, the sharp eyes of my girls caught sight of them, and seemed much surprised that we were not eager to speak with the stranger. I was very glad when darkness hid us, as I hoped, from her. We arranged, however, to keep a bright look out all night, and to furl everything, should she pass near us, so as to escape observation. Charley and Peter kept a watch together. They insisted on my turning in after my first watch was over, and in truth I could leave the vessel in their care with as much confidence as if I had her myself.

Chapter Eight.

A Joyful Discovery.

More than once I saw in my dreams a big ship closing rapidly with us and the French flag run up at the main, and a voice ordering us to heave to. We were all to be made prisoners; horrible would be the fate of those dearest to me. I started up in a cold perspiration, though the weather was hot enough as may be supposed.

There was scarcely a sound except the rippling of the water against the vessel’s side, the breathing of those sleeping round me in our little cabin, and the tread of Peter’s feet overhead. Charley was at the helm I guessed. He said something, and then they both burst into a merry laugh. “All’s right,” I thought to myself, “I know why I had that uncomfortable dream. I was over anxious. I ought, having done my best, to have thrown all my care and anxiety on God; knowing that He cares for me and those dear to me.” I got out of bed, knelt down, and prayed, and when I lay down again I slept as soundly as I had ever done in my life. Awaking at daylight, I went on deck to relieve the young men. No sail was in sight. Once more we put the schooner on her proper course. I proposed touching on the western or southern coast of Australia for the sake of obtaining grass or hay for the sheep, and water and fuel. We had found the importance of having a good supply of fuel. I was no longer anxious about the stranger, but still I knew that if he was bound in the same direction that we were, owing to the uncertain winds and calms, we might very possibly again fall in with him. Still, he might after all be a friend. I would banish the subject from my mind. I did so. In the next week we had fine weather and a fair breeze, till the land, stretching away in the north, blue and indistinct, was seen on our larboard bow. We hauled up for it till we got near enough to distinguish objects on shore. I cannot say that the appearance of that part of the new country which was to be our future home was at all attractive. Backs and sand-hills, and slight elevations covered with dark green trees, were the only objects we could discern. We could obtain plenty of wood, but that we could find any water in that dry looking country seemed very doubtful, even if we could manage to land. We had all been so eagerly watching the coast, that for a long time no one had turned their eyes to the southward; Mary, happening to do so, exclaimed, “Father, there’s a sail in the horizon no bigger than my hand, but I see it clearly.”

Charley, on hearing this, sprang aloft with his glass. He quickly returned, and quietly remarked to me, “A ship standing in for the land, not unlike our friend of last week.”

I agreed with him it would be prudent to avoid her. The best way to do this was to stand close in, so that our masts should not appear above the land. The shore was here higher and more broken than that which we had before passed.

The stranger was drawing near, and judging from the cut of his sails I had little doubt that he was a Frenchman. Whether or not he saw us it was hard to say; I was afraid he did, as he was steering a course which would inevitably cut us off. I still did not like to communicate my fears to my wife and daughters. It must be done soon I felt, for the nearer the stranger drew the more convinced I was that he was French. While we were watching our supposed enemy we did not neglect to look out for a place of refuge, and we kept scanning the coast anxiously for any opening

into which we might run to hide ourselves. My wife and daughters suspected, from what they observed, that I did not like the look of the stranger; and when at last I saw that it was no use concealing from them what I suspected, Mary, I think it was, proposed loading the boats with as many necessaries as they could carry, running close in, and, having deserted the vessel, hiding ourselves in the woods till our enemies had gone away.

Her sisters chimed in, and thought that it would not be at all unpleasant to picnic in the woods for a few days, or perhaps settle there altogether. They little dreamed of the inhospitable character of that part of the country; still I would say nothing to damp their courage. The breeze was fresh and from the south-west, and though it brought up the stranger, it enabled us to stand close in shore with less danger than if the wind had been dead on it. As far as we could judge, there was no opening to indicate a harbour or shelter of any sort. The big ship was approaching rapidly; I felt as if we were caught in a trap. We had no choice now but to stand on; the wind was too much to the westward to allow us to retrace our course, and so double on the stranger. I thought by this time that we must be seen. We were small, that was one thing; and another was, probably, that no one was looking for us. If not seen now, we should be in a few minutes; of that I felt sure. Again and again I examined the strange vessel, and became more and more convinced that if not a government ship she was worse; one of the large privateers which were known to infest the Indian seas, and which occasionally made excursions to other regions. They were generally commanded by ruffians, and manned with desperadoes of all nations—the scourings of the French galleys. To fall into such hands would be worse than death. I cannot tell you what fearful suggestions were offered to my mind. To run the vessel in among the breakers, to scuttle her, to set her on fire; anything seemed better than being taken.

We stood on; the atmosphere was so clear that it seemed impossible to escape the observation of the stranger. Just then a line of white foam appeared almost ahead. It was, I judged, a reef extending from the shore. Hauling round it, I observed an indentation in the coast, the first we had seen in that long, unbroken line of sandy shore. I steered towards it; an opening appeared; the lead was kept going; the wind favoured us; we shortened sail, and in a few minutes brought up within a high woody point, completely concealed from any vessel passing even close outside. As soon as the canvas was made snug, Charley and the boys hurried on shore to watch the strange ship. I followed them. She was steering it seemed for the very end of the reef. It struck me that perhaps she was looking for the very harbour in which we had brought up. If so, after all our efforts to escape, we should fall into her power. She drew closer and closer. Could the entrance of our harbour be seen from her deck?

“She is a good way to the eastward of the reef,” observed Charley. “Her lead is going; she intends to bring up; she is looking for a harbour, and probably this one.”

“She has missed it, though,” observed Peter, “see, she is standing on to the eastward.”

We remained on the height to which we had climbed, so hidden among the trees, that even if glasses had been directed towards us we should not have been seen. The stranger stood on for about three miles, and then, furling sails, brought up at the entrance of what we thought was perhaps a harbour, from the appearance of the land about it. Our hope was that she would send her boats to examine the harbour, and that if she went in we might put to sea late in the evening and escape her. We were, however, pretty safe in our present position, and we determined to profit by it.

We divided for this purpose into three parties: one to search for water, another to land the sheep, and a third to cut wood.

Charley and I set off to look for water. No signs were to be seen near where we landed. To the west the country looked especially barren, and we therefore agreed to go towards the east, although it was in the direction where the Frenchmen were supposed to be. We first explored the shore of the harbour, but found no stream running into it. Indeed it was a mere inlet of the sea and of small extent.

An old settler would have had far less difficulty than we experienced in discovering water, because he would have known exactly the sort of trees to look out for, such as grow only on the banks of streams or water holes.

“What a fearfully arid country this is,” I observed to Charley, “I hope the part we are going to is not like it.”

