Tasmanian friends and foes : feathered, furred, and finned; a family chronicle of country life, nature history, and veritable adventure / [Mrs. Charles Meredith].

Contributors

Meredith, Charles, Mrs., 1812-1895.

Publication/Creation

London : M. Ward, 1881.

Persistent URL

https://wellcomecollection.org/works/kkcxpf5s

License and attribution

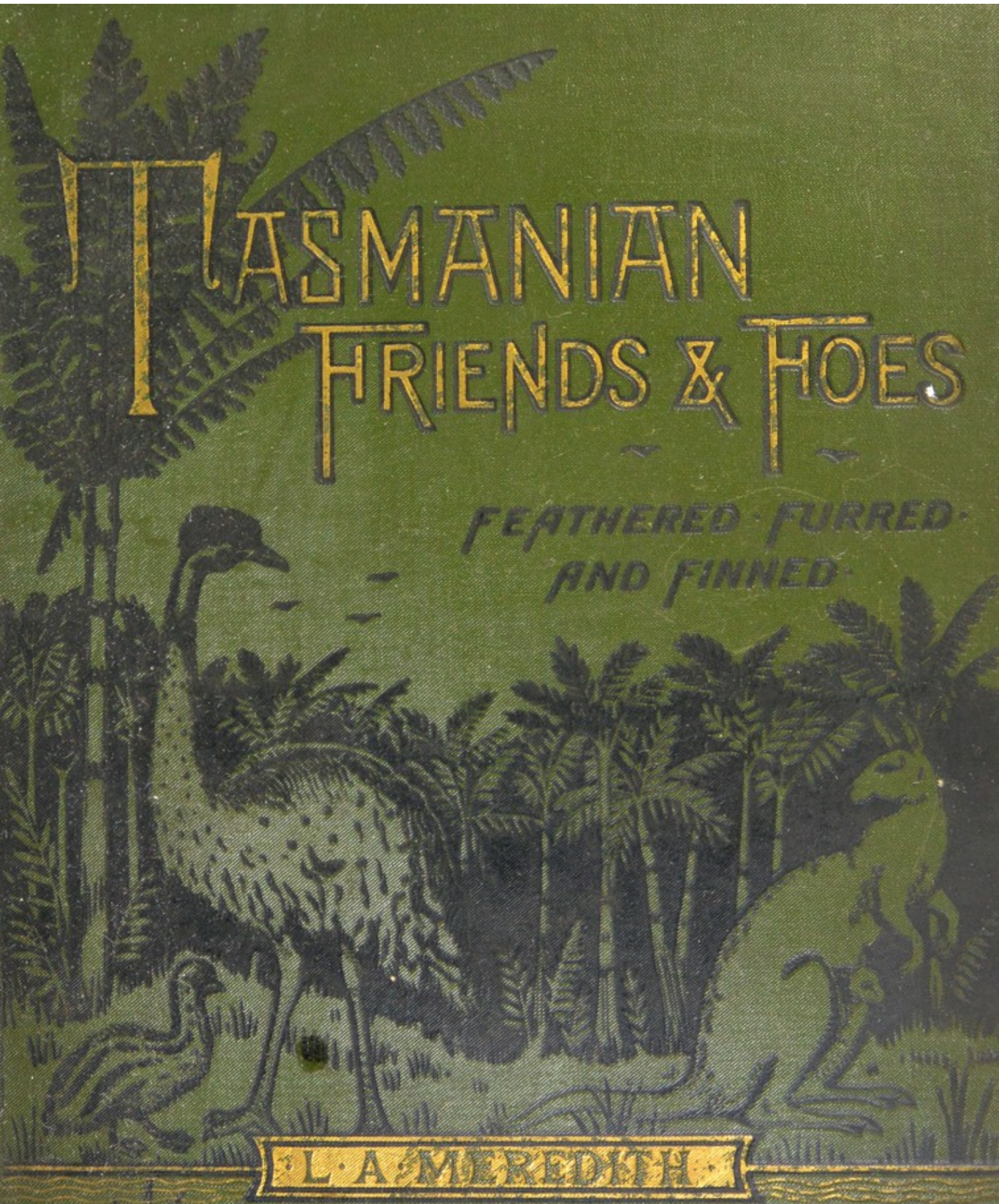
This work has been identified as being free of known restrictions under copyright law, including all related and neighbouring rights and is being made available under the Creative Commons, Public Domain Mark.

You can copy, modify, distribute and perform the work, even for commercial purposes, without asking permission.

Wellcome Collection
183 Euston Road
London NW1 2BE UK
T +44 (0)20 7611 8722
E library@wellcomecollection.org
https://wellcomecollection.org

TASMANIAN FRIENDS & FOES

FEATHERED · FURRED · AND FINNED ·



L · A · MEREDITH ·

22102058553

PROBS
Orient
Bury St. Brit. Museum
London, W.C.

Med
K6636

7/6
ц/п

229

12157

Tasmanian Friends and Foes



PLATE VI. CHAP. 32.

TASMANIAN FRIENDS AND FOES

FEATHERED, FURRED, AND FINNED

A FAMILY CHRONICLE OF COUNTRY LIFE, NATURAL HISTORY, AND VERITABLE ADVENTURE

BY

LOUISA ANNE MEREDITH

AUTHOR OF "MY HOME IN TASMANIA," "SOME OF MY BUSH FRIENDS IN TASMANIA," "OUR ISLAND HOME: A TASMANIAN SKETCH-BOOK," &C., &C.

With Coloured Plates, from Drawings by the Author

AND OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS

"Oh! thou sculptor, painter, poet,
Lay this lesson to thy heart:
That is best which lieth nearest,
Shape from that thy work of art."

LONGFELLOW.

SECOND EDITION

London:

MARCUS WARD & CO., 67 & 68, CHANDOS STREET

AND ROYAL ULSTER WORKS, BELFAST

1881

11697

14172

PUBLISHERS' NOTE.

It is due to the Author of this work to state that she is resident in Tasmania, and that the Proof Sheets have therefore not had the advantage of her supervision. Great care has, however, been taken in its production, and it is hoped that no errors or omissions have been made.

WELLCOME INSTITUTE LIBRARY
Coll. welMOmec
Call No. QL

This Volume

IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED TO

ETHEL AND GODFREY,

TASMANIAN-BORN CHILDREN OF SIR THOMAS GORE BROWNE, K.C.M.G., &c.,
FORMERLY GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA;—

MARY VIOLET,

DAUGHTER OF MAJOR-GENERAL P. MAXWELL;

STANISLAUS,

SON OF COUNT ODOARDO COLACICCHI;

ROWLAND,

SON OF COLONEL T. VAUGHTON;

AND TO MY OTHER

GRAND-NIECES AND NEPHEWS

IN EUROPE AND AUSTRALIA,

WITH THE HOPE THAT THEY MAY ALL SHARE THAT LOVE OF NATURE WHICH
FROM CHILDHOOD TO AGE
I HAVE FOUND SO PRECIOUS A COMPANION.

Louisa A. Meredith.

In Memoriam.

THE HONOURABLE CHARLES MEREDITH,

Born at Poyston, Pembrokeshire, 29th May, 1811;
Died at Launceston, Tasmania, 2nd March, 1880.

HE from whose noble character a few features are feebly portrayed in these pages, has been removed by death from the scene of his benevolent purpose and earnest effort ere their publication.

The following extract, from one of the many warm tributes offered to his memory by Colonial writers, has been selected by his sorrowing wife as a loving tribute for which no apology need be asked, since the chief interest to be found in this book consists in his adventures, which are therein faithfully narrated :—

"He was the very Rupert of debate—fearless, earnest, honest, truthful, witty, and withal uncompromising. Few cared about breaking a lance with him. His enmities were political; he did not make them personal. Ever ready, after a fearless denunciation of a political opponent and his principles, or a bitter passage of arms in debate, to welcome the friend with a warm greeting outside, even those who most suffered under the withering sarcasm of his scathing tongue, whilst they feared, honoured the man, and paid tribute to his dauntless nature.

. . . . . .

"Charles Meredith was considerate, full of energy, kindly, generous, and lovable, a staunch friend, and, what is more, an honourable foe. He was sensitive to the pain which mars God's beautiful earth; courageous in action as in idea; as a man, honest—as a friend, faithful—as a magistrate, fearless; whilst not the least of the characteristics which helped to make his noble nature so lovable was his tender thought for God's speechless creatures. He truly wore

'The white flower of a blameless life
Before a thousand peering littlenesses.'

Another of Tasmania's sons, one of her most trusty friends, of her most honoured servants, who has left his work on the scroll of time, is gone; but his name will be remembered, and in every remembrance honoured—honoured and loved as that of one

'Who reverenced his conscience as his king;
Whose glory was redressing human wrong;
Who spoke no slander—no, nor listened to it.'"

Sydney Town and County Journal, April 3, 1880.

L. A. M.

LAUNCESTON, TASMANIA,
June 8, 1880.

PREFACE.

IN the following pages are gathered and woven into connected sequence some of the incidents and observations which a residence of thirty-nine years in Tasmania has served to collect. *Every adventure narrated is strictly true;* and the anecdotes of birds and animals are facts, set down simply from our own experience. The one feature in the book in which Fiction may claim a share, is the *personnel* of the characters, and the slender thread of domestic story on which the beads of reality are strung. Even though some reader of enquiring mind may think he can identify some members of the Merton family, he will vainly seek originals for the inmates at the "Pines" or "Walloora."

Since writing the chapters on our native animals, I have, for the first time, read the following observations upon them in the article "Marsupialia" in *Chambers's Encyclopædia*, vol. vi., p. 342:—

"In accordance with this condition of the brain, these animals are all characterised by a low degree of intelligence, and are said (when in captivity) not to manifest any sign of recognition of their feeders."

Whilst regretting that so unjustifiable an opinion should be held by men of science, I am fain to rejoice over those pages of my unpretending book, which I think will supply evidence that the engaging and affectionate animals whose brief memoirs they contain were far from deficient in intelligence. The gentle usage and freedom they enjoyed with us would

very probably be more favourable to the manifestation of sense and attachment than the dreary lives they would pass in large zoological collections, where the bestowal of a daily dole of food might be all the kindly notice they would receive. The young brush kangaroo, of which the longest account is given, showed most decided knowledge of, and preference for, certain individuals. In a morning, before his breakfast of bread and milk was given to him, he would follow me or the parlour-maid from place to place until we fed him; but he *only* so followed *us* because no one else was in the habit of feeding him at that hour. In the garden he hopped round and round in merry races with our sons (then children), seeming as fond of the fun as they were, or with his little fore paws took hold of one of my husband's hands or mine, licking them fondly, and evidently liking to pace the walks with us in our sedater manner; but at the sound of an opening gate he would quickly and warily rear himself erect, and glance round, with his ever alert and mobile ears intently listening, and should an unfamiliar step approach, he invariably took flight, leaping away at racing speed to hide himself amongst the shrubs. Here, surely, was evidence of clear discrimination.

My tame bandicoots, which used to run up, like great mice, into the folds of my dress, or creep into my sleeves, never attempted such familiarities with any other person; and the one which died would cry uneasily if any hands but my own touched it after it became sick.

A great forest kangaroo, which long ago belonged to the wife of one of Mr. Meredith's servants, always accompanied her everywhere, as a faithful dog would do, but never followed anyone else; and the wombat attaches itself to particular persons with touching fidelity.

My simple, truthful records relating to individuals of the marsupial tribes cannot prove aught as to their comformation of brain, but may, I venture to believe, in some degree vindicate them from the suspicion of stupidity or ingratitude.

Beyond the hope that this homely chronicle may interest young readers,

and perhaps some older ones, whose love of Nature may give it favour in their eyes, I have one earnest purpose at heart—the desire to devote the best help which I am capable of bringing to the good work of showing to all, but especially to the young, how full of healthy, refining, vivid pleasure is that habit of mind which to ardent, reverent admiration of the Creator's works unites tender care for the comfort and happiness of our dumb friends and companions.

I do not presume to offer scientific information on any subject, but have given the proper names of most objects alluded to, so that works of authority on Natural History may readily be consulted by the inquiring or studious reader.

For his goodness in affixing their proper names to the list of birds and reptiles observed in Riverina by my son Charles, I offer my best thanks to Professor M'Coy, F.G.S., &c., &c., of the Melbourne University.

For the names of the fish with whose portraits I have illustrated some of the descriptions, I am indebted to my friend of many years, the late Mr. Morton Allport, F.L.S., F.Z.S., F.R.C.I., &c., &c., of Hobart, whose scientific attainments, and whose ready kindness in imparting knowledge to others, rendered his life one of active usefulness, and his recent early death such a loss to the interests of general science (in Australia especially) as is simply irreparable. That his hearty praise was given to my drawings (and he was a true artist) is the best guarantee I can offer for their accuracy.

I have to thank another Tasmanian naturalist, Mr. M. Johnston,* for his assistance in enabling me to name some long-known favourites among our ferns.

To Professor Agardh of Lünd I offer grateful acknowledgments for so valuable a requital for parcels of Tasmanian *Algæ* as the names of those I have sent to him, the list of which I add to this volume, in the belief that it may be interesting to collectors.

My gifted artist friend, Mr. N. Chevalier, too, must here see the repetition of my thanks for his charming sketch of Dumpy the Wombat.