We were about to turn back in despair, when my companion, who was a little ahead, exclaimed that he saw some water just below us. We were not long in reaching a pure and clear pool or water-hole. We slaked our own thirst, but it was a long way to bring our sheep, while it would have been nearly impossible to fill our casks from it. We discovered, however, that water ran into it, therefore it must have an outlet. This we discovered, and traced it down towards the sea. Great was our pleasure to find that it ran into a small harbour, where we could quickly fill our casks. We hastened back, and trusting to be able to obtain as much as we required, brought a supply for the sheep from the vessel. We had as yet seen no natives; indeed, from the barren nature of the country, I could scarcely believe that any could exist there.

There were animals, however, for at night the boys, who were watching over the sheep, saw a creature approaching stealthily.

Mark fired, but missed, and then made chase. The creature got off, leaving some traces of blood seen in the morning. It was a dingo, or native dog. Early next day, the weather being very fine, we went in the boat with the casks to the small harbour we had discovered. We had brought some wooden pipes, and by placing them a little way up the stream, we were able to conduct the water so as to fall over a rock directly into the casks. While the boys were filling them, I climbed to a height at the mouth of the harbour. There the masts of the French ship were plainly discernible. This did not give me much concern, but directly afterwards I perceived, through my glass, a party of men coming along the beach and rapidly approaching us.

Chapter Nine.

Land, Hurrah!

I hurried back to the boat. The casks were filled. We got them in. Should we remain in the harbour and try to conceal ourselves, or should we boldly pull out with the certainty of being seen, but yet with the possibility of getting back to the schooner and putting to sea before the privateer's men could reach us. We decided on the latter course, not a moment was to be lost. If we should succeed in getting out to sea we should be safe; for with so large a number of her people on shore it was not likely that the French ships would chase us.

"Now, my lads, pull for life and liberty!" I exclaimed, as I took the helm. "Gently at first till we are clear of the harbour. The Frenchmen won't see us till then."

The entrance was not very easy; as soon as we were outside the boys gave way. I every now and then turned my head round to ascertain if we were observed. The Frenchmen were most probably, as we had been, searching for water and did not see us. At length they caught sight of us, I concluded, as I saw them running along the shore as fast as their legs would carry them. My boys exerted their arms in a like manner. The Frenchmen, although they saw that we were beyond their reach, fired a shot at us. Another and another followed. It was done in mere wantonness, for they could not have known who we were. We were much too distant from them, however, for the shot to reach us. Heavily laden as was our boat, the boys urged her on fast, and in a short time we were alongside the schooner. Charley White, who had remained in charge, had heard the shots, and guessing who had fired them, had got the sheep on board with the wood and grass, and made everything ready for weighing. Happily, the breeze blew down the harbour. We speedily hoisted the boats on board and got the anchors up, and while the Frenchmen were climbing up a height which formed the eastern shore of the inlet, we ran out and were speedily clear of the land. We could see them through the glass stamping on the ground, apparently with rage at our having escaped them. The northerly breeze carried us in a short time out of their sight and indeed out of sight of the land itself. We were to the south of the equator, and that northerly wind was the hottest I ever experienced; from its very smell we could tell that it had blown over many hundred miles of burnt earth or dry sand. We kept south; for I purposed going round Van Diemen's Land instead of through Bass's Straits—not then very well known.

Next day we looked out with some anxiety for the Frenchman, but he was nowhere to be seen, and we entertained the hope that we had escaped him altogether.

We sighted the southern part of Van Diemen's Land. But as we should not have been allowed to land at the new settlement then even had we wished it, unless we had put in there in distress, we continued our course for Port Jackson. It was time for us to be in port. We had eaten up all the fowls except those we wanted to land; the biscuits were becoming mouldy, the water bad, the hay was nearly consumed, and the sheep, put on short allowance, were looking thin, though otherwise healthy.

The lads were continually going to the mast-head, each one eager to be the first to discover land.

We were edging in for the coast, from which I knew that we were not far distant, when Mark, who was aloft, shouted out, "Land! land! Hurrah! the land we are bound for!" I was afraid that in the exuberance of his delight he would have let go his hold, and come down by the run on deck. John thought so too, and with alarm expressed in his countenance, ran under him to catch him in his arms. He held on, however, and in a few seconds his brother and White joined him, and shouted with almost as much glee as he had exhibited, "Land! land!" We stood in directly for it, for by my calculations we were not far off Botany Bay, or rather Port Jackson, for that in reality was the port for which we were bound.

In England in those days people always spoke of Botany Bay, because that was the place where Captain Cook landed before Port Jackson was discovered.

A strong breeze was blowing, which carried us rapidly towards the land. The wind increased, and dark clouds were seen gathering in the south-east. I had heard of a black squall off that coast, and from the darkness of the sky and the increasing wind, I was afraid that one was now brewing. Charley White was of my opinion, I found. This made me more than ever anxious to get into harbour before dark. Still it increased the danger of approaching the shore, and the bay afforded no shelter to the wind then blowing. We flew rapidly on; the dim outline of the coast became more and more distinct. At length we could distinguish some lofty headlands directly ahead.

Charley White knew that two such headlands mark the entrance to Port Jackson, but he reminded me that there is a third, which forms the side of False Bay, and that more than one ship had run in there, and that instead of finding a sheltering harbour they had been thrown against the rugged cliffs which form its sides.

The knowledge of this increased my anxiety. The sky in the east became darker and darker, and the wind yet further increased, till it blew almost a hurricane; heavy seas came rolling up, topped with white foam, leaping in eagerness it seemed to catch the little craft which had borne us in safety so far over the bosom of the ocean, and was about to escape altogether from their power.

Peter stood at the helm. Charley and I kept a keen look-out ahead. As we flew on, the land became more distinct, and the outline of the headlands appeared; still darkness was coming on—a mistake would be fatal.

"I see the heads!" exclaimed Charley at length. "There is no mistake; I am certain of it. Starboard a little, Peter. That will do, she is heading right in for the entrance. Take the bearings now; keep her exact on that course. My life for it, we shall get safe into the harbour."

My anxiety was lifted off my shoulders. I had a confidence in Charley's judgment and knowledge which I should have

placed in few people, but he had already shown me that he was to be trusted. The darkness now came rapidly on, and so heavy a sea got up, and so furiously blew the gale, that I often doubted whether the little *May Flower* would stand it. I doubt whether alone I could have found the entrance; but Charley never wavered in his opinion. Keeping his eye towards the land, now gradually becoming shrouded in deeper and deeper gloom, he continued to direct Peter how to steer.

After a time the land rose up close ahead of us, but there was a deep slit in the centre, which seemed each instant to increase in width, and then the cliffs appeared on either side. The roar of the waves was tremendous, deafening to our ears; but we felt them less and less, till, rushing on, a wide, open, smooth expanse lay before us, and we were in smooth water—the haven where we would be.

Chapter Ten.

Our Convict Host.

Oh, the rest, the satisfaction, and, I may say, the thankfulness we felt. We shortened sail, and rounded to for a pilot, who came on board, and took us up to a berth opposite to Sydney, or the camp, as it was even then frequently called. As soon as we had dropped our anchor and furled sails, we one and all of us, young and old, my wife and daughters and my boys, and White and the crew, went down on our knees and returned thanks to the God of love and mercy who had thus brought us in safety in our small vessel across the great ocean. The tempest raged on without, but we lay quiet and secure within the harbour. I cannot describe to you how free from care I slept that night, and yet many people would have said that our troubles were only now going to begin.

As soon as the morning broke, all on board assembled on deck to look out on the new world to which we had come. The magnificent harbour, its surrounding heights and numerous points and inlets were the same then as now, but the ground on which the large city of Sydney now stands was then dotted over with a few Government buildings and merchants' stores, and here and there a large private residence, and not a few big public-houses; but most of the dwelling-houses were of plank, and some even of canvas, belonging to newcomers. Still there was evidence of progress, and as the day advanced, and people began to move about, a good deal of animation and activity was visible.

We were soon surrounded by boats, with people eager to know where we had come from, and what cargo we had got. Many of the visitors were not pleasant-looking customers, and I was in no wise inclined to encourage them on board. Those who did come looked with very great interest at the sheep, and I soon found from their remarks that they considered them of much value, and that the speculation was likely to prove a good one.

Before, however, I entered into any engagements, I went on shore to ascertain the state of affairs. I found that I could obtain a large grant of land free, and that as many convicts would be assigned to me as I could maintain, to cultivate the land. I knew a little about farming, and I forgot at the time that the convicts were not likely to become very pleasant servants, so that everything to be done appeared plain and easy before me, and in high spirits I returned on board.

My family were, of course, all eager to get on shore, but as they had no home to go to, it was arranged that I and Charley White and John should set out at once to select some land, while Peter remained on board to take care of the family and look after the vessel. We none of us knew much about land, as to which was likely to prove good or bad, but then we could take advantage of the experience of earlier settlers. We could ascertain how some had failed, and others had been successful, and follow, with such modifications as circumstances might require, the example of the latter. We each carried a knapsack with provisions, and a cloak to sleep in at night; said Charley, who was a good shot, had a gun, that he might kill a kangaroo, or any other animal we might fall in with, for food. We each of us had also a pocket compass, without which no man should attempt to travel in a new country like Australia.

My wife and daughters seemed very anxious when we were all ready and about to set out, but I reminded them that we were only just going to do what we had come all the way from England to do, and that there were no wild beasts or other dangers that I knew of to fear. "Oh, but there are those hideous black men, father," exclaimed Susan; "do take care of them, for I am sure that they look as if they would do any mischief."

"No fear," answered Charley, "they look worse than they are, and we shall be able to manage any number of them, even if they should take it into their heads to play us tricks. Mary is not afraid, you see." Mary looked as if she thought Charley would be able, with his single arm, to put to flight a whole host of blacks. Those we had seen, though ugly enough, were not very terrific-looking fellows. We heard, however, that away from Sydney, where the white settlers had found some blacks pilfering, and had shot them dead, the survivors had retaliated, and murdered two or three white men.

As horses were at that time very dear, I did not wish to purchase any for our journey, and none were to be hired. We had therefore to trudge forward on foot. One thing we wanted, and that was a guide who knew the nature of the country, the best mode of traversing it, and where farms were situated. Unaccustomed to walking, we felt very weary the first day of our journey as night approached, and yet no house appeared in sight. We were travelling along a high road made by convicts. The worst characters were employed on the roads, a labour which they especially detested. They were generally doubly convicted felons. They were worked in chains, but sometimes even then they broke away, and, taking to the bush, robbed every one they met, and murdered those who resisted them.

We thought at last that we should have to camp out, instead of getting the shelter of a roof, which we had expected to do. Just, however, as we were about to stop, a light appeared ahead. We made for it. The door of a cottage stood open. We entered. A fire was blazing on the hearth, with a large damper baking under the ashes, and a huge teapot of tea was steaming away on a table set out for a meal; while a joint of a kangaroo was among the good things which

gladdened our eyes.

“You may walk in, strangers, and welcome,” said a rough-looking man, who at that moment appeared from the back part of the cottage. “Here, missus, I see you have supper ready, where are you?” His wife, a buxom dame, came when called from an inner room, and welcomed us as her husband had done. We were soon seated at the table, doing justice to the kangaroo and damper. When our host and his wife heard that we had lately arrived, they were eager for us to tell them all the news from England, but what we had to say was not what they cared much to hear, that was very evident. As I examined their countenances, I did not like the expression they bore, nor warn the way they spoke altogether satisfactory. I suspected, and I was right, that they were convicts. At that time there were many of that class, who had already risen to considerable wealth, in the colony.

Chapter Eleven.

Our Journey Inland.

Although, as I have said, the faces of our host and hostess did not please me, and indeed gave me some disquietude, they both made themselves so pleasant, and were so civil and hospitable, that I could not help feeling it was ungrateful for me to harbour hard thoughts of them. While we were still at the table, a man came in and took his seat opposite to me. I supposed that he was living in the house, at all events that he was expected. He eyed me very hard, and then went on eating his supper. At last Charley White addressed me as Mr Biddulph, though he generally called me father. Immediately the stranger started up, and coming round to me and taking my hand, exclaimed, “Why, Mr Biddulph, I thought that I knew your face, but I little expected to see you out here.” When he spoke I recognised a man to whom I had once rendered a considerable service. He was in debt. I gave him a sum of money to save him from prison, and he promised to repay me. Before he did so he disappeared, and I did not expect to receive a farthing, but on two occasions small amounts were sent to me, which I knew came from him, though the larger portion still remained unpaid.

“I hope that you are doing well, Jacob,” said I, not thinking of the debt.

“Pretty well, but not as well as I could wish, Mr Biddulph,” he answered. “I have been in the country about five years, and know it as well as most men, but there are one or two things on my mind which I should like to get free of. One of them is my debt to you, and the honest truth is, that though I have worked hard, of money I have none. Most of my wages have come in the shape of rum, and I never yet heard of a man getting rich on such payment as that.”

I saw that our host and hostess exchanged glances, but I took no notice of them.

“If you know the country you are just the man I want, and can quickly repay me, and place me in your debt also,” I observed. “I want a guide through the country, and some one who knows the nature of the land, to help me in choosing a farm.”

“Just the thing I should like,” he exclaimed, jumping at the proposal; “I’m a free man, and can go where I like.”

I judged from this that he had not always been free. Our entertainers did not seem over well pleased at his so readily accepting my proposal. Still they treated us civilly, and we had no cause to complain. They brought us some sacks full of dry grass, which they spread on the floor, with some kangaroo skins to cover us; in those days sheep skins were rare. We lay down, commending ourselves to God, and felt as secure among convicts, with the possibility of a visit from the bush-rangers, as we had done in our tight little craft in the middle of the ocean.

We were on foot before daybreak, and with Jacob Rawdon as our guide, set out, as soon as we had taken some food, on our journey. Our host and his wife were evidently displeased at his leaving them.

After we had got to a distance I asked him why this was. “The reason is that I had become well-nigh their slave,” he answered. “They paid me my wages in rum, which I drank mostly, or exchanged at a great loss for necessaries, and so you see that I am not a shilling the richer than I was when I first began to work for myself. Still I hope to be able to repay you, and it will be a great satisfaction to me to do so.”