---

* Author of *Field Memoranda for Tasmanian Botanists.*

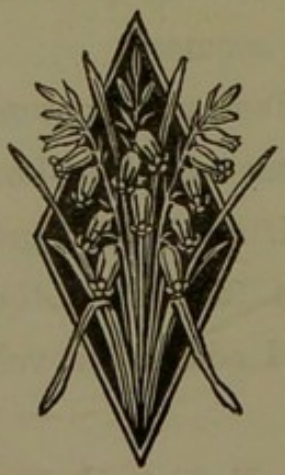
Mr. Gould, whose peerless works have won for him the gratitude of all the world, most kindly permitted me to use copies of some of his admirable pictures of Tasmanian animals and birds; and whether such form any part of these illustrations or not, my sincere thanks for his liberality are equally due.

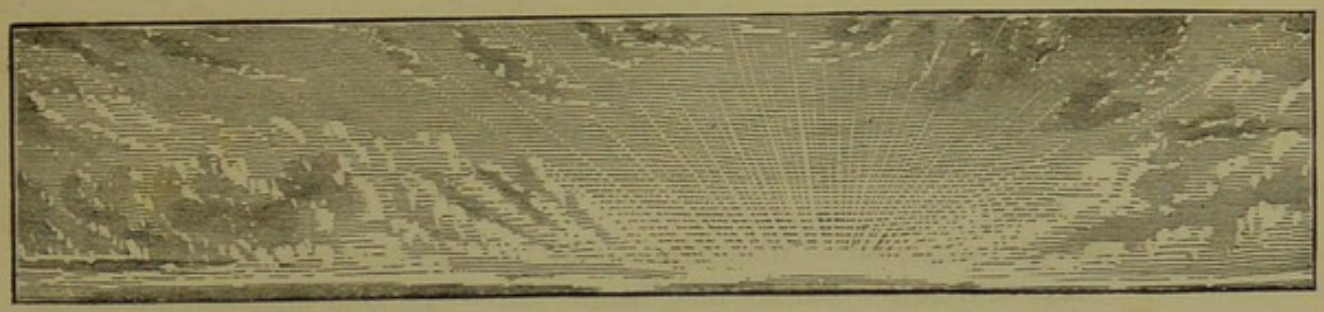
The desire of my publishers for an increased number of coloured drawings has caused considerable delay in the appearance of this book, my fast-failing eyesight rendering the task of making them a longer one than I should have found it some years ago.

Perhaps it may not be altogether irrelevant to add that these final lines of the book, in which divers experiences in the past lives of both my dear husband and myself find utterance, are written on the fortieth anniversary of our wedding-day.

L. A. M.

Malunnah, Tasmania,
April 18th, 1879.





CONTENTS.

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	(*Plate 1*)—Introductory—"Loorana"—The Mertons—Gwendoline's Proposition—Snow-berry, &c.	9
II.	Family Pursuits—Gwendoline's First "Gossip"—Forest Kangaroo—Sir E. Wilmot's Park—Brush Kangaroo—Tame Pets—Joey's Habits and Manners—Joey in Disgrace—Death—Giuseppe and Beppo—Guy on Guinea-pigs	14
III.	(*Plate 2*)—Freda's Fairy—The Green Mantis	23
IV.	Guy's Ploughing—Louis's Brush Fencing	26
V.	(*Plate 3*)—A Spectre	28
VI.	Gwendoline's Second "Gossip"—Wallaby—"Bustle"—Kangaroo Rats—"Trotty" and "Hoppy"—Nest—Forest Rat—Opossum—Possy's Performances—Ring-tail Opossum—Opossum Mouse	30
VII.	(*Plate 4*)—Rain—A Former Flood—A Waterspout—Native Cherries—Turquoise Gems	39
VIII.	Early Alarm—Giles "up a tree"—Flooded-out Families—The Rescue	42
IX.	The Lost Orchard—Gwendoline's Third "Gossip"—Wombat—"Dumpy"	51
X.	"Gossip" continued—Porcupine Ant-eater—Platypus—Musk Rat—Bandicoot—"Coota"	55
XI.	Rain—Guy's "Gossip"—Devil—Tiger—Native and Tiger Cats—"John"—"Mr. Boker"	62
XII.	Jerry's News—Flood-imprisoned Horses—Recovery—A Faithless Shepherd—Lost Sheep—Difficulties	70
XIII.	A Wet Winter—Snow—She-oak—He-oak	75
XIV.	A Tragedy of Old Days—Aborigines—An Iron Rule—Study under Peculiarities—Mast-head Readings	79
XV.	Old Adventures—The Lubras' Warning—A Boy Hermit	86
XVI.	Old Adventures—Sheep-driving—Winter Quarters—Return—Kind Convicts—Finding an Old Four-footed Friend	93
XVII.	Old Adventures—Floods—Foresight Rewarded—Tree Bridge—Wallaby Supper—Return	99
XVIII.	Gwendoline's Fourth "Gossip"—Eagles—Their Pursuit of Animals—Pet Lambs—Sea Eagle—Hawk—Crow—Magpie—Black Magpie—Jackass—Owls—Mope Hawk—Bittern—Crane	103

CHAP. PAGE

XIX.—"Gossip" continued—Parrots—White Cockatoo—Our Tame Acquaintances—Black Cockatoo—Rose-hill and other Parrots—Swift Parroquet—Bronze-wing Pigeon—Ground Dove—Wattle-bird—Summer-bird—Miner - - - - - - - - - - 113

XX.—"Gossip" continued—Little Birds—Robin—Our Particular Friend—Blue-cap—Firetail—Pranks of a Tame Pair—Diamond-bird—Honey-eater—"Get-over!"—"Kitty Wick!"—"Who are you?"—White-eyes—Swallows - - - - - - - - - 122

XXI.—A Journey—"Why carry an Axe?"—Arrival—Walloora and its Inmates 130

XXII.—An Expedition, and what came of it—Ferns—The Enchanted Grove - 136

XXIII.—The Alarm—The Search—Night—Morning - - - - - 144

XXIV.—The Deer-park—Emus—Black Swans—Cygnets—A Military Noah Claypole—Destruction of Swans' Eggs—Mountain Duck—Black Duck—Bald Coot - - - - - - - - - - 153

XXV.—A Domestic Discussion—Woman's Work - - - - - - 161

XXVI.—A Keepsake—Departure—Arrival at Home—A Welcome Guest - 170

XXVII.—Home Avocations—Snakes—Serpents—Iguanas - - - - - 174

XXVIII.—Emus—A New Apostle—Barbarities of Civilisation—Birds in Riverina—Ducks—Whistling Teal—Ibis—Crane—Diver—Night-cries—Drought—Pigeons—Mallee Hens—Parrots—Little Birds—Native Companions 180

XXIX.—Mistaken Identity of Lamb and Kid—Equine Damon and Pythias - 191

XXX.—Guy's Grand Idea—Aunt Anne and her Abode—"Gully" saying Grace—Tamed Wild Gulls—Penguins—King Penguin - - - - 195

XXXI.—The Boat—The Beach—Skye's Playmates—Sea-gulls—Red-bills—Dottrels—Hermit Crab—Cormorants—Pelicans—Sea-weeds—"Holy Coat"—"Coverlet"—Sand-saucers—Blue Crabs—A small new Acquaintance with a large Name - - - - - - - - - 202

XXXII.—(*Plates 5 and 6*)—"Fish O!"—Blue-head—Parrot-fish—John Dory—Magpie Perch—Pig-faced Lady—Flat-heads—Cat-fish—Grampus 211

XXXIII.—"An Hour's Sail" proves a Day's Adventure—A Mountain Scramble—Ferny Ravine—Varieties of Ferns—White Lichen—Oyster Bay Pine—Gannets—Eagles - - - - - - - - - 216

XXXIV.—Fishing—Submarine Forests of Kelp—Venus's Doves—Shags—Two Fish on one Hook—Barracouta—Rock Cod—Toad-fish - - - - 224

XXXV.—A Shark Coincidence—Primitive Bed-making—Extempore Gridiron—Native Pepper—New Dinner Service—Dinner *à l'antique*—A Night Picture—Owl - - - - - - - - - - 229

XXXVI.—Whaling Adventures - - - - - - - - - 235

XXXVII.—Shark Encounters—Airy Bedchambers—Return Voyage—Barracouta-fishing—Arrival - - - - - - - - - - 240

XXXVIII.—(*Plates 7 and 8*)—Poseidon's Present—Superb Dragon—Ostracian—Ibacus—Ruby-fish—Tortoiseshell-fish—Phosphorescence—Cray-fishing—Migratory Silver-fish—Mrs. Leslie's New Manager - - - - 247

ALGÆ collected at Orford, East Coast of Tasmania, by the Author, and named by Professor C. S. AGARDH - - - - - - 255

INDEX - - - - - - - - - - 257

Tasmanian Friends and Foes.

CHAPTER I.

A rural home, whose simple annals yield
No stately theme for Fiction's florid pen,
But truthful tales of trial, that may teach
Patience and thankfulness to many men.

"MAMMA, when you have quite finished your letters, I want to talk to you." The speaker was a girl of seventeen, slight and tall for her age, with a bright, earnest face, full of energy and intelligence. An open letter, in round childish writing, was in her hand, and, after reading it through a second time, she had sat for a while in deep thought before addressing her mother, who was still intent on her correspondence. The English mail had been received that morning, and Mrs. Merton had many dear friends and relatives in the Old Country, whose long letters were an undiminished delight and solace to her, although many years had passed since she had bidden them farewell, and, as a young bride, accompanied her husband (who had lived in the Australian colonies from early boyhood) on his return after a visit to England.

Of the many trials and vicissitudes, losses and crosses, which befel the brave young couple in the early years of their colonial life, it is not our present purpose to speak. At the time when Lina sat reading her letter, the family dwelt in a pleasant country-house in Tasmania, some miles distant from any village or neighbours of their own class, and surrounded by bush and forest. The house, called "Loorana" (an aboriginal word signifying brushwood), stood on a pretty knoll, encompassed on two sides by a small, but never-failing river. In the

valley around it, some extensive paddocks had been cleared and cultivated, which bore abundant crops of grain and roots. Sheep and a few cattle occupied the greater part of the estate, which was but of moderate extent, for Mr. Merton had neither inherited wealth, nor drawn prizes in the golden lotteries of Australian speculation. Five children, and their needs of food, raiment, and education, sometimes pressed almost too heavily on his mind and means; but the household was nevertheless a cheery one, and such privation as was inevitable was shared bravely, if not even merrily.

In the pleasant room, where the mother and daughter sat beside the table strewn with letters, newspapers, and book-packets (welcome gift-guests), the furniture, though simple and inexpensive, was well-kept, comfortable, and evinced an amount of taste in colour and arrangement that is too often lacking in more pretentious apartments. The pretty wall-paper (put up by Mrs. Merton's own clever hands) harmonised with the fresh chintz covers of the easy-chairs and sofa, and with the warmer hues of the carpet, whilst a few fine old family pictures and choice engravings told both of pride of ancestry and love of art.

Putting her last letter back into its envelope, Mrs. Merton turned to Lina.

"And now, dear, what have you to tell me?"

"You 'll not laugh, Mamma, please?"

"That must depend upon there being anything to laugh at."

"Well, Mamma, I've been thinking. You see Sibyl's letter says how amused she was with the account I wrote her of our poor magpie, and she wants to hear more about our pets, and native things of all sorts, for she thinks that opossums and kangaroos must be much prettier than the rabbits and guinea-pigs they keep at Woodlands. So I've been thinking, that if you and Papa would help us, Guy and I could write a good many little bits about the live things here that would interest Sibyl, and our other cousins too. Don't you think we can?"

"I think—nay, I am sure you can, if you like to try."

"And if we always use paper the same size, and write plainly, Sibyl can stitch the leaves all together; and if you will draw something nice for the cover, Mamma, she will have quite a little book."

Mrs. Merton smiled. "You are certainly galloping to conclusions, Lina, to talk of binding your book before you begin to write it. But it is a good idea, and I advise you to put it in practice; only, do not weary of your scheme, as I

have known young people do, of intentions which seemed equally charming at the outset."

"Ah! that terrible old subject! You never will forget it. I wish you would, Mamma."

"I am glad your conscience is so tender, Lina; I named no particular instance of fickleness."

"For all that, I know what you mean—my beginning to press plants for a collection, and not going on with it. But you know, Mamma, how they would dry up, and go brown and ugly, and black and brittle, and not look a bit like the real live darlings. It seemed quite cruel to squeeze them to death in that way."

"Very well; we will not say any more about the Herbarium; only let its memory serve you as an admonition not to undertake any scheme until you are satisfied that you can carry it on to completion, even though the task should grow difficult or distasteful."

"But, Mamma dear, how could it grow distasteful?"

"I do not think it ought to do so. I only warn you to 'count the cost' before you incur responsibility by making promises to Sibyl, which you may break, and so disappoint her."

"Well, Mamma, as you have so little faith in my perseverance, I will only make the promise to myself, but go on all the same, sending her what we write; and when we cannot think of any more to say—why, then, of course we must leave off."

"Bravo, Linny! That's what Papa calls a self-evident proposition," cried a hearty boyish voice at the open window, and an outstretched hand held up a bunch of native berries, which Lina, with a glad cry, sprang up to receive.