I did not doubt him, and had heard enough about the people I was likely to meet to know that it would not do to question him too closely as to why he had come to the country. I observed that he was frequently downcast, and that an expression of grief passed over his countenance; indeed, from several things he said, I felt great hopes that, whatever had been his errors, he was resolved to turn from them and to lead a new life. Under this belief I spoke seriously to him, and reminded him that he could not go on in his own strength, that the best man alive could not; and that if he would do right he must seek for aid from God the Father, through the influence of the Holy Spirit, trusting entirely and alone to the perfect sacrifice of Christ. He listened attentively. The doctrine seemed entirely new to him, but he did not in any way appear inclined to reject it. He walked on by my side, often silent, now and then he made a remark. His voice faltered. I saw that he was in tears. “Can God pardon such a vile, mad sinner as I have been?” he asked at length.

“If you are looking to Christ as the Lamb slain for you, you are pardoned, completely, entirely,” I answered; “though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow in God’s sight.”

His step became elastic; a brightness spread over his countenance. “I see it, I see it, but I would not have believed it,” I heard him saying to himself.

I cannot describe all the incidents of our journey.

One painful sight was a road-gang of convicts chained by the legs. They were certainly a villainous-looking set, mostly doubly convicted felons. Despair was depicted in the countenances of many. Jacob told me that he had known several who had been guilty of murder, that they might be hanged, and as they thought put out of their misery; others had committed suicide. Yet these men were once joyous, bright-cheeked, innocent little boys, the pride of their parents. Some had grown into manhood before they fell into open sin, though many probably were born among scenes of vice, ignorant even of the name of virtue or religion. “Still, debased as they are, all have souls to be saved,” I thought to myself, and I resolved that, though I could do those poor wretches no good, I would do my best to improve the convicts assigned to me as servants.

We soon came to the end of the road, and struck across the country. Here Jacob’s guidance became of great value. We were much interested by the novel appearance of the country, so different from anything we had seen before.

The huge gum-trees (*eucalypti*), with their evergreen, mistletoe-looking leaves, standing apart from each other, impressed us most. It seemed to us as if we were walking through a large park, with wide open spaces and clumps of trees here and there; only the leaves of the trees hung down long and thin, with their edges upwards, and the grass, though tall, was sparse, the blades growing apart from each other.

In some places the ground was covered with heather, and with other bright-coloured small flowers, but all without scent. This was supplied, however, in abundance from the groves of acacia, near which we passed. The birds with gay plumage, especially the parrots—parroquets climbing from branch to branch or flying amid the trees—made us feel still more that we had got into a new land.

The greatest excitement, however, was caused the first time we fell in with a kangaroo, now so scarce near the settled districts. Jacob seizing Charley White’s gun said that he knew we should soon fall in with some more, and going on cautiously ahead he very soon fired, and then shouted to us to give chase. He had severely wounded but not killed a large kangaroo; and the animal went leaping over the ground with his long legs, leaving, however, a thick trace of blood behind him, which showed that he could not run a long course. This encouraged us to follow with greater zeal, and we enjoyed it the more as we dashed through the forest after having been shut up so many months in our little vessel. At last we got up close to the kangaroo, a huge fellow, who turned round boldly to meet us. My son John, being close to the animal, was going to strike him with a stick, when Jacob Rawdon cried out to him to beware, and he had just time to spring back as the animal struck at him with the formidable claw of one of his hinder feet. However, it was his last effort before the animal sank exhausted from loss of blood to the ground.

Jacob told us that he had seen many a dog killed when rushing in on a kangaroo standing at bay, by being ripped up, and that John had had a narrow escape. The countenance of the animal had so mild an expression that we could scarcely believe that he could commit so much damage.

We at once set to work to cut him up, and then, each of us loaded with the best parts selected by Jacob, we continued our journey. We slept at the cottage of a settler, who received us very kindly. We feasted on our kangaroo flesh, and were able to repay him with a portion of it. The next night we camped out near a stream. Jacob Rawdon shot a number of parrots, which we roasted for supper. The next morning we reached a lightly timbered, undulating country, with a river running through it. Rawdon stopped and looked round.

“Here, Mr Biddulph, if you take my advice you will pitch your tent. You have grass and water for sheep and cattle, and timber to build your house, and barns, and fences, and to keep your fires burning. What more do you desire? the soil is good; you may grow corn and vegetables and fruit-trees. You think that we are now in a desert: in a few years you will find yourself in the midst of civilisation.”

I talked over the matter. Jacob showed me that he was right, and the boys agreed with him. He understood surveying, and we measured out roughly two thousand acres. He told me that as a free settler I should have no difficulty in obtaining a grant of it. We soon fixed on a site for a house—not far from the stream, but at a sufficient height to be out of its influence when swollen by rains. The stream ran into a navigable river not far off, and from a neighbouring height we could see it and the sea in the far distance. Charley and John were highly pleased with the country, and were eager to get back to Sydney to secure the grant, lest any one else should make application. Jacob laughed at their eagerness.

“It is a good big country, and there is room for all,” he observed.

He was right. A large part of half a century has passed since then, and a steady stream of human beings has been setting in ever since, and still there is room for all who come wishing to work.

John wanted Charley to stay and camp out with him while Jacob and I went back; but to that Charley would not agree. He did not like leaving me to travel alone with a doubtful character such as Jacob, and he besides wished, I have no doubt, to see Mary. I, however, was very strongly disposed to trust Jacob.

We got back to Sydney without any adventure, and found all well on board. The sheep had greatly improved in appearance. I sold a ram and four ewes for a price which fully covered all the charges of the voyage; the rest of those I had brought I kept, that I might have a good stock with which I might commence on my own property. I at once also made application for a grant of the land I had seen, and obtained it without difficulty. I got an excellent price for the whole of my cargo, and soon found a purchaser for our little schooner. She was to run between Port Jackson and other ports, either opened or about to be opened, to the north and south. Altogether my speculation turned out a most successful one.

I felt something like Noah coming out of the ark when I landed, for the last time, with my wife and family and chattels and sheep; and having selected a quiet place, we all knelt down and returned hearty thanks to God for the protection He had afforded us during our passage across the ocean. We asked Him to guide and protect us for the future; and I am very sure that He heard our prayers.

Chapter Twelve.

Bush-Rangers.

Having bought a couple of horses at great cost, and a light waggon, or dray rather, I stowed therein the most indispensable portion of our goods and provisions. The rest we stored, to fetch when we had got up a cottage. My wife and daughters insisted on walking, saying that they weighed more than all the tea and sugar we should require for many months, and they were sure it would be wise to take all the stores we could carry. The sheep were so tame that they did not require to be driven, but followed the boys, who took especial charge of them, like lambs.

Steadfast, the dog, ran alongside the horses, and Duchess, the cat, took up her post on the top of the dray with the cocks and hens, and cages containing the other birds. Bob Hunt and Dick Nailor, having made up their minds to quit the sea, speedily turned into sturdy draymen, though they kept to their sailor's rig, and could not easily lay aside their nautical expressions. "As the horses, or their immediate progenitors, had, however, come across the sea, it was but natural that they should understand them," observed Mark, when Dick shouted out occasionally, "Starboard Dobbin, lay the fore-topsail abaft, Bob;" "It's time to shorten sail, and bring the ship to an anchor;" or, "Luff, lad, luff, or you'll be into that tree on the lee bow." Sometimes when the ground looked rougher and more impracticable than usual, Dick would cry out, "Breakers ahead; we must haul our wind and see if we can't get round the shoal; won't do to wreck the waggon out here, where shipwrights', I mean blacksmiths', shops are pretty scarce, I fancy."

Notwithstanding the inexperience of our men, and our own also, indeed, we got on wonderfully well. We all gave our minds to the work, and thus made amends for other deficiencies. Rawdon proved a first-rate guide, and by his knowledge and sagacity we avoided many of the difficulties which might have impeded our progress.

Our boys and girls enjoyed the journey very much. They especially liked camping out at night, for the novelty of the thing, I suspect. The parrots and parroquets, and other gay-coloured birds, with which they now made an intimate acquaintance, were a source of great interest. The girls were rather horrified when several were brought in shot by Charley White and the boys. Rawdon at once plucked them, and put them before the fire to roast. Pretty Polly pie soon became a favourite dish in our establishment, as it was at that time in the houses of most settlers. He also showed us how to make damper, a wheaten cake baked under the ashes. At first it seemed very doubtful how it would turn out, as we saw the lump of dough placed in a hole, and then covered up with bits of burning wood.

Our chief prize was a kangaroo. The boys caught sight of the creature as we were moving on, and gave chase. Away he went, hopping along on his hind legs, with his little front ones tucked up, just as some women in cold weather hold their arms with their shawls drawn over their shoulders. Charley White, however, brought him down, and he soon shared the fate of the parrots. We pronounced the flesh not very inferior to mutton, and more suited to our taste in a hot climate. A good sportsman need not starve in the fertile parts of Australia, but there is one great necessary of life, of which he may find himself fearfully deficient—that is, water. We were obliged to make very irregular stages, that we might camp near a stream or water hole; and explorers dare not move from one source of supply till they have discovered a fresh one, at which they and their animals may drink.

At length we reached the spot we had fixed on for a location, and of which I had procured a grant. I had to make certain arrangements before I could get the assigned servants, or, in other words, the convicts who would be required to carry on farming operations on a large scale. I was glad not to have them in the first instance, and we were so strong-handed that we could do very well without them.

My wife and girls were delighted with the position of their new home. We camped on a spot close to a situation which seemed the best suited for our proposed house, on a gentle slope, with a hill covered with trees behind it, and a stream some distance below us. The spot was pretty clear of wood, that is to say, just out of the bush, and there was excellent pasture on either side for our sheep and for our cattle, whenever we should obtain them. They were not so plentiful as they now are.

As soon as we had pitched our tent we all knelt down and returned thanks to that merciful God who had brought us across the ocean into this lovely haven of rest—so it seemed, for we thought not then of the troubles before us.

What a privilege it is to be able to go direct to God in prayer, through the sure mediation of the loving Jesus, pleading His perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice— His precious blood shed for sinful man on Calvary. I felt it then: I have felt it ever since; and I would not give up that privilege of prayer for anything else the world can bestow. I have sometimes thought what a fearful thing it would be for a man who has enjoyed that blessing to lose it altogether, if that were possible; to be told, "You must not pray! God will not hear your prayers! From henceforth you must have no communion with the Most High!" The thought has just occurred to me as I have been speaking of this our first night on our new location.

We, of course, gave water to our sheep and penned them carefully before lying down to rest. We knew that we had not so many enemies to guard against as there are in many countries; but still there were some. First, there were dingoes, or native dogs, who play the part of wolves as well as foxes, in Australia, by attacking sheepfolds and poultry yards: they were certain in an out-station to visit us. Then we were told there were natives who might very likely come in the night to steal a fat sheep, or to attack us if they could find us unprepared; and lastly, there were some bush-rangers already abroad—ruffians who had escaped from road-gangs, and not being able to return to the settlement, lived a wild, desperate life in the bush, and procured their stores by plundering drays coming up from Port Jackson, or out-stations where they thought anything was to be got. However, as none had been heard of for some time, we had no apprehensions about them.

We were too strong a party to invite attack, and only a very hungry, and therefore desperate man, would think of molesting us. Still, it was prudent for one to remain on watch. Charley White took the first watch, as he had done at

sea. Peter was to take the second. I heard Charley call him up, but not feeling disposed to sleep myself, I told him to rest on, as I knew that he was very tired, and that I would look out instead. I took a gun in my hand, and walked round and round our little camp. There was no moon, but the stars were very bright, proving the clearness of the atmosphere. Now and then I stopped and gazed up at them, admiring their beauty, and thinking how greatly increased must be our powers of comprehension before we should understand all about them. I must have been standing thus silent and quiet for some time, when, casting my eyes down on the earth, I thought I saw an object moving slowly among some brushwood or scrub at a little distance. I stood still a minute longer, and just as I was moving the creature came out of the scrub. It was a dingo, I had little doubt of that; I was on the point of lifting my gun to my shoulder to fire, when probably seeing me, it ran quickly back. I instantly went after it, hoping to get a fair shot at the other side of the scrub, which was but a small patch of underwood. I felt sure that he would go through it, and followed. I worked my way along—no difficult matter where the scrub is open, as it generally is out here—and once more caught sight of the creature stealing cautiously away at no great distance. They are cunning beasts, those dingoes. Often I have knocked one over, and left him for dead, when after a little time, turning round, I have seen him stealing off; but the moment he saw that he was observed, dropping down and looking as dead as before. I was sure that I should hit the dingo and prevent him coming again to visit our sheep; so I raised my gun to fire. At that instant I received a blow on the side of my head, which would have brought me to the ground had its strength not been broken by a bough. My hand was on the trigger, and I fired my gun. A man stood before me, and closing, attempted to wrench the weapon out of my hand. I had too firm a hold of it, however, for I was a stronger man than he. He was active though, and tried all sorts of ways to get the better of me. Finding that he could not succeed, he uttered several coos—a sound heard a long way in the bush, and just then coming into use among the settlers. Again he closed with me, so that I could not strike him with my gun, while he tried with his legs to trip me up. I thought that it was now high time for me to cry out; so I shouted at the top of my voice, as loud as if I was hailing a ship at sea in a gale of wind. It rather astonished my friend, I suspect; especially when I dropped my gun, and seizing him in my arms, lifted him off the ground. He begged me to let him go. “No, no,” I answered, “you wanted to rob me; but you find that you have caught a Tartar, and I shall not release you till you give an account of yourself.” The cooing had been heard by the man’s companions, for just as I had mastered him, two men appeared coming out of the wood which covered the hill under which we had camped. My assailant saw them, and began to struggle to free himself from me; but starvation and rough living had weakened him. Still it was hard work to get him along while he struggled in the hope that his comrades would come to his assistance. They were getting very near indeed, when I heard a shout close to me, and as the bush-rangers were darting towards me, Charley, Peter, the other boys, and Dick Nailor came rushing up from the other side.