"Oh, Mamma! what a lovely spray of Snow-balls!* Is it not? And how purely snowily white they are, with the bright red seed-cells just smiling through the crevices in the snow; and how prettily the crimson tint is repeated in the hairy stems! Thank you, Guy—thank you. Do draw them, Mamma: they will make such a pretty group, with some of the dark blue-purple ones† by way of contrast."

---

* *Gualtheria hispida.*—The "Snow-berry," or "Wax Cluster," is also called native Arbutus, from the form of the white flowers which precede the fruit. The latter is of a peculiar brioche-like form, and as the deep clefts open, the crimson seed-cells peep through.

† *Billardiera longiflora*, the well-known beautiful climber, with pale greenish bell-flowers and purple fruit.

"If you do, Mother," said Guy, "pray put in that rare butterfly I found for you—the 'Emerald King' you called him—all black velvet and green, with his long-tailed wings;* and you must paint the underside—the *lining* of his royal robes—as well, for it is quite different from the upper surface. Well, Linny, and what is it you are going to do before you leave off?"

"Come in, and I'll tell you all about it."

Guy Merton was a year and a-half younger than Gwendoline (whom we have already introduced by her pet name of "Lina"), a tall robust lad, with a broad, bold, frank face, and clear, blue-grey eyes that could not *look* a falsehood, even were his lips to speak one—which they never did. His mother had earnestly desired to see him placed in some profession, and after she had instructed him herself till he was eleven, he was sent to the (then) best colonial school; but after four years the means were wanting to continue his education, and, to Mrs. Merton's bitter disappointment, he remained at home assisting his father on the farm, and her cherished hope of his future bright career had to be reluctantly resigned.

If Guy himself as yet regretted the change, is doubtful. To a boy of his age, energy, and health, an out-door life seems full of charm and enjoyment, whilst to be confined to desk-work is looked upon as little short of purgatory. The hard rough labour, early and late, through heat or cold, wet or dry—the unending anxiety of a settler's life, and the small proportion which the gain bears to the toil, are alike unknown and unconsidered by many a thoughtless boy who, because he enjoys a holiday with gun or fishing-rod, thinks he "would like to be a farmer." And not until too late are the advantages he possibly rejects in a profession—the daily comforts and refinements of civilised life, the triumphs of intellectual power and culture, and the pathway to affluence and distinction—seen in their true colours, and estimated at their proper value. During his school-days, Guy's inclinations led him, too, to esteem the happiness of a country life above all others; but the final decision lay not with him to make. Long ere he had expected the change, daily labour took the place of study.

"And the long and the short of it is, Linny, you want to write a book," was Guy's laughing remark, when Lina's little scheme for her cousin's amusement was duly laid before him.

"Oh no, Guy, I cannot do it by myself; but I thought if you would help,

* Emerald King—*Papilis sp.*—name not known.

and write what you know about wild things, and if Papa would write down some of the stories he tells us, that we might——"

"Collect scraps enough for your patchwork?" interrupted Guy. "All right. You begin, and show us what you want. I'm not much of a hand at spinning yarns, and besides, I've got lots to do now; but I suppose you go on the beggar's-wallet principle—'The smallest contribution gratefully received'?"

"That's not a pretty speech, Guy," said Lina, with a little grimace. "But very near the truth, I dare say," she added, laughing.

"And now make haste and clear the table, Lina," said Mrs. Merton, gathering up her letters. "Your father is coming up the hill, and dinner is ready."





CHAPTER II.

Now stir the fire, and close the shutters fast;
Let fall the curtains; wheel the sofa round,
. . . . . .
So let us welcome peaceful evening in.

COWPER.

A FEW evenings after, the family were seated round the lamp-lit table after tea, each busy with some occupation, except Lina. Mrs. Merton, her never-failing work-basket beside her, was making a waistcoat for her husband; for, aided by a hand sewing-machine, she executed nearly all the tailoring of the family, and most artistically too, and such an apple of discord as a dressmaker's bill never disturbed that house. Mr. Merton had a toy cutter on the table before him, which he had skilfully carved from a block of sassafras wood,* and which he was now rigging with the neatest accuracy, watched with eager delight by his youngest boy, Frank, the future owner, who held the hull of the vessel steady, whilst his father fitted and measured and tied knots of wonderful device and variety in the slender whip-cord "ropes." Guy was doing his best to copy a print of a naval review from an illustrated paper, much exercised in patience by the difficulty he experienced in drawing the masts and spars, and ever and anon turning to his mother, beside whom he sat, for counsel and assistance. Louis, the second son, a slight, delicate-looking boy of twelve, was carefully carving a small piece of pine into the form of a boat, to act as "dingy" to the cutter. And fair-haired Winifred, a rosy, round little damsel of six, twisted her pretty lips, and puckered her brows into as terrible a frown as they could make, whilst pulling a needle, with disproportionately thick cotton, through a piece of print, to make a doll's petticoat. Gwendoline alone sat unemployed.

---

* *Atherosperma moschata.*

"A penny for your thoughts, Lina," said her father, looking up, after "splicing" some part of his miniature tackle, which had been somewhat difficult to manage.

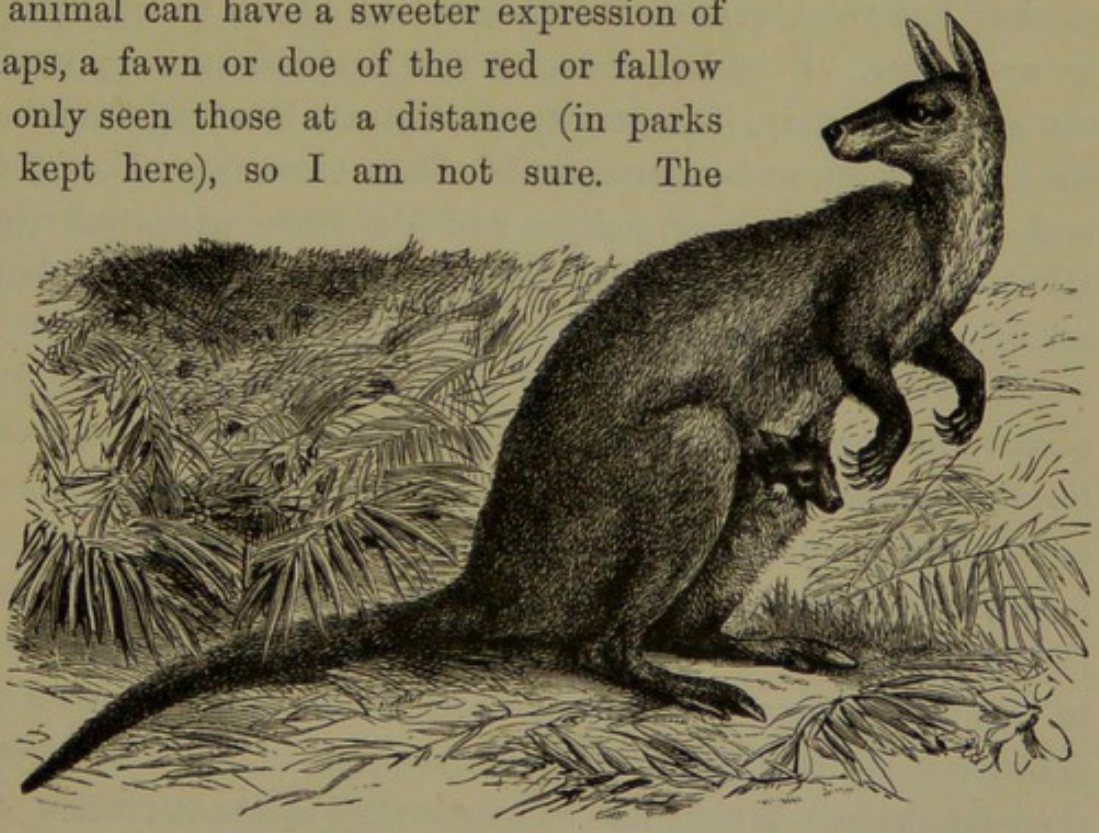
Lina's soft colour flushed up into the very roots of her brown hair, as she said, hesitatingly—

"Oh, Papa, I thought—I wished——had I not better read you what I was going to send Sibyl next mail? I tried to remember about the kangaroos we have had tame, because she says she saw those at the Zoological Gardens in London, and thought them such funny things, hopping about like frogs."

So Lina, by general desire, read what Guy ironically entitled her scientific article, but which we shall better describe as—

GWENDOLINE'S FIRST GOSSIP.

I think, dear Cousin Sibyl, that you would indeed say kangaroos were nicer pets than guinea-pigs, if you had seen some of those we have had tame. I do not think any animal can have a sweeter expression of face—unless, perhaps, a fawn or doe of the red or fallow deer, and I have only seen those at a distance (in parks where they are kept here), so I am not sure. The kangaroo's face is very like a deer's, with full dark eyes, and quite long eye-lashes, and such beautiful large delicate ears, like a mouse's, only magnified I don't know how many times. They are almost always in motion, turning this way and that, in different directions, to catch every little sound in the air that might give warning of coming danger.



We have never had one of the largest kind—the Forester Kangaroo*—tame, for they have been so hunted and destroyed that there are very few left in

* *Macropus giganteus.*

Tasmania, and those are in private preserves, or very remote out-of-the-way places, and rarely seen. Papa says that, when he was a boy, they were plentiful, quietly feeding in the open country—five, ten, or twenty at a time. The natives (I suppose I ought to say the aborigines, for I am a native, you know)—the aborigines called the old father of a flock a Boomer. These were often very large: about five feet high in their usual position, but when standing quite up, they were fully six feet, as tall as Papa—only fancy what big creatures they were!—and weighing 150 or 200 pounds. Papa remembers the wife of one of his shepherds who had reared a forester kangaroo, that was quite tame and gentle, and a good deal taller than she was. He followed her wherever she went, hopping about with her, as docile and quiet as a dog. But the usual sad fate of such pets befel him. He was pulled down and killed by strange dogs.

Mamma has often told us of the nice collection of live native animals which Sir Eardley Wilmot kept in a little park in Hobart, close to the old Government House. There was a Boomer named Jacob that Mamma wished to pat and stroke; but the Governor told her he was not to be trusted quite so far as that by a stranger. Even the claws of the fore-feet are very strong and sharp, and can scratch terribly, if the creature chooses. Many of the others in the paddock were quite tame, and came up to be noticed and fed. Now, the pretty old house, and its conservatory-verandahs, and the little park, and the kind, noble old Governor himself, are all gone long ago, and great official buildings have been set up where they used to be.

In Victoria, there are still a great many of the big kangaroos in some places; but the people there want all the grass for their sheep, and the poor foresters have been hunted down in hundreds and thousands, and killed so cruelly, that Papa thinks they will be quite gone before long. Is it not very sad for the settlers to be so greedy, and grudge such beautiful creatures a little of the food that used to belong to them altogether? and, besides, they are so good to eat, that one would think people would value them for their meat, just as gentlemen at home in England like venison. I am sure it is much nicer than their fat sheep. We all like kangaroo very much, and when strangers come, and we have it for dinner, they enjoy it as quite a "dainty dish." I wonder if it is ever "set before the Queen." I think she would say it was very good, if cooked as Mamma has it done. When you keep a park of kangaroo, I'll send you her recipes.

Our pets have been of the second-sized kind, the Brush Kangaroo.* They

Macropus Bennettii.

sit between two and three feet high, but are higher when they stand or jump. I think our last Joey was the dearest of all, and we had him about three years. I do not know why they are named Joey any more than Johnny; but, whether male or female, that is what young kangaroos or opossums are commonly called.

We had this one quite young. Our great kangaroo-dog, Bluey, chased and killed his poor mother; but when the little one jumped out of her pouch, the dear old dog caught it, and carried it in his mouth quite gently, without hurting it. So it was brought home, and Mamma, and a maid we had then who was very kind to all our pets, fed poor little Joey with warm milk from a bottle, and kept him in some wool and flannel in a basket. He was very soft and thin, and his long legs seemed so weak and slight you would have been afraid to touch him. He was taken great care of, and grew quite strong and active, and used to hop round the garden with us at a flying pace if we ran races. If we walked quietly, he would take one of our hands in his two little fore paws quite lovingly, and hop gently beside us. He soon learned to eat his milk from a saucer, and throughout his life used to expect it in a morning.

In wet weather he certainly was a little provoking, for, as he lived at liberty in the garden, he always came in the morning to the house-door, and, if that were open, hopped into the hall and dining-room. So his long wet tail and hind feet made three long dirty tracks wherever he went—a good deal more to our amusement than that of his old friend the housemaid, who used to remonstrate with him very gravely, and ask him how he came not to learn better manners, and wipe his feet on the mat "like the other young gentlemen."

One summer morning, when the doors were all open, I came alone into the dining-room, and at the window stood Joey on tip-toe, with one hand resting on the window-frame, and his pretty bright face peering out in the drollest way at the cat lying outside in the sun. How I wished I could have painted a picture of him! He often tried to make friends with puss, but she rejected his overtures in a very unladylike manner, spitting, clawing, setting up her back, and scampering away if he attempted to approach within touching distance.

Nothing could be more graceful than his movements and attitudes. Even when he sat on the middle of his back, holding his tail straight up in front of him with one hand, and combing the hair smooth with the other, it was done daintily; and though it always made us laugh to see him, he never looked awkward, as any other animal would do in such a grotesque position. If our merriment disturbed him, he would pause for a moment and look up, as if to

say, "You are very rude to interrupt a gentleman at his toilet. Pray mind your own affairs!" and then go on combing as busily as before.