The two bush-rangers took to flight, leaving their companion in our power.

“You have got the better of me, I must own!” he exclaimed. “Perhaps you will not believe me when I say that all I wanted was your gun and ammunition. If I had got that I might have demanded some food, for I am starving, but I did not wish to harm you or any one else.”

“A curious way you took to prove that, by trying to knock me down,” I answered, as Dick Nailor relieved me of the charge of the man, by taking hold of his collar and one arm and forcing him onwards.

“Come along with us to our camp, and we shall learn more about you.”

The man said nothing in return, and he felt that in the grasp of the giant resistance was useless.

We quickly reached the camp, where we found Bob Hunt trying to comfort my wife and daughters, who had been much alarmed at hearing the shot fired and finding me absent.

By the light of the lantern held to the prisoner’s face we saw that he was pale and haggard, that his hair was long and uncombed, and that a razor had not touched his chin or lips for many a day; while his clothes were rudely patched, and even thus hardly hung together. Thus we could not but believe the account he gave of his hunger and suffering—indeed, I had heard that most of the men who had taken to the bush soon died of starvation, or were killed by the blacks.

We quickly put some biscuits and cheese before our prisoner. He ate of it ravenously, giving way occasionally to an hysterical laugh. His eyes sparkled when I gave him some rum and water. I saw that he required a stimulant, and I would not allow him to take any more solid food. Compassion for the poor wretch predominated above any other feeling.

It was useless to inquire what circumstances had brought him to that condition. Sin was the cause of it, of course; but he required help, and, in spite of his attack on me, I felt that it ought to be given him.

While he was eating, it struck me that I was well acquainted with his countenance.

After looking again and again, I felt nearly sure that I was right, strange as it seemed; and grateful I was that I had not in our struggle taken his life or injured him.

Chapter Thirteen.

Our Prisoner.

We kept a strict watch over our wretched prisoner. For his own sake I did not wish him to escape, and, far from having an intention of delivering him up to justice, my earnest desire was to try and reclaim him. I think that, under the circumstances, I should have acted as I did had he been an indifferent person; but I felt sure, from the peculiarity of his features, that he was the youngest son of my kind old patron and friend, Mr Wells. Often in his childhood had

he sat on my knee when I came home from sea, and often he had listened attentively to the accounts of my adventures. He was a pretty, interesting little fellow. As he grew up he altered very much; became disobedient to his parents, and ultimately growing wilder and wilder, went, as the expression is, to the bad. For some years I had not even heard of him.

Worn out with fatigue, our prisoner slept on till after the sun was up, and we were busy in marking out the ground for our slate hut, and making preparations for cutting down the nearest trees with which to build it. More than once I looked at his countenance while he slept, and called my wife to look at him. We were both convinced that my surmise was correct.

On awaking at last he gazed round with an astonished, puzzled look, and sighed deeply. I happened to be near, and went up to him.

“Arthur!” I said, gently, “what brought you here?”

“What!—Who are you?—How do you know me?” he exclaimed, springing to his feet. “I’ll answer you though—my own folly and vice and sin. I am in your power. I did not wish to take your life, but I hoped to get your gun and then to force you to give me and my mates food—that was all. You may, however, take me into camp and deliver me up to the governor and his men; if they hang me at once I shall be grateful to you, for I am weary of this life. I am a mere slave to my mates; they would murder me in an instant if I should become burdensome to them; and, bad as I am, they are so much worse that I can even now have no fellowship with them.”

Thus the unhappy man ran on, eagerly discharging, as it were, at once his long pent-up feelings and thoughts. For weeks and months he had been wandering about, nearly starved, and ill-treated and despised by his companions in crime. And this man had been in the rank of a gentleman, and had been educated as one, and had once felt as one! I know to a certainty that there are numbers of such wandering about the world, and others who have died miserably, —outcasts from their friends and, more terrible fate, from their God,—who little thought when they made their first downward step in the path of sin to what a fearful termination it was leading them.

I let our unhappy prisoner grow calm before I again spoke to him.

“You asked me,” I said, “how I know your name, and who I am.” And I then went over many of the incidents of his early life, when he was a happy, pleasant-mannered little boy at home.

He made no reply; but he seemed to guess who I was, and bent down his head between his hands. I saw tears dropping from between his fingers. It was a good sign. I thought of the parable of the prodigal son. “He has been eating the husks: perhaps he will soon say, ‘I will arise and go to my Father.’” I prayed that the Holy Spirit would strive mightily with him, and make him feel not only his sad moral and physical condition, but his terribly dangerous spiritual state. Such prayers are, I believe, never made in vain.

I was eager, I must own, to begin my mornings work, but I did not wish at that moment to interrupt the man’s thoughts. I waited therefore patiently till he should speak. After a time he lifted up his head, and said, “Who are you?” I told him that I remembered him as a boy—that his countenance was unchanged—and that his father had been my benefactor.

“Thank God for that! if such as I am may utter that name,” he exclaimed. “You’ll not have me hung, then; you’ll not deliver me up to a shameful death?”

“No indeed, Arthur,” I answered; “I will rather do my best to protect you. I do not know what crimes you have committed, and I do not wish to know; but I hope to see you restored to tranquillity of mind, and that you may find joy and peace in believing on that one only Saviour, through whom you can obtain pardon for your transgressions and reconciliation with God.”

I then and there unfolded to him God’s merciful plan of salvation. I was sure that then was the time. His heart was softened; he was ready to receive the truths of the gospel. It was a happy thing for me that I knew the plan of salvation before I left England. I was thus enabled to impart it to this poor man and to others. His idea was that if he could but be very sorry for all his misdeeds, and commit no more, and work away hard to please God in some sort of fashion, he might have a chance of going to heaven at last. He would scarcely believe me when I told him that I found nothing of that sort throughout the Gospels and Epistles; that Christ, the anointed One, had done all that was required for us sinners; that all we have to do is to accept His glorious offer, by faith in the perfect efficacy of His atoning blood, shed for all mankind on Calvary. These truths and many more I tried to explain to Arthur, and it was satisfactory to mark the readiness with which he accepted them.

He was for some time utterly prostrated and scarcely able to stand up, much less to work. We, of course, were all very busy from sunrise to sunset, and I could pay very little attention to him during the day. I gave him, however, the few books we had brought with us; but I was glad to see that the Book of books, long unread, was his chief delight. He would sit with it in his hand all day, and at night would draw near to the fire, and pore over its pages as long as the flames burnt with sufficient brightness. I felt sure from the first that he was in earnest, though J— warned me that he was only shamming, and that as soon as he could have a chance he would be off with anything he could lay hands on. I said that I had no fear about the matter, and should not keep a watch over him.