There were some borderings of double daisies, of whose flowers he was very fond: he often made a litter with the little petals he dropped about; but roses were his favourite delicacy; and dearly as Mamma loves her roses, she never could scold him for taking them, he did it so prettily—hopping along till he saw a full-blown one that pleased him, then standing on his toes and tail, and picking first the one flower so neatly with one hand (for really it is nonsense to call it a *paw*), and then sitting erect, holding it in both, and nibbling it leaf by leaf so calmly and deliberately—never in the least haste, nor trying to gobble, as many other creatures do when they are fed. Ears of corn, or blades of grass, or pieces of bread were all taken in the same refined style. I am sure his manners at meals might have set an example of elegant deportment to many boys and girls, and older people too; and, when he had done, he brushed the crumbs off his coat, washed his face and hands (in the best way *he* knew), and combed his whiskers, before starting for a game of play, or a hop round the grass plot.

But once our dear Joey got into real disgrace. Mamma had a bed of fine tulips, which had been very handsome for one or two years, and, having greatly increased, and been carefully replanted, were expected to make a grand show when they bloomed. The little green shoots were just above the ground, when we found holes scratched in the beds, and bulbs taken out, and left half-eaten on the soil. Great was the consternation, and loud the cries of "Bandicoots!" "Kangaroo rats!" and bitter reproaches were poured on our two peerless terriers for want of diligence and betrayal of trust.

"Pepper," a genuine "Dandie Dinmont," and "Bob," of equally illustrious descent (both brought from Scotland by Cousin George as presents to Papa and Mamma), were on duty next evening, and made to hunt every nook of the garden, to the great diversion of the boys; but, except terrifying my new kitten, and sending her, "spitting like fireworks," as Guy said, up a pear-tree, nothing came of the chase. Still, in the morning, more tulip bulbs lay nibbled on the bed.

"There must be a hole in the fence, where bandicoots come through," said Mamma.

So the old gardener went round, with strips of wood and nails, and secured every slit that a mouse could creep in at; and the terriers kept watch again. Yet again, in the morning, there lay more nibbled bulbs! It grew mysterious; and we began to wonder if the garden were haunted by goblin thieves with a

taste for bulbs. About the fourth morning, whilst Papa stood for a while in the verandah, he called softly to Mamma—

"Here! come quietly—I've found the bandicoot!" You may be sure Mamma lost no time. And what do you think she saw? On the centre of the precious tulip-bed sat Master Joey, looking as innocent and handsome as ever, with a smooth brown bulb in his paws—yes, I'll call them paws now, it was so naughty of him—nibbling off the green shoot, and when that was gone, he dropped the bulb, and bending down—as you know they must, to put their fore-feet on the ground—he cleverly scratched out another, and proceeded to eat that in the same dainty way; but I do not think he finished the tid-bit, for Mamma did scold him then, and banished him to his own little paddock, which had been fenced in for his especial use next the garden, until the tulips were safely past their tempting age.

That was the only mischief our dear Joey ever did. Several times he hopped away, when the gates were left open, and once stayed out in the bush two or three months, always near the house, and frequently seen; but we were in continual fear lest strange dogs should chase and kill him. All our own seemed to know him quite well. Each time we enticed him back into the garden, and he grew large and fat, and so handsome in his beautiful thick furry coat.

But he is gone now. One morning Guy saw him lying still, stretched out on the grass plot, and on going to look, found him quite dead and cold. He had died without the least hurt, and without a struggle, and was apparently in perfect health. The only reason anyone could think of was, that perhaps he was too fat, having plenty to eat, and less exercise than in his wild state.

You may think how sorry we were! but I hope he had led a happy life with us; we tried to make it so.

Mamma never likes us to *seek* for things to keep as pets. She says we cannot make them as happy as they are in a natural state where God has placed them. And, of course, all our care, and wool, and flannel, and milk was very miserable work to poor Joey, compared with his mother's soft warm pouch, where he could lie cuddled up so snug—although it was better for him than perishing wretchedly of cold and hunger after his mother was killed. Yet even in such a fate as that, there must be less suffering than many poor little creatures endure in the possession of careless or unfeeling children or grown people. I have seen some "pets," as they are called, that I have really wished I could *kill*, to put an end to their miseries. I never can understand how

anyone can be cruel or negligent to poor, helpless, dumb creatures. It is such pain to see them ill-used, and so very pleasant to feed them and make them comfortable. With all the care that is possible, many more Joeys die than live, when taken young from their mothers. I know ours have always been most kindly attended to, but most of them died soon.

"I like to hear Linny talk of *killing* anything," observed Louis. "She's almost too soft-hearted to kill a fly."

"Don't be too sure of that," said Guy. "I remember how she flew at me, and gave me a precious good pummelling too, when I took up her kitten, and said in fun that it would be handsomer if I trimmed its tail and ears."

"That only bears out Lina's assertion," said her father, "that the sight of tyranny or cruelty arms her with resolution to resist and prevent it. But you are interrupting the reading; say what you like when it is over."

Once we had two brush kangaroos at the same time, and they used to play and romp together like kittens, racing round their paddock, and gambolling over each other in the drollest way. But the funniest thing was to see them *waltz*—yes, absolutely waltz, dancing round and round on their toes, with their hands clasped together.

One of the peacocks often flew over the fence and paid them a visit, seeming to enjoy their astonishment and consternation when he spread his tail, and walked after them, making the odd shimmering sound in his feathers; the end of the business being usually a hasty retreat on the part of Giuseppe and Joey into their house. But when the peacock only trailed his gorgeous train on the ground, Giuseppe, who was full-grown, had a great fancy for following him in his stately walk, hopping after the brilliant plumes, and stooping to touch them with his little black hands, as if curious to know what they were made of, or if they were good to eat.

We were all sadly grieved when a strange dog leaped into the enclosure and killed both the kangaroos. That is one great reason for not keeping pets. Something shocking is almost sure to happen to them, and then one is so sorry for their loss. Our own well-bred dogs always knew the tame kangaroos perfectly, never seeming to think of touching them; and a happy family party of dogs, cats, and a Joey might often be seen lying together in the verandah, so that we were apt to forget the danger of interlopers, as it too often happened, with fatal results.

Lina ceased reading, and folded up her papers.

"That's all, Papa."

"A very good beginning, Lina. Your description would amuse *me* if I knew as little about such animals as Sibyl does; so I should think it will interest her. Is that the rough copy of your letter, or a revised one?"

Lina laughed. "Oh, Papa, how suspicious you are! Of course Mamma looked it over, and made some corrections."

"Very few, I assure you," said Mrs. Merton.

"Ah, well," exclaimed Guy, giving himself a tremendous stretch after stooping over his drawing, "if that's the sort of thing, Linny, I think I can do the Tigers and Devils and Native Cats for you. They're more in my line than yours, I dare say; but I can't this mail—if I do next. You'd better write some more, Linny."

"And don't forget little Coopy," said Winifred.

"Nor the Opossum Mouse," added Louis, taking a critical look along the tiny keel of his dingy. "Talk of guinea-pigs! Some *would* have said that was a pretty creature."

"What is a guinea-pig?" inquired Frank.

"Why, it's a little beast with a big head and no tail—short, stout, smooth, sleeky, and smelly—almost round, and patch-coloured, like a tortoise-shell cat," replied Guy; "but no more like a pig than you're like a peacock."

"Then why is it called a pig?"

"For about the same reason, I suppose, that our Wombat is sometimes called a badger, because it's quite unlike one."

"That certainly appears to have been the principle on which a good many common names in the colonies have been bestowed," said Mr. Merton. "Creatures more like weasels than aught else are called *cats;* a dog-like beast is called a *tiger;* and, most absurd of all, a bird is known as a *jackass.* However, we must not talk any more now—it is bed-time for you young ones. Here's my little Freda nodding over her doll. Louis, stow your dingy on the deck of the cutter, and put all away for to-night. We must be up at dawn, and gather the home-run. Remember that, Guy."

"Yes, Papa. Ah, Linny! I told you I should not have time to write anything yet. So you had better go on yourself with another chapter; you've lots of time."

"Well, Guy," said Mrs. Merton, "Lina deserves credit for very often *making* time for extra work. If you have to gather sheep, and assist in

other farm business, she has her daily dairy-work, and helps me in the house in all sorts of ways, besides teaching Frank and Winifred when I am prevented, and attending, when she can, to her own studies and music, which, I am sorry to say, fall very short of the time they ought to get."

"So you see, Guy," said his father, "the fact that Lina writes at all is an apt illustration of the old saw, 'Where there's a will there's a way.'"

"And it's quite understood, Guy," said Lina, whose cheeks burned uncomfortably to hear praise of herself, to the possible disparagement of her beloved Guy, "that when I have told what little more I can of our harmless animals, you will redeem your promise as to the savage ones."

"All right, Linny. Only, don't reckon on me to fill much space in the book. One page will hold all I can tell, I dare say."

"If you describe everything as shortly as you did the guinea-pig just now, I should think it would," observed Louis, laughing. "You could do the kangaroo in about six words—'*Tall. Brown. Narrow top. Broad bottom. Eats grass. Hops.*' See what a deal of time and paper you've wasted, Linny."

"Very good, Mr. Quiz; you'll have to bring *your* scrap to the wallet one of these days, and show what *your* style's like," was Guy's good-humoured rejoinder.

CHAPTER III.

Each shell, each crawling insect holds a rank
Important in the plan of Him who framed
This scale of beings.

STILLINGFLEET.

"MAMMA! Mamma! I do think I have found a fairy. Please wait. I am bringing it for you to see."

The call came from Freda in the garden, as she advanced slowly, her eyes fixed on some flowers in her hand. "Look, Mamma, do you see it?"

"I see some pretty red correa* and lilac†. Ah! yes; there is a lovely Green Mantis‡ on them. Carry it carefully into the drawing-room, and we will get a large glass shade to put over it, so that we may keep it safely for a day or two, and watch its singular habits. We will then put it back again in the garden."

"We must give it plenty of fresh flowers, Mamma. Of course it eats honey?"

"It is very natural for you to suppose so," said Mrs. Merton. "I had the same idea when I first found one; it seems such a delicate, ethereal creature, with those exquisite green gauze wings, and long slender legs on which it is poised so airily, and that wonderfully queer and intelligent head, that deliberately turns round to look at you, with a quaint, inquisitive expression that no other insect I ever saw is capable of. Now we will put our very curious friend on this white paper, and place the shade over it, leaving the glass a little raised at one side to admit air."

---

* *Correa speciosa*—native fuchsia of Colonies.

† *Tetratheca glandulosa*—native lilac. So named as resembling lilac both in colour and fragrance.

‡ *Mantis religiosa.*

"But it will starve without some flowers, Mamma."

"It would certainly starve with flowers alone, Freda, although the sweetest you could select. Your fairy is not one who sips pearly drops of dew or pellucid honey from lily or rose. It requires less dainty and more substantial food, not only catching its own game in a most adroit manner, but devouring its victims alive, as you will see, if you can capture a few common flies without hurting them. Its green colour, although brighter than anything in the vegetable world, still assimilates enough with the various tints of foliage to render it very inconspicuous when perched on leaves; and so it waits, almost motionless, for the approach of the flies that frisk about the flowers and shrubs. But as you might watch it vainly for some time out of doors, even if it remained stationary, we will feed it here awhile."

Mrs. Merton put the flies in beneath the glass, in which they flew about and walked round the mantis, which, standing up at its full height, poised on the four hinder legs, held the two in front (which we may call arms, and which are adorned with a shaded spot of vivid blue on the second joint) closely folded together in the supposed devotional attitude which has won for it the name of *praying* mantis (and which would well describe it, if for *a* we write *e—preying*).

Fixing its eyes on the nearest fly, the mantis watched eagerly, turning its head this way and that, following the movements of the fly with an eager intelligent expression of face, as a man or sagacious animal might do, but not otherwise changing its position. The fly, after creeping and flying round and round, lit on the paper just in front of the mantis, which, with one rapid dart of an arm, like a clever conjuror's legerdemain, almost too quick for detection, snatched it up, and, holding it firmly impaled between the double row of sharp spines with which the points of the arm are provided, lifted it up to its mouth, and began quietly to eat it alive, first biting off and rejecting the head. Ere it had taken more than one or two bites, a second fly walked across within range, and was seized by the disengaged arm of the mantis, which then, like a greedy child with a cake in each hand, bit sometimes a morsel out of one, sometimes out of the other, until the bodies of both flies were devoured, and the heads, legs, and wings lay discarded on the paper.

Freda gazed on the performance in fascinated amazement.

"Oh, Mamma! how can such a beautiful thing be so cruel? I won't let him have live flies again. He shall only eat dead ones."

"My darling, He who created the mantis also endowed it with its appetites and propensities; we cannot alter nor modify them to suit our short-sighted

ideas. The mantis will not accept dead flies, nor even touch those which are maimed. And, remember, it only eats its flies as we do our oysters—fresh and alive. I very much doubt if the one victim feels more than the other."

Mrs. Merton's observations were interrupted by a burst of laughter. "Oh, Mamma! how funny! do look."

The mantis, with two more flies under discussion, one in either claw, was intently following, with its weird, eager gaze, the movements of a third—for the capture of which it had no unoccupied hand left—and its droll expression of helpless greed was unmistakable.

"But it cannot be hungry now, Mamma? It has eaten two whole flies, and most of two more. Ah! see—it drops the little bit of one that was almost finished, and has caught the new one!"

"My dear, the first mantis I ever saw I carried home from a garden on a posy of flowers, round which I wound my veil, that I might not lose the strange and beautiful creature. I kept it for a day or two under a glass like this, with only flowers for its sustenance, thinking, as you did, that it ate honey. Fortunately for my poor captive, I was told of its carnivorous habits, and then put flies under the glass. To my astonishment, the delicate creature caught and ate up *thirteen* before pausing in its meal. It must have been almost famished."

"Poor thing!—I mean savage, greedy thing! But it is so very beautiful! Shall I catch some more flies for it, Mamma?"

"Ah!" sighed Mrs. Merton. "Beauty covers more sins than charity ever did!"

NOTE.—The mantis-portraits in the plate are drawn with careful accuracy from life, life-size. To exaggerate the quaint, grotesque oddity of the attitudes the insect assumes is impossible; it is difficult to do tolerable justice to them.—L. A. M.

"THE MANTES.—These insects have their fore-legs of a construction not unlike that of a sabre; and they can as dexterously cleave their antagonist in two, or cut off his head at a stroke, as the most expert hussar. . . . You will think it singular that both in Europe and Africa these cruel insects have obtained a character for gentleness of disposition and even sanctity. This has arisen from the upright or sitting position, with the fore-legs bent, assumed in watching for their prey, which the vulgar have supposed to be a praying posture, and hence adopted the belief that a child or traveller that had lost his road would be guided by taking one of these pious insects in his hand, and observing what way it pointed."

KIRBY & SPENCE'S *Entomology.*

CHAPTER IV.

Oft have we seen him, at the peep of dawn,
Brushing with hasty steps the dew away,
To meet the sun upon the upland lawn.

GRAY.

IT was on a bright day of April, mid-autumn in Tasmania, when our chronicle of the Mertons opened. Then the two busiest times of the year, shearing and harvest, had been long over, and ploughing was daily going on.

Guy, after beginning by driving the bullock-plough team, and occasionally trying his skill with the horses, was now promoted to the charge of a quiet staunch pair himself, whilst another, in the care of a trusty man, usually worked in the same field.

Rising soon after four, he fed and groomed his horses, then ate his own breakfast, also by the light of a candle, finishing by dawn, so as to be ready to begin work at earliest daylight. When ploughing in a distant field, he carried a substantial sandwich and bottle of tea with him, for his mid-day meal; but when the work lay near home, Frank was delighted to take luncheon down to him, and, when the horses began again after their rest, to hold the plough himself, for one turn, under Guy's guidance, who would laugh and say—

"Ah, Frank, playing at ploughing's very good fun, isn't it? I hope you'll like it as well when it turns to harvest."

After the horses were stabled, cleaned, and fed in the afternoon, Guy had to work at the chaff-cutter to prepare their food for the next day, as his father's system was to have the sheaves of oats cut up, ear and straw together, as being most thrifty. This, the day's regular work during fine weather, and the many minor matters in which Guy's assistance was claimed during the remaining daylight, kept him fully occupied.

Louis had, until recently, spent his mornings at lessons with his mother,

and as he was to go to school after the June holidays, Mrs. Merton was most anxious that he should benefit as much as possible by her instruction, so as to take the better place in the school classes. Mr. Merton, though fond and proud of his boys, and heartily desirous of their success, did not share his wife's anxious ambition for their mental culture as warmly as she could have desired. During Guy's school-years, it was his mother who, at each vacation, inquired and examined into his progress, encouraged him to increased effort, and promised to double whatever prizes he could win. His father rather wearied of such topics, and put them aside with a—

"Well, well, these are the holidays; don't worry the boy about lessons now: besides, it 's not of the slightest use. He has the opportunity given him. If a lad chooses to learn, he *will* learn, and you can't hinder him; and if he does not choose, all the talking in the world won't make him."

A very easy-going, off-hand way of dealing with the question, but which, most assuredly, would only answer in a few exceptional cases—of boys whose own unquenchable thirst for knowledge impels them to take advantage of the smallest chance for its attainment, and who can lay the foundation for learning that wins a world-wide celebrity in the night-school which they attend after the day's hard labour.

The home-interest in, and estimate of, an average boy's progress, ought to have, and usually has, a potent influence on his efforts and his career; and those parents who, from indolence, indifference, or other cause, neglect to use such wholesome incentives to perseverance, have no small amount of their children's shortcomings, and their own disappointment therein, to answer for.

Louis's morning lessons had latterly been wholly omitted, as his assistance was required in the replacement of part of the sheep-run fence, which a bush fire had destroyed. No other hands save Isaac's and his could be spared, as ploughing must not be interrupted. So poor Louis laid aside books, exercises, pens, and pencils, shouldered his axe, and went "brush-fencing" with the best grace he could.

When the order was spoken, his mother gave one sigh—she knew remonstrance was vain—stitched large and stout outside patches on his moleskin trousers, made him a leathern bag to carry his daily luncheon, and felt as if another castle-in-the-air had crumbled at her feet.

Louis saw the unspoken regret on her quivering face, and quietly kissed her. "Don't mind it, Mamma. I *am* sorry to be taken off just now. I wish I 'd worked harder when I might, and then it wouldn't so much signify; but I will when I do get to school, and try to make all up."



CHAPTER V.

"There are insects which live, as it were, by hypocrisy, by getting themselves mistaken—so perfect is their costume and acting—for the withered leaves and dried-up twigs amongst which they habitually feed."—From an article in the *Spectator* newspaper, on "The Hypocrisies of Nature."

"MOTHER! Lina! where are you? Do come out a minute; I've something wonderful to show you," cried Guy, hurrying in from the garden one Sunday afternoon. "Oh! here you are. Come down this walk, where we planted the native shrubs. Now you see that bush of red Epacris? Very well; my wonderful discovery is there. Do you see it?"

Mrs. Merton and Lina looked attentively in the direction to which Guy pointed.

"I cannot see anything but the few remaining red flowers, and a great many dead-looking sticks," said Lina.

Mrs. Merton gazed still more searchingly. "Nor do I. Your wonder must have vanished, Guy."

The boy laughed merrily. "Oh, no, Mother; he's there still. *I* see him plainly enough; and so ought you, for he's seven or eight inches long."

"What nonsense!" cried Lina. "You're making fun of us."

"Stay," said her mother, restraining her from touching the bush. "Look there—I saw something move—a long, brown, jointed leg—and there's another and another—six of them—and having found the legs, we can now trace the body they belong to—long, brown, and thin—so exactly like one of the dead Epacris sticks, it is not strange we did not readily discover it."

"How very curious!" exclaimed Lina, examining the insect. "I see its queer round eyes, and its horns are like little strings of the tiniest beads."

"Scientific people don't talk of insects' *horns*, Linny—we say *antennæ*," said Guy, with mock solemnity.


EMERALD KING BUTTERFLY.
SHOWING UPPER AND UNDER SIDES.
WHITE CLUSTER (GUALTHERIA HISPIDA)
PURPLE BERRY (BILLARDIERA LONGIFLORA)
L. A. M.
MARCUS WARD & CO.

"But what *is* it, Mamma?" asked Lina. "Did you ever see one like it before?"

"Never; but I can tell you that it is a creature allied to the mantis family, if not a member of it. It must be the Tasmanian spectre.* I have had it so well described to me, that I am sure of its identity."

"You will draw it, Mamma?" asked Guy. "It will be something quite new in art to take the portrait of a spectre!"

"Yes, I shall be very glad to have a sketch of the strange creature. We will carefully break off the stem of the twig on which it is poised, and carry all in together."

"I wonder what kind of flies it likes best; I would catch some to feed it with, if I knew."

"Surely a spectre cannot eat? That *would* be a queer paradox," said Lina, laughing.

"It so far conforms to your ideas as to be a strict vegetarian," said Mrs. Merton, "and never indulges in the carnivorous banquets we have seen our delicate little beauty the green mantis enjoy so heartily. But this poor fellow seems almost torpid. It is late in the season for him. We have had one or two cold nights, and he is probably near death now."

This supposition proved correct; the poor spectre scarcely moved after it was found. It was a most patient "sitter" for a careful portrait the size of life, from which the annexed plate is taken, and then the strange-looking but perfectly harmless creature gradually stiffened into death.

---

* My kind friend, the late Mr. Morton Allport, of Hobart, to whom I so often used to refer for aid in any doubtful point of natural history, told me that he believed this species has not been named, but that it belongs to the genus *Phasma*. It is rare, and only known on the north coast of the colony. I have not found a second specimen.—L. A. M.

CHAPTER VI.

The hawk and crow to roost are gone,
The owl sits on the tree,
The farmer's barley-reaping 's done,
And the sheaves set *cap-à-pie.*
Then down thro' the blossoms,
For frolic and for play,
Go we merry, merry 'possums,
For it is our op'ning day.

The Opossum's Evening Song (freely translated).

THE evenings, which were usually so pleasant to both parents and children at Loorana, became much curtailed at this season. The early rising which was indispensable for Guy and Louis, and their hard work all day, made early going to bed both necessary and welcome to them. Lina's well-filled time could not be made elastic enough to admit of her writing so frequently as she wished to do, so that it was on an evening in June (answering to the English December) —the season of short days, and, that year, of long and frequent rains, and bleak cold southerly wind—when we find the little family party seated at their various avocations ready to hear

GWENDOLINE'S SECOND GOSSIP.

I have only told you yet, dear Sibyl, of the two largest kinds of kangaroos; there are several others here, and more species still in the great Australian continent. Of ours, the next in size is the Wallaby,* which is the name by which it was known to the aboriginal blacks. It is very like the brush kangaroo, only about half the size. The fur is very soft, of a grey colour, mixed with a brownish tan, and the pretty creatures are very graceful and

* *Halmaturus Billardieri.* By using *o* instead of *a*, the sound of the aboriginal word is best preserved.

nimble. They live chiefly in scrubs and thickets, in mountain gullies, or near rivers, and make runs in all directions through the thick growth, like the passages in a rabbit-warren; so that, when people go to hunt them, they take sharp, clever little dogs, like our terriers, to follow and put them out.

We had a tame one, a good while ago, that used to hop after us everywhere, even up stairs, and if you had seen him coming down in a hurry, with his long tail and long legs slipping and sprawling as he came scuttering down, you would have felt certain he must tumble over head-first; but he shuffled along all right, finishing off with a leap over the two or three lowest stairs, and a grand scamper round the hall and parlour, as if in delight at his clever performance.

We had a nursery book once, with a story of three hedgehogs—Bustle, and Bristle, and Bob; so we called our Wallaby "Bustle," he was such a fussy, brisk, scampering little fellow.

The Kangaroo Rat* has not so pretty a face nor so soft a coat as the wallaby, and is a good deal smaller—not much more than a foot high. The head, I must acknowledge, *is* more like a rat's than a deer's, but those we have had were nice little things, and grew very affectionate and fond of us. One we called "Trotty," and one "Hop-o'-my-Thumb"—"Hoppy" for short, of course. They were as playful as kittens, and followed us like pet dogs.

Luckily for the poor little beasties, no one fancies eating them—probably because they are called *rats;* so that giving *them* an "ill name" has been a great service to them. Still, they are killed very often, because, like our beloved Joey, they like digging bulbs and roots for their own eating, and are sometimes very destructive in gardens. In the earlier years of the colony, they often came in great numbers at a time, attacking the same garden, night after night, for a week or two together, eating potatoes and other roots, especially flower-bulbs, when there were any, in large quantities.

Papa once showed me one of their nests. It was made on the ground, of long dry grass, woven and packed together quite firmly, and snugly covered over, with only an opening on one side for a door. At a very little distance, it only looked like one of the dry grass tussocks that were growing all around. Is it not beautiful and wonderful that animals are so clever? that the good God not only makes them able to build warm nests for themselves and their young, but to take care that they shall not look at all like nests on the outside, so as not to attract enemies? The sight of that little rat's house set me thinking of

* *Hypsiprymnus apicalis.*

His power and love who has created and cared for all His creatures so tenderly and wisely, more than any book I ever read in my life.

A much prettier little creature than this is the Forest Kangaroo Rat*—more elegant in form, and with a more gentle expression of face—just like a kangaroo in miniature, and with the softest grey fur you can imagine. Guy caught a young one quite lately, and brought it to Mamma for a pet. Oh! such a lovely little creature! But after a family council, held to decide its fate, it was resolved, *nem. con.*, to restore its freedom, rather than incur the risk of its coming to harm in our hands. I think I was just a little sorry, for I know it would soon have become quite tame; but I dare say Mamma was right. So we carried it in a basket up to the place where Guy saw it start from, and set down the basket, open. I do believe it was already reconciled to its new house, for, instead of rushing out at once, it turned round two or three times in the flannel, as if to go asleep; but Frank moved, and off went the Joey at such a rate that none of us, except Guy, could have caught it again, had we wished to do so.

I dare say you have seen Opossums,† as well as kangaroos, in collections of animals at home; but you must believe my assurance, dear cousin, that you do not know any more of them than if you had only seen Mr. Gould's pictures (which, indeed, all but live and move), because their habit is to sleep all day and play and eat all night; and as you could not very conveniently go to the Zoological Gardens in the dark, you must miss the sight of their frisky antics.