We had pretty hard work, you may be sure, and I doubt if any men could have worked harder; but we kept our health very well—indeed, in spite of the heat, I never felt stronger. We had first our own dwelling-house to get up, and then the huts for the men. Our own abode was, indeed, but a hut—larger than the others, with divisions; but there was very little finish or ornament about it. To be sure, it was a good deal larger than the cabin of the *May Flower*, though the girls complained that it was not half as neat; nor was it, indeed. Neatness was to come by and by, we said. With many settlers, it must be owned, it never comes at all. We, however, before long put up a verandah, almost a

necessary appendage to a house in that hot climate. There was thus always shade and shelter on one side of the house or the other, and here my wife and daughters could sit and work, and carry on all sorts of operations.

Our very first work, I should have said, was to make a pen for the sheep, where they would be secure from the natives or dingoes at night. In the daytime, when out feeding, they could be easily kept together, and they were so tame that they would follow us about like dogs. Their offspring learnt the same custom; and so instead of the sheep being driven, as in England, they throughout the whole of the country follow the shepherd wherever he leads, and know his voice. Often have I thought of the parable of the Good Shepherd when I have heard a shepherd, in a slightly undulating or hilly country, calling to his sheep, and seen the flock come trooping over the ridges from afar, and gradually drawing round him, not one being missing.

As soon as we could, also, we got a garden fenced in and dug up, and a paddock for wheat. We had no wish to starve, and at that time provisions were often very scarce and enormously dear in the colony. At one time, indeed, in consequence of the non-arrival of store-ships from England, the settlers were nearly starved.

Chapter Fourteen.

A Settler’s Life.

The number of people who knew anything about farming or gardening was very small, and continued so long after the colony was settled. At first, indeed, there were none, and they actually did not know what to do with the seeds which had been sent out with them.

At the time of our arrival a change for the better had taken place, and a large proportion of free settlers were agriculturists, who soon taught the labourers they employed, and several farms were established.

We little thought at that time of the vast power of production possessed by Australia. Day after day we worked on, cutting down trees, splitting them with wedges, building huts, putting up fences, and digging and planting. The latter operations were very important; from the number of mouths we should soon have to feed, the expense of providing food would be very great unless we could produce some on the estate.

As soon as Arthur Wells had recovered his strength he willingly set to work, and no man could have laboured harder than he did. He knew more than any of us did about farming, though we had some books to help us. What was of great consequence, also, he understood the climate; for it was some time before we could bring ourselves to remember that the Australian spring is in October; and that Christmas is the hottest time of the year; and that the periods of seed-time and harvest are the opposite to those of the old country.

Jacob, besides being a good guide through the country, understood felling trees, and splitting timber, and putting up huts—very valuable arts in that country. He might have been a first-rate watchmaker or jeweller, have known Hebrew or Greek, or been a good draughtsman, or kept accounts in excellent style, or dressed to perfection, and been able to leap with the most perfect grace and nimbleness over counters, and yet have starved. Rough backwoodsmen, blacksmiths, carpenters, and ploughmen have from the first been able to secure good wages in Australia. Other men have succeeded by turning their hands to do whatever might offer; but for such men as I have mentioned, the demand remains as at first unabated.

Having got through the work requiring immediate attention, I resolved to return to Sydney to bring up the remainder of our stores, and to procure a few assigned servants. Such was the name given to convicts when made over to the charge of private persons. The duty of the master was to find them employment, to feed them according to a certain scale, and more than that, the original intention of those who formed the plan was that he should do his best to instruct and improve them. I am afraid that not many took much trouble about that; but some few conscientious masters did all they could, and the consequence was that very many poor fellows who might have been utterly lost, had they been turned loose at home, became reformed characters, and respectable members of society.

I took Dick Nailor and Mark with me to look after the dray, thinking that the assigned men might know very little about the matter.

We had a prosperous journey into Sydney. The first thing I did was to sell the horses, for which there was a great demand; and I consequently got a high price for them, more than double what I gave. Instead I bought four working oxen, ten milch cows, and a fine bull. There would be time enough to procure horses when they became more plentiful. Though useful, of course they were not absolute necessaries; and I hoped from the stock I had now got, to become possessed in a few years of a fine herd of cattle. I might have had fifty servants assigned to me, but I accepted only six; and those I had the opportunity of selecting. I determined with these and the assistance of our own party to bring under cultivation as many acres of ground as I could manage.

A settler’s life in a new country is not all plain sailing, as we were to find—though in many instances it may be somewhat monotonous. We had some expectation of meeting with an adventure, for we heard that several bush-rangers were out, who were levying black-mail on all travellers. We resolved at all events not to be taken unawares.

I felt pretty sure that we might trust our new men, and Dick Nailor was a man not to be attacked with impunity even by the most daring of robbers.

We found when we moved on that we had not more men than we required for conducting the dray and driving the cattle. Had we possessed more experience, half our number would have driven twenty times as many cattle as we had, and more than that, with ease.

We made good about twelve miles in the day. At night we had enough to do to keep our valuable cattle from straying. We found the simplest plan was to light a number of fires in a circle, beyond which the animals were seldom disposed to move. It, however, required constant attention to keep up the fires, for as soon as the flames dropped, the animals seemed no longer disposed to be restrained within the circle.

This occupied most of our party during the night, so that only two or three at a time could get rest. We slept very fast when we did sleep, to make up for lost time—as Mark observed. Either Dick Nailor or I was always on the watch, as I did not think it prudent to trust the convicts, though they had but little temptation to play us any tricks. They were pretty well aware that they would have no prospect of setting up for themselves, even if they should run away with our cattle.

We had got within three or four miles of our station, but as we could not reach it before dark, we camped as usual, hoping that we might get there the next morning.

Scarcely had we unyoked our oxen than several blacks appeared coming towards us from a neighbouring bush. I was not aware at the time of the dislike oxen have to the natives, and was astonished at the state of excitement into which the animals were put as the blacks drew near. We had the greatest difficulty, indeed, in restraining the animals from breaking off into the bush. I accordingly, followed by Dick Nailor, went forward to meet our visitors, both of us, however, carrying our guns, for we could not tell what might be their intention. They stopped when they saw the cattle snorting and turning about, seemingly as unwilling to draw near them as the animals were to have their company. They seemed to be a tribe not accustomed to white men, for they did not understand a word we spoke, nor could we what they said. We discovered, however, that they wanted something—it was tobacco,—we gave them some. We showed them that we were ready to be on friendly terms. They then begged for something to drink—rum, and seemed very much astonished to find that we had none. To my belief they had never themselves tasted any, but had heard of the white man’s fire-water from other blacks—his curse—their destruction.

After a little time they intimated to us, so we understood them, that there was something they wished to show to us in the bush at a little distance. They seemed so well disposed that I did not at the time dream of treachery. I told Dick Nailor that I would go forward and see what they wanted to show us. Even Dick hesitated.

“They may mean well, but if they don’t they will have us at terrible advantage all alone in the woods, and they are fearfully ugly fellows to look at, they must allow,” he observed, coming up close to me, to protect me rather than to seek protection for himself.

Still the blacks seemed so eager that we should go, and made so many signs to us, that I was sure that there was something particular they wished to show us. Had I been as well acquainted with them as I afterwards became I should not have ventured. Still the greater number of murders they have committed must be laid to the white man’s charge. They merely retaliated when treated by him with fearful cruelty and injustice. The white man set them an example which the savages copied. True, many of the convicts were reprobates and outcasts. Not once, but frequently men have gone forth with fire-arms and shot down the blacks as if they had been wild beasts. I speak of days happily gone by.