Like all other native creatures here, they are scarce now compared with what even I remember them—so many, many thousands are snared and shot for their warm furry coats, which are made into great rugs, six or eight feet square, for travellers to use in the bush, or for carriage wraps; and very warm and handsome they are, but I never see ours without grieving for the many happy lives it cost.

At one time we could walk out with Papa on a moonlight night, and, without going far from the house, be almost sure of seeing some opossums in the trees, scampering along the branches, and up and down the trunks, and often leaping from one tree to another, as you have perhaps seen squirrels in England. They live in holes of trees, where they have nice warm nests to curl up in all day. Now and then we have seen one by daylight, sitting at the opening of his dwelling—his front door, in fact—high up in some big gum tree; and sometimes

---

* *Bettongia cuniculus.*

† *Phalangista vulpina*—Common Opossum. *P. fuliginosa*—Black or Sooty Opossum.

they are so imprudent as to sleep on the ground, when, if dogs should come near, poor Possy is snapped up before he can escape. I suppose they play about till quite tired out, and so are too lazy to climb up home.

"I wonder," said Guy, "when the Duke of Edinburgh was in Victoria, that he liked to be made such a baby of as to let the opossums be caught ready for him, instead of going out like anybody else, and finding them properly."

"How do you know he didn't?" asked Louis.

"Because everybody talked of it in Victoria, when Papa was there," replied Guy. "One, if not more, of the rich men who entertained the Duke, set the blacks to catch opossums weeks before; and the poor brutes were kept in cellars till he came. Then they were put up in the gum-trees by hundreds, and blacks and dogs posted round the trees day and night to prevent their getting away, till the Duke was brought out to shoot them."

"I don't believe it," said Louis; "or if it was done, you may be sure the Duke knew nothing about it. He is a brave man—everybody knows that—and to shoot things in that way would be very mean."

"Mean enough—but not meaner than the way that royal and noble *sportsmen*, as they call themselves, slaughter pheasants in English preserves, where the poor birds are as tame as our fowls, and are driven up to the guns."

"You need not go to England for instances, Guy," said his father, "whilst in this colony the shameful sight has been, and is too often seen, of a deer, so tame and gentle that it can scarcely be *made* to run away, being hunted again and again within an inch of its life, and, just when death would be merciful, it is secured to go through like agonies as often as its brave and gallant pursuers ordain."

"Well," said Guy, "I'm very fond of hunting and shooting too—yes, Linny, I am, so you need not shake your head at me, for I shall not deny it—but I like *fair* hunting of wild things. That seems to be part of human nature all the world over and in all ages; and if everybody ceased hunting, I suppose the beasts would eat us out in time. But I should be ashamed to go blazing away at a lot of birds or animals that other people had first caught and secured. It's so childish as well as bloodthirsty! If men have not the pluck to go and find game in a manly, honest way, they should leave it for those that have—that's my opinion."

"Ah! my dear Guy," said his mother, "I'm afraid you are only a sort of noble savage after all. You do not seem to realise, with sufficient deference,

that it is only in the highest circles of civilisation and refinement that *battues*, pigeon-matches, and diversions of the like nature prevail as amusements. Our vulgar rustic notions of what is manly or humane must be as an unknown tongue in such regions."

"Then the sooner the language is learnt there, the better for the honour and well-being of England," said Mr. Merton. "Linny, go on with your reading."

At the time when the opossums were so numerous, they used to do great mischief to our cornfields, particularly during harvest. You would not think it possible for creatures only the size of big cats to make such a mess and such terrible destruction perhaps in one night. They used to pull the shocks down, and untie and scatter the sheaves, strewing the wheat or other grain all over the field; and, besides what they ate, a great quantity that could not be bound up again or collected was quite spoiled. Only pigs could pick it up at all.

Mamma and I were always so sorry to have opossums killed, that Papa took us to see the dreadful havoc our favourites made, to prove to us that he was obliged to make war upon them sometimes. In the orchard, too, they were sadly mischievous, breaking our young trees, and knocking off the fruit, besides eating almost everything, more or less. We often used to hear them scrambling over the house-roof, and making their odd cry, which is hard to describe—it seems a sort of hoarse chuckle, low down in the throat. Some opossums are grey, others of a rich golden brown, mixed with black, which latter are the most valued.

We have only had one of them tame, for, though we were all very fond of him, he kept us in such a state of dread and vigilance, whilst he was awake, that it was resolved, *nem. con.*, never to try a second experiment of the kind. One of the men-servants brought him to me as a present, after a night's "'possuming," in which the poor mother had been killed. Almost all our native animals are marsupial—that is, the mothers have each a pouch or pocket in front, in which they carry their young until the little ones are strong and active. The opossum Joeys, too, often cling to the mother's back, and make her fur all touzled and shabby where they sit and hold on. The men who collect skins call such as these "Joey-ridden," and valueless.

I was delighted to have my Possy. He was such a soft, sweet-faced, pretty little thing, about half the size of a squirrel; but his delicate pink feet had very sharp claws, as my hands and arms soon bore witness. If the little girl in

Punch had cuddled *him*, she would have said Possies had "pins in their toes," as well as kittens! After I got him safe in his cage, I did not annoy him by much nursing, which he evidently disliked. At first we were obliged to handle him, because he had to be fed with milk; but he soon learned to lap it for himself. He lived in his box-cage all day, curled up fast asleep in a lot of wool; but in the evening we always set him at liberty in the house till morning; and he grew fast, and fat, and handsome, and as large as a cat.

How would you like to take your meals whilst hung up by your frock, and perhaps one foot, to the side of the room or a beam overhead, and just able to reach your food with your hands, and put it in your mouth whilst in this upside-down position?

Because that is the way Possy best liked to take his supper! Mamma used to think he would choke; but Papa said he admired his digestion. He might have sat comfortably beside his saucer of bread and milk, and taken it in a commonplace way if he pleased; but he always contrived to hang himself up by the tail, like a pendulum, and stretch his hands down for the pieces of bread until all were gone, before coming to lap the milk.

Then, when he had eaten enough, his frolics began, generally by a run up any coat that hung in the hall, and a general clearance of the hat-pegs. Then a sudden "flop" on the floor, and the next minute, if the parlour door were open, he would be round the room twice or thrice like a small whirlwind, and up the curtains to the top of the cornice, which was a favourite vantage-ground, and gave him a good view of all going on below, and a capital opportunity to plan mischief. He seemed to know that he had us all at a disadvantage there, for we could not get him down without risk of hurting him. Sometimes he sat for a good while so perfectly still that he was forgotten; and as, when he pleased, he could descend as softly as a spider, perhaps the next thing would be a shriek from somebody whose elbow or foot he had gently bitten, in play. I am sure he enjoyed the fun of making us start, or he would not have gone so stealthily about his little wickednesses; and when he saw he was detected, he made any amount of racket—leaping, running, and scrambling over, under, and round tables, chairs, sideboard, piano, and sofa, for we had then only one sitting-room, doing double duty as dining and drawing-room. He used to make desperate efforts to get upon the chimney-piece, but, fortunately, it was rather high, and we guarded it with care, too, or Mamma's precious old china would have come to an end. A general putting away of breakables accompanied the first sounds of Possy's awakening from his day-long slumber, and if that were inconvenient, the

parlour door was kept shut against his entrance; but, in spite of every precaution, glasses, jugs, and decanters were sometimes swept off and smashed in his mad career.

An open work-box was a great attraction to him. He would come slyly and silently on the table, and peep all round it very gravely, and then, more quickly than you could see, hook the end of his tail to the lid, and jump off. Of course there was a grand upset; reels, balls, and thimbles flew in all directions, and in the same instant the rogue vanished, not to be found again until order and quiet were restored, when a pinch of some one's toe, or a tweak of Papa's coat, hair, or ear, told of Possy's recovered courage and unquelled impudence.

His tail was equal, in point of use, to another pair of hands. Being prehensile (that is, able to lay fast hold), he could hang by it from anything that would bear his weight, and many were his mishaps and tumbles when mistaking movables on the table for solid parts of it. Although he had never climbed in the forest himself, I suppose his instinct led him to believe that things in a house grew all together like the branches of trees; and my work-box tumbling down with him was like a bough suddenly breaking off.

I am glad to be able to tell you that our entertaining, troublesome Possy proved, so far as we know, an exception to the rule that pets come to untimely ends. He was so free in every way, that we never supposed he cared to go away from us; but probably those of his kind who used to frequent our roof and garden were heard by him, and he may have joined them, for he deserted his cage one night, left his supper unsought, and never returned.

I wish I could be sure that, like the heroines of fairy tales, he "lived happily ever afterwards."

There is a still prettier kind called the Ring-tailed Opossum;* but that is not quite a correct name, as, instead of a ring, the tail has a tip of white about two inches long. A pair of these built their house, like a great bird's nest, in rather a low tree near the garden, so that we could watch their elegant and agile movements quite well, when the evenings were moonlight. The ring-tails are smaller than the common kind, grey, with a lighter shade underneath; and in fun, frolic, activity, and grace, fully equal, if not excel them. We never had one of them tame, but I saw one at another house, which came in when the dessert was served, and went down the table, from one person to another, to be fed with little dainties of fruit or cakes, taking everything so gently and prettily, and

* *Phalangista viverrina.*

sitting up, eating from his hands, in the neatest way imaginable. On a sudden, something startled him. In an instant his tail clasped itself round the stem of a wineglass, and he leaped off the table; no doubt much astonished to find that his faithless support fell too, in sundry pieces.

Before ending this gossip, I think I ought to tell you of two quite little creatures here, one called the Kangaroo Mouse, and the other the Opossum Mouse. Not any of us have seen the first; we have only heard of it as being a kangaroo in miniature, three or four inches high. But we have had the opossum mice, which, I think, must be the loveliest little creatures in the world, and are about the size, Mamma says, of an English dormouse. They are most often found by the tree being cut down in which their nest is made, when they are easily caught. The nest itself is a marvel of ingenuity, made with soft fibres and grass, and lined beautifully with down and web. Their grey fur is the softest I ever touched; velvet is harsh in comparison; and when asleep in the daytime, they curl themselves round in a ball, and hide their faces in it. They have a very innocent, sweet expression, large, lustrous black eyes, and wide-open, delicate ears; the tale is prehensile, like the opossum's, and the end of it is almost always curled and clasped round something or other. My little mouse had a small box to live in, full of nice soft wool, and the box was fastened on a little platform of boughs hung from the nursery ceiling. I wish you could have seen the pretty creature frisking about this odd sort of habitation; for at night he was just as wide-awake as he was fast asleep all day, and seemed never tired of scampering and frolicking about. Of course the cat was kept away from the room when Mousey was at play, for fear he might come down and be snapped up.

After living with us some time, our tiny pet was carried off in great triumph by a scientific friend of Mamma's, who took it with him on his return to England, but the little mouse died before arriving there.

We might have kept others, for two or three have been brought to us; but we have only had a good look at them, and then carried them back to the exact place they came from, and put them down at liberty, watching till they were safe out of sight. I hope they soon found their friends again, and went on enjoying their happy, innocent lives, instead of being kept prisoners in a solitary, unnatural state. Do you not think it was the kindest and wisest thing we could do?

"What 's the use of asking anybody a question, when they 're on the other

side of the world, and can't answer you?—at least, not for ever so long," exclaimed matter-of-fact Guy when his sister ceased reading.

"Indeed, Guy," replied Lina, "I did not think about that when I was writing; but, perhaps, being asked a direct question in that way may make Sibyl think the matter quietly over to herself; and if she does, I am sure she will see how much better it was for the pretty things to be set free; and if she makes up her mind that we were right, she may do the same sometime, and spare some poor little animal or bird the long sad misery of life in a prison."

"Oh, if she has any doubts on that matter, she can see the poor skylarks and blackbirds that Papa says are kept in cramped little cages all over London. I should think they must make any one's heart ache to hear or see them."

"It's so shocking to think of," said Mrs. Merton, "and a disgrace to a civilised people that such barbarities are suffered."

"Why does not the Queen make a law to prevent anybody keeping birds in cages?" exclaimed Louis.

"My boy," interposed Mr. Merton, "the Queen does not make the laws. She assents to such as are made by Parliament; and I am afraid it will be a long time before her Majesty's faithful Commons begin to legislate for little singing-birds. I agree with you entirely, you well know, as to the wicked cruelty of bird-catching and caging; but I have more faith in the effect of rational, wholesome education for the masses of the people, than in any special law-making on the subject. Had you all been reared in a home where wanton cruelties were continually practised without condemnation, even you would not be as rightly sensitive to animal suffering as you now are, after having always before you my own watchfulness against every kind of inhumanity to God's dumb creatures, and your mother's tender care for all helplessness and suffering."

CHAPTER VII.

"The day is dark, and dull, and dreary;
It rains, and the rain is never weary."

"HOW persistently the rain continues!" exclaimed Mrs. Merton, listening to the heavy downpour, which had not ceased for some hours.

"There 'll be a flood, Papa," said Louis.

"I am afraid there will; a very heavy one. And even if that did not happen, this continued rain will do great injury to all the crops that are sown, and prevent our getting to work upon the unploughed land for some time."

"The water-furrows are all drawn, that 's one good thing," said Guy. "I worked an hour later yesterday to get mine finished, for Isaac said he 'looked for wet' before long."

"And he 's found it—more 's the pity," said Louis.

"I hope the sheep and cattle are all safe," said Mrs. Merton, anxiously. "After so much rain, and the ground being so completely soaked, all that now falls runs off at once, and the river rises so very rapidly when that is the case."

"Yes; and when you remember the mountain tier at the back, and the deep, almost precipitous ravines and gullies that pour down their swollen torrents into this river, it is no marvel that it does rise so suddenly."

"But there is always time to get things out of the way," said Guy.

"Well, not quite always. I once saw the first descent of a great flood, after a thunderstorm with an extraordinary fall of rain, in the hills. I was on the high bank, near the 'Crooked Corner,' as you children call it, and heard a roaring sound, which rapidly increased, and was evidently drawing near. Looking up the river, I saw a great wave, literally a wall of water, rushing towards me, and carrying with it, and in it, trees, branches, pieces of fences, and all manner of wreck. The boulders and pebbles of the river-bed lay bare

beneath me one minute, and the next, were some feet deep beneath the raging torrent. It was positively frightful; but very grand too."

"I should like to have seen it," exclaimed Louis.

"And I was glad to have the chance of doing so," said Mr. Merton, "for of course it was by the merest accident. But a still more startling phenomenon occurred to me in New South Wales, many years ago. I was staying a day or two with some friends, whose house was built near the foot of a mountain slope overlooking the farm and a good deal of the sheep-run. It was a very lovely spot. One day, when the weather was to all appearance fine and settled, and we were seated at dinner, a sudden, indescribable noise was heard, and almost before we had time to say, 'What's that?' it grew into the unmistakable roar of water, and a turbid, furious cascade, carrying rocks and stones of all sizes along with it, burst through the house, making the spacious hall one channel, which filled every room on the ground floor a foot or more deep, whilst two other branches of the torrent swept round either side of the house, destroying out-buildings, trees, and garden in their rapid course. Nothing but an earthquake or an avalanche could have brought more sudden and sweeping desolation. In a short time, perhaps an hour or two, all was over, and the chasms torn by the water were fast running dry."

"But, Papa, what made it?" asked Frank, who had listened intently to the story.

"The only way in which anyone attempted to account for it was, that a waterspout had burst high up in the mountains; but as no one happened to see the original catastrophe, we could only guess what it might be by its consequences, and they were disastrous enough to my poor friends."

"Didn't they go away from that dreadful mountain?" said Freda.

"No, little woman, they did not. Too much money had already been spent in settling there. I believe it is very rarely that a second cannon-ball exactly hits the hole made by a former one, and I fancy my friends had faith in the unlikelihood of a second waterspout bursting on the precise spot that this had done; and as I never heard of their suffering such a visitation since, they were probably right."

"If one of those puffing auctioneers wanted to make a good advertisement of such a place," said Guy, "he might truly say that 'water had been laid on the premises regardless of expense.'"

"I wish I had not heard of such a horrid thing just at bedtime," said Lina.

"I shall have the dismal sound of that pouring rain in my ears as I go to sleep, and dream of floods and drowning, to a certainty."

"How would a dish of cherries serve as an antidote to such horrors?" said her father. "If you look on my study table, you will find some."

Lina soon returned, singing—

"'Cherry ripe! cherry ripe!
Ripe I cry!
Full and fair ones,
Come and buy!'

Only, you know, Papa, these are not our native cherries." *

"But far more deserving of the name than the celebrated Antipodean fruit, with the 'flour outside.'† *That* is most likely the yew-berry."

"I quite agree with you," said Mrs. Merton. "These *Aristotelias* are certainly longer in shape than a real cherry, but the leaf of the little plant, and the way in which the stalk is set into the fruit, are very like. There are red and black cherries in the garden, as handsome as these are outside, and much nicer within, but we have not any tame that are quite white, like the delicate ones. And how soft and lovely these exquisite turquoise gems are, our peerless *Drymophila.*‡ We often hear it said, as a reproach, that Tasmania has not any indigenous fruit worth eating; but no one can refuse to own that she has many which are most beautiful to look at."

---

* *Aristotelia penduncularis.* Varieties with red, white, and black fruit. Plant, a single, slight stem, 12 to 15 inches high.

† *Exocarpus cupressiformis* (not in plate).

‡ *Drymophila cyanocarpa.* Also a single stem, 12 to 15 inches high.

CHAPTER VIII.

The rivers swell,
Of bounds impatient. Sudden from the hills,
O'er rocks and woods, in broad brown cataracts,
A thousand snow-fed torrents shoot at once.

THOMSON.

LONG before daylight on the following morning, Guy Merton was aroused by his father's voice.

"Jump up, Guy, and make haste dressing. Isaac says he has heard some one cooeying* from the river. There's a tremendous flood. I'm going down to see what's the matter, and you may come too. I've lit your candle. Be quick."

The last injunction was quite unnecessary. Guy's toilet did not include any study of the graces that morning, but hurrying on his clothes, and donning a stout waterproof coat and leather leggings, he went out with his father into the dark cold morning and the pouring rain, when they hastened down towards the river.

The excellent dreadnought overcoats worn by both were home-made by the deft fingers of Mrs. Merton herself, the material being thick, strong unbleached calico, made up, and then well painted over twice or thrice with boiled linseed oil; forming light, cheap, and efficient "macintoshes." Isaac, in a serviceable cape of the same manufacture, was in attendance with a lantern.

Suddenly there was a splash, and the lantern performed some eccentric evolutions.

"Stop where ye be, Master. The dry bank's all under water, and I'm in it; but the lantern's safe, as luck has it." And Isaac scrambled back to Mr.

---

* The shrill, ringing cry of "Coo-ee" is now pretty generally known, I believe, as the one which travels better and farther on the air than any other, and is universally used in these colonies.

Merton, who could hardly credit the fact of the water having risen to a point so much higher than any marks of wreck left by preceding floods.

"Coo-ee!" sounded faintly through the darkness, but only just distinguishable above the roar of the river and the streaming rain.

"There, Master. I told ye there was somebody in the water; that's what I heard afore."

"Coo-ee!" returned Mr. Merton in a strong, cheery tone. "Who are you?"

"It's *me*," was the response.

"And who's *me?* What's your name?" bellowed Mr. Merton again.

"Giles Gra-ay," replied the voice.

"Where are you?" shouted Mr. Merton.

"Up a tree-ee."

"Hold on, then!" was Isaac's advice. "It's that half-witted chap that lives at Stubbs's," he exclaimed. "The Missis haint much more sense than the lad; she's always a-sending him about o' nights for some fool's errand or another—ribbin, or ossifers (lucifers?), or gin may be, from the township. I've said many a time as some'at would happen him."

"We cannot do anything till daylight, I am afraid," said Mr. Merton.

"Unless we can light a fire here," said Guy. "It must comfort him a little, only to have the blaze to look at."

"So it would, Master Guy. But I doubt the wood's all too wet to burn."

"I'll fetch some dry brush from the house. I crammed the oven full yesterday," said Guy, running off home.

"Coo-ee!" cried poor Giles again. "I'm so cold!" Even this was only understood after several repetitions, the roar of the river rendering it almost impossible to hear any other sound.

"Hold on!" cried Mr. Merton. "We'll try all we can do for you as soon as it's light. Only *hold on!*"

Guy's brushwood, lit in the comparatively dry hollow of a tree, soon made a bright blaze, and Isaac begged his master and Guy to go home till daylight. "For you'll get your deaths o' cold, and can't do no good to the poor chap if you stop. I'll potter about the fire, and sing out to him, and keep his heart up as well as I can. Lord! how it do pour, to be sure! Do go up, sir; please do." So they went.

And a very comfortable contrast to the dreary scene outside did the broad, blazing kitchen-hearth present to the eyes of our dripping friends.

Mrs. Merton had risen when her husband did, and called up her one maid, and both had been busy preparing for the reception of any half-drowned wretch who might be brought up, by putting clothes and blankets to air, and kettles to boil. The glowing warmth of the clear bright kitchen was voted far preferable to the just-lit dining-room fire, and breakfast was eaten there, to the delight and diversion of Frank and Freda, who had availed themselves of the general excitement to come down in a half-fledged condition, and had been detected and taken back by Lina, as being guilty of the never-permitted negligence of that family institution, the tub. Frank's explanation was that he dressed in the dark, and could not see the tub.

"Then you should have waited until I came," said Lina.

"Oh! but," pleaded Freda, "we thought Papa might be bringing the man home, and we wanted to see him; we never saw a drowned man."

"Pray that you never may!" exclaimed her mother.

Louis's dignity was a little nettled at not having been roused when Guy was. He always stoutly repudiated the idea that he was less robust than his brother—an undeniable fact, however, which caused him to be spared unnecessary exposure to inclement weather.

Day was only dawning when Mr. Merton and Guy returned to the river-bank, or, more correctly, the margin of the flood, which extended from 60 to 100 yards over either shore, beyond the usual bed of the stream. As they descended the hill which sloped from the house towards the river, they heard Isaac calling loudly and cheerily to poor Giles—

"Keep yer heart up, lad, and hold on. Daylight's coming, and so's Master!"

At that instant they heard a heavy *thud,* followed by the crash of breaking timber, and a scream of agony from Giles. It was not light enough to see clearly what had happened, but Isaac cried—

"His tree's broke! Lord help him, poor chap! He's drowned, I doubt."

"This flood would shift the big timber we felled up above, Papa," said Guy; "I expect it's some of that has smashed the tree Giles was in."

"Keep still," said Mr. Merton; "he'll call out again if he's escaped."

They listened for some time. No voice was heard—nothing but the wind and the rain, and the roaring rush of the merciless flood.

By slow degrees a paler mist overspread the blank darkness. The outline of the nearest hills told faintly against the eastern sky. Then the trees around loomed out, the rain somewhat abated, and the broad, turbulent expanse of

water gradually became visible, pouring along in a whirl of foaming rapids, carrying down huge trees, branches, masses of heavy dead-wood and post-and-rail fencing, all rolling and tumbling over and over in the impetuous torrent. The large standing trees, round which the flood flowed, had intercepted some of the timber, which was fast accumulating against their massive trunks, in great heaps of rude scaffolding, piled up some height above the water. Upon one of these masses, near the shore, sat a poor rabbit, drenched and soiled, the picture of misery. Guy soon espied it.

"You could easily knock him over with a stick, Master Guy," said Isaac.

"I'd like very much to get him out, but certainly not to kill him. Poor little beast! he's wretched enough, and it *would* be shocking for us to take his life after even the flood has spared it. I hope he'll come safe ashore."

"That's more than Giles will, I fear," said Mr. Merton.

"I wonder if he can swim?" said Guy.

"The best swimmer living could do little *there*. Even if the water were not full of wreck, the current would sweep him over; and with all that timber knocking along, he would be struck down to a certainty. I'm afraid there's no hope."

"I doubt not, Master," said Isaac. "The Lord have mercy on him!"

"Good morning, sir!" said another of the farm servants.

"Hallo, Bruce! is that you? Why, you look as if *you'd* been half drowned. I'm afraid that poor lad Giles is lost. We have been waiting till daylight to try and rescue him from a tree in the river, but it was just now carried away, and I fear he must be drowned."

"Lord, sir! I hope not. He was at our place yesterday, about four o'clock, going to the township for a bottle o' gin——"

"I said so!" put in Isaac.

"And my missis told him he'd best look sharp, or he'd not get back again, for the river was a-rising then."

"Your cottage is all right, I hope?" said Mr. Merton.

Bruce smiled.

"Well, sir, I can't say it's all right, exactly. After we went to bed, my old dog—he lies inside, this cold weather—began howling and whining in a queer way, but we was sleepy, and took no notice, till the child cried; and when my wife jumped out of bed to look after it, she was in the water. She shrieked, and woke me. I'd got some matches in my coat-pocket on the bed, so we got a light. There was the cradle—leastways the box I made into one—swimming about the

floor, and the child crying, as well he might, for the wet had come through to him. The old dog was on the sofy. I watched the water for a bit, and see it was rising, and it was then about two foot deep on the floor."

"Two feet?" exclaimed Mr. Merton, incredulously. "I never saw the slightest indications of a flood ever having reached the bank where I built your cottage."

"No, nor I neither, sir; but there it is."

"Then Johnson's hut's flooded too, I know," said Isaac.

"You're right there, Ike, but they're all safe. I got my wife to put something on her as quick as she could, and carried her out to the big gum-tree by the corner of the garden. She climbed it once for fun, a good bit ago, so I set her at it, and up she clawed, into the fork. Then I gave her up the child, and nothing would serve but she'd have the cat too. So I fetched the poor thing, and set *her* to go up the tree. She was a deal cleverer at that work than her missis; and there they are now, and likely to stop, as far as I can see."

"What an adventure!" exclaimed Guy.

"How deep is the water now?" asked Mr. Merton.

"About four feet inside, I expect, sir, and I don't think it'll be any higher; indeed it's fell a little, I think."

"I am afraid your clothes and little stores must be all spoiled."

"No, sir. I shoved all I could on to the rafters; but a good deal's damaged, of course."

"You cannot have had any breakfast?"

"No, sir; but I don't mind. I'd be very glad of a drop of warm tea for my wife, if I might ask the missis."