I called out to Mark to keep in the camp with the men and beasts, and Dick and I followed the black, I repeat that it was a very unwise thing to do.

However, on we went. I told Dick to keep his eyes about him, and his gun ready for use.

Having camped early, there was still plenty of daylight; indeed, the blacks themselves will never move at night, from superstitious feelings,—the dread of meeting evil spirits: of good ones they have no notion. There were a good many blacks about, so we signed them to go on ahead, and that we would follow. They did so—when suddenly they drew back, and we saw before us, on the side of an open glade, under a thick-stemmed tree, a rude hut, and just before it, on the ground, two men, wretched, haggard creatures.

On drawing nearer we discovered that the forms alone of the men were there, the spirit had fled. Not a particle of food was to be found near them, but there were the ashes of a small fire, and near it two or three pieces of burnt leather. They had been endeavouring, when too late, to satisfy the cravings of hunger with such food. We had more to discover.

Chapter Fifteen.

Conclusion.

It was a sad sight, but what we saw when we got closer was of even sadder significance. The blacks pointed to one of the bodies which lay stretched out. There was a cut on the head, and, as if just fallen from the right hand of the other man, an axe. There could be no doubt that the last act of one of the famished men had been to murder his companion—for what object it was horrible to think.

But who were these poor wretches? We were convinced that they were bush-rangers. It was even possible that they were the late companions of Arthur Wells. He alone, however, could answer that question. We made signs to the blacks that we would bury the bodies the following day, but that we had not time to do so then. They seemed to understand us, and apparently contentedly accompanied us from the spot. Although convinced that they did not intend us any harm we were watchful as before. This was the more necessary as the sun had set, and it would be difficult to defend ourselves in the dark.

We pushed on, therefore, to the camp as rapidly as we could. We found all safe, and collected some articles which we

thought would please the natives. We presented them. They went away highly pleased.

We had scarcely sat down to tea round our watch-fire when curious shrieks and shouts—most unearthly sounds—reached our ears. They came from the direction where we had last seen the natives. Some of the men declared that the noise must be produced by evil spirits, and were in a great fright; but Mark, who was too sensible to entertain so foolish a notion, asserted that it must be made by the natives, and expressed his wish to go and see what they were about. He wanted Dick Nailor to go with him. Now Dick, though very big, and utterly fearless of human foes, had not quite made up his mind as to the cause of the strange sounds. I, therefore, fully agreeing with Mark, told Dick to take charge of the camp, and that I would accompany my boy. Poor Dick was really unhappy at this; but I, wishing to prove to the men that although Satan was busy enough in the country, it was not by making strange sounds in the bush, persisted in my determination. Mark, laughing heartily at the fears of our companions, set off with me.

We had not got far when we saw the light of a fire burning in an open space among the trees, and figures passing in front of it. For a short time the fire was hid from us by some thick bushes, but when we had got round them we both stopped, and I must confess even I drew my breath somewhat short, for just on the other side of the fire appeared twenty or more skeletons dancing about in the most fantastic manner. Suddenly they would disappear; then again return and frisk about more furiously than before. I rubbed my eyes, I thought that I must be in a dream, or deceived in some way or other. I asked Mark what he saw.

“A skeleton dance, and a very curious thing it is too, but it’s some trick of those black fellows,” he whispered. “Jacob was telling me that they have meetings at night and play all sorts of pranks. I caught sight of the figure of a man just now, between us and the fire, and I could not see through his ribs. He was no skeleton, at all events.”

We crept cautiously nearer, and then saw that what looked like the bones of skeletons were merely white marks painted on the bodies of the blacks, and that when they turned round these were concealed from us. Still I must say that their appearance was at first quite sufficient to startle anybody not prepared to see them.

Not wishing to disturb the natives we retreated quietly to our camp, but though we described the curious sight none of the men seemed disposed to go out and look at it. The natives kept up their revels for a considerable time, and prevented us from getting much sleep. They effectually prevented the cattle, however, from straying in their direction. The natives were keeping what is called a Corroboree, and I do not know that it is a much more barbarous amusement than many of more civilised people.

We were off by daybreak, and in three hours reached our settlement. All had gone well, and I need scarcely say that we were heartily welcomed. My purchase of cattle was greatly admired, and very valuable stock they proved. I had still a good amount of cash left as capital, so that I could go on for two or more years without having to sell any stock, and I now hoped that the land would produce enough corn to feed all those employed on the farm, with some over. I forgot to say that in the afternoon Dick Nailor, with Arthur and two other men, set out to bury the bodies of the white men. My suspicion was confirmed. They were Arthur’s wretched companions. Their fate has been that of hundreds who have attempted to follow the same course. It made a deep impression on Arthur Wells, who ultimately became, through God’s grace, a thoroughly changed man.

I was not disappointed in any of my expectations. God prospered me on every side. I was able to purchase more sheep in the course of another year, so that my flocks rapidly increased. Small flocks, as may be supposed, do not pay. In the course of time we got up a better and larger house. We wanted one indeed, for our family increased in a way we had not expected. Charley White was engaged, I should have said, to my eldest girl, Mary; and just before they were to be married he started off in the dray to Sydney. Whether or not Mary knew why he had gone we could not tell. He was a very short time absent, and when the dray appeared, there, seated under an awning in front, was a nice-looking old lady, and Mary exclaimed, “That’s Aunt Priscilla,” but instead of her cats she was accompanied by two young ladies.

It appeared that Charley had been sending home such glowing accounts of the colony, that Miss Beamish was seized with a strong desire to come out and join her nephew; and, like a sagacious woman, had brought out with her the commodity just then and ever since most required, in the shape of two honest, well-educated, nice-looking girls. Peter and Mark took a great fancy to them, and before long they became their wives.

Miss Beamish got a grant of land close to mine, on which Charley put up a house for her, he and his wife living with her and managing the farm, which she, indeed, made over to him and his heirs, of whom there were, in the course of a few years, no small number.

I was soon able to start Peter in an estate of his own; and Mark a few years afterwards.

Arthur Wells obtained a free pardon and married Susan. I did not consider that his having been a convict should be a bar to their marriage, for I never met a more thoroughly reformed character. He made her an excellent husband.

All my children married as they grew up—the girls at an early age, but the boys had to wait some time before they could find suitable wives. However, in the course of years—I need not say how many—all my children happily married, were settled either with me on my original property, much increased both in value and size, or else on estates around me.

I have been greatly blessed in life. I have, however, a difficulty which I do not think I shall ever get over—it is to remember the names of my grand-children. Already upwards of fifty muster together at our family meetings, and as far as I can judge, that number may be more than doubled in the course of a few years.

Australia still affords a fine field for settlers, but they must be industrious, persevering, and energetic; idlers, rogues, and vagabonds will starve there, as everywhere else. As in most parts of the world so in Australia; trust in God, industry, and perseverance will conquer all difficulties and lead on to success.

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