"Of course; but why not take both wife and child to the house?"

"Oh, sir, there's a deep channel in the little hollow on this side. It's as much as I can do to get over by myself, with this stout sapling to help me."

"And where are Johnson's people?"

"A-top of their ridge-pole, sir. Johnson cut all the trees down that stood anyway a-nigh, because he said they harboured the parrots, so they couldn't get into one, and they durstn't stop in the hut, so he helped his wife and the girls on to the top. I see'd 'em as I came by just now."

"Poor old Nancy Johnson!" exclaimed Guy. "What a tale she'll have to tell Mamma about her spazzums and rheumaticals! But won't the cottages be washed away, Bruce?"

"Oh no, Master Guy—no fear. You see it's only back-water as comes

round us. There's no rush. It rises as quiet as can be, and as soon as the flood goes down, the back-water can run off."

"Well," said Mr. Merton, "the best thing now is for you to go up to your mistress, and ask her to give you two or three bottles of hot tea—perhaps a kettleful would be better—and some bread and meat, for your wife and the Johnsons. Get your own breakfast at the house. I'll make my way a little further down this bank, for the chance of seeing that unfortunate boy. Yes, Guy, you can come; and, Isaac, you had better go back and attend to your milking. You can do nothing here, I'm afraid. There will be plenty of work for us all soon, for the destruction of fencing alone must be very serious."

"Lots of posts and rails have been going past, ever since we could see," said Guy.

"I wish I could get over to the middle run; but Cox would be sure to get the sheep off the marsh before dark yesterday, with the certainty of the flood before him."

"I dare say he would, Papa, if he got back in time, but I'm very much afraid he didn't."

"*Got back?* Where did he go, then?"

"Just before I came up from the garden in the afternoon, with some green stuff for the pigs, I heard a dog bark, and saw Cox going up the sandhill, towards the township."

Mr. Merton said nothing; but his look of mingled dread and displeasure told that, had he spoken, it would not have been to utter praises of Cox the shepherd.

"Listen, Papa; somebody's calling."

"I hear several voices; they are in this direction;" and Mr. Merton hurried through a thicket of tea-tree* to a clear bank by the flooded river, where half-a-dozen men were eagerly talking together, and at sight of him they gathered round.

"Morning, sir. Here's that poor lad Giles, sir."

"Have you found his body?"

"Yes, sir, and soul, too, I suppose. Leastways, he's up a tree yonder, and how to get him out we don't know."

Mr. Merton looked in amazement. Yes, there was Giles, clinging to another tree, almost mid-way across the wide surging flood, more out of reach

---

* *Leptospermum scoparium.*

than in his first refuge. How he had survived the transit was something marvellous. A huge heap of wreck, which had gathered round the second tree, had caught him as he was whirled along, and, creeping up, he had managed to clamber into the branches, where he hung, more dead than alive, wet through, and half-frozen in the cold southerly wind. He had ceased to cry out, and his kind-hearted watchers expected each moment to see him drop into the river. What could they do?

One big young fellow fairly blubbered. "If I could but swim, I'd get at him somehow. Oh! sir, he's my brother—and he's a bit soft-like, you know—but, bless you! Mother sets more store by him than by all the rest of us. I'll never face her again if Giles drowns. No, never. I think I'd reach him if you'd tie a rope round me. The water can't be so very deep."

"Such a foolhardy attempt would only leave us two to save instead of one," said Mr. Merton. "I can only see one way."

"And what's that, sir?" cried all at once.

"To shoot a line into the tree. Guy, go and fetch my gun, and the new large ball of twine, and bring down the two coils of rope out of the loft. Gray can go with you to carry them. And—stay—on the carpenter's bench are some narrow, straight strips of wood; bring some of those. Make haste, for I'm afraid that poor fellow cannot hold on much longer."

Away they sped, as fast as youth, strength, and good-will could carry them.

"Cheer up, Giles, my boy!" yelled a friendly voice. "The Master don't like fellows bird-nestin'. He'll have ye out o' that in no time. Hold on."

"My hut's the nighest here to take him to," said Brown, a neighbour's shepherd. "I'll run up and tell my old woman to have a warm bed ready."

Half-an-hour passed away slowly, very slowly.

"Seems like half-a-day," said one.

"Trouble stops the clock," said another.

Another quarter dragged by; then the cry rose—"Here they come!" and the breathless messengers dashed up.

A stick was quickly trimmed, the twine unrolled and stretched—one end tied to the notched stick, the other to an end of the rope. Mr. Merton loaded the gun and fired. The stick fell far short of the tree. Again and again, the same result. Poor Giles, beginning to understand what was going on, pitched himself a little higher on his uneasy perch, and stretched first one arm and then the other, as if to get rid of the numb chill that paralysed them.

"I believe this twine is too heavy," said Mr. Merton, after more vain attempts.

"Try a little more powder, sir."

"There was a double charge in last time."

"Sam Brown, have your missis finished the fishing-net she was a-making for her father?" inquired a looker-on.

"No; why?"

"'Cause that's lighter twine than the Master's, if you've any left."

Brown's reply was to nod his head, and start off to run home. His hut was not far distant, and he returned with a hank of fine light twine, which was quickly fastened to the stick. Another shot. It carried considerably farther, but not nearly to the tree, and the twine broke in hauling in, losing a good many yards of it, and the stick as well.

"The distance is too great," said Mr. Merton. "If I could reach the heap of wreck round that tree" (pointing to one thirty or forty yards from the bank), "I think I could drop the stick into Giles's tree to a certainty."

"Oh, Papa! pray don't try that," cried Guy. "You see how dangerous it is. You won't let anyone else go. Pray, don't—*please*, don't, Papa."

"Don't interfere," said his father sternly, waving Guy back, and going on with his preparations by fixing another stick.

"There's not so much timber coming down now, Master Guy," said Brown, "and the water's not deep here. If three or four of us get stout poles, and wade in on this upper side, we can fend off most of the wreck from the Master whilst he gets to the tree."

So said, so done; and Mr. Merton, holding his gun well above the splash of the water as he breasted the torrent, and passing from one firm hand to another, reached the pile of wreck, and with some difficulty clambered up the slippery shifting mass till he could pass one arm round the tree. Then, securing as firm foot-hold as he could, and taking deliberate aim, he fired—the shout that went up told how successfully. The stick hung in the branches of Giles's tree, above his head.

"Haul away, lad! Haul away till the rope comes!" they shouted again and again—for Giles made no attempt to get hold of the stick. At last, the fact that it meant life and rescue seemed to dawn upon him. He wound up the thin twine, then the thicker, but the rope came but slowly through the scrub and water; at last he grasped it.

"Tie it fast round you, and jump into the water," was the next cry. Giles

tied it round him, but hesitated, as well he might, to hurl himself into that boiling, tumultuous flood. Finally, he tumbled in by accident, a branch by which he held breaking off.

Then followed more shouting than ears could interpret, but the stout hands ashore pulled manfully on the rope. Giles disappeared from the moment of his fall, and the people, terrified lest he should be drowned at last, hauled at the rope with wild energy. Mr. Merton, safe back from the wreck, looked anxiously for the poor lad's reappearance, but the strong current carried him down the river for some distance.

Seconds seemed minutes in that brief space, so full of dread and danger; but at last a pale face rose amidst the flood-swept scrub near the shore, and, with another ringing shout, Giles was hauled through, scratched, bruised, and senseless, into the joyful grasp of his good friends.

A few spoonfuls of some warm mixture out of a bottle, produced from the inner recesses of Sam Brown's waistcoat, revived him wonderfully, and he was taken off at once by his big brother and the rest to worthy Sam's cottage, where the "old woman," who was moreover a noted nurse and doctress, soon completed his recovery.



CHAPTER IX.

The heart is hard in nature, and unfit
For human fellowship, as being void
Of sympathy, and therefore dead alike
To love and friendship both, that is not pleased
With sight of animals enjoying life,
Nor feels their happiness augment its own.

COWPER.

ON their way back, wet as they were, Mr. Merton and Guy made a short *détour* to look at the new orchard, which had been recently planted at the foot of the knoll on which the house stood.

As they came in view of it, both stopped aghast.

Was that chaos of muddy water, overlaid by hundred of tons of uprooted gum-trees, the neat, fair garden they had all laboured so hopefully?

All that remained of it, alas!

The flood, so much higher than any known previously, had burst through a part of the river bank, and driven one branch of its waters over this hitherto dry ground, tearing down fences and all else in its course, and carrying enormous trees from land which was in process of clearing, and depositing them along its path of desolation, in terrible evidence of its power.

Mr. Merton looked, but did not speak.

Guy could not repress a few tears. "What will Mamma say? I wonder if she knows!"

Turning, they saw Mrs. Merton standing a little above them, with Lina and Louis; Lina sobbing bitterly, leaning her face on her mother's arm.

Mrs. Merton's eyes swam in tears too, but, dashing them away, she met her husband with a smile. "How thankful I am to see you safe! I so feared you would risk your life in helping that poor boy. What has become of him?"

"Papa saved him—you may be sure of that, Mamma," cried Guy. "He's safe in bed at Sam Brown's by this time. But oh, Mamma, our poor orchard!"

"It is no use to talk about it, dear child. You may think how grieved I am. I must try and only remember how much I have to be thankful for—that your father is safe, and has rescued that poor boy from a miserable death. Come, Lina, crying will not serve any good purpose, or I could cry too, heartily. Dry your tears, and go on home with Guy." And, laying her hand on her husband's arm, Mrs. Merton drew him away from the desolate scene.

Nothing could be done to remedy the injury wrought by the flood until the water wholly subsided. The cattle were believed to be all safe. Not any of the horses accustomed to "run out" had been seen since the rain; but they had plenty of high ground to retreat to, so that little apprehension was felt on their account. Mr. Merton's chief anxiety was for his sheep on the "middle run," valuable young ewes and lambs. The run, having a river on either side, was completely cut off from communication with the house, or other parts of his estate, during floods. If, as Guy believed, the shepherd had been absent, everything was to be feared.

Bruce and Johnson had twice taken supplies of hot tea and food to their wives and children, who were still perched aloft in the tree and on the ridge-pole; and as it was evident that they would not be able to re-enter their dwellings for another twenty-four hours, if then, Mr. Merton bade the men get their families up to the house. With some difficulty this was accomplished. Bruce carried his child and the cat, and then his wife, safe ashore, and next helped his neighbour. The girls were easily carried, but Mrs. Johnson was a portly dame, tall and stout, and stout of heart too, so she waded out, with the aid of a good pole.

The kitchen party was a large and a talkative one that night.

The pleasant dining-room was as bright and warm as though nothing but sunshine and prosperity lay beyond; but the father sat in his chair by the fire, silent and thoughtful, anxious about many things.

"Lina," said Mrs. Merton, "you may as well read to us your next paper for Sibyl. The mail goes out on Monday."

"Do, my child," said her father; "I can listen, and I do not feel inclined to do much besides. Your voice will be a pleasant relief from that sullen roar of water, which tells of so much care and loss."

GWENDOLINE'S THIRD GOSSIP.

If I could only show you the real animals, my dear cousin, as I write about them; and if, after looking at the delicate, wonderfully lovely little opossum mouse, you were next to see a Wombat,* you *would* be amused! It is such a squat, thick, fat, slow, awkward-looking creature, with a broad, flat body, more the shape of a beetle than anything else I can think of, only just a little larger, as a wombat often weighs 40 or 50 lbs. It has a broadish kind of snout, very small eyes, short ears, short tail, and very short legs, on which it shuffles along



"DUMPY," THE WOMBAT. (From a Drawing by N. Chevalier.)

at no very rapid rate, you may suppose. Its extremely thick skin is covered with long, coarse, grey hair, and its whiskers are long, stiff bristles—altogether, not the sort of thing you would pick out of a menagerie for a household pet; and yet we were very fond of our poor "Dumpy," as we named the one we had for about two years. We had him when quite young, and when we were little too, and the good-tempered, harmless beastie used to play with us in its gentle, cumbrous way, and follow us about the house and garden like an old dog.

* *Phascolomys wombat.*

We gave him a broad box, in a corner of a covered shed, to sleep in, with a large piece of a blanket for a bed. He knew his room quite well, and it was very droll to see him clamber up and turn himself round in the blanket, and if part of it had fallen over the side, he would pull it up closely round him with his hands (for all these creatures use their fore-paws very much in the same way that monkeys do), just as cleverly as you cuddle the clothes about you on a cold night. But although this was a warmer bed than he would find outside in his native state, he soon began to covet one more luxurious, and if he could get into a bedroom without being seen, and find anything to clamber up by, one or other of us would find Dumpy curled up between our blankets when we went to bed. The servants objected to this trick of his much more strongly than we children did; indeed we liked the fun of having him, and Dumpy was not popular in the kitchen. Once or twice he was missing for a day, or day and night, and then reappeared, seeming quite knocked up, and slept for an unusually long time. We heard afterwards that he had been purposely taken away into the bush to be lost, but had found his way back to us from a long distance. I heard once of a tame wombat being taken in a boat across a large river to be got rid of, having become troublesome by the same habits; but in some extraordinary way the poor thing travelled back to the house it had lived in, and, after such a touching proof of fidelity, was not sent away any more.

One day, when Papa and I were on a journey, we stayed a night at a friend's house. At tea the conversation turned on native animals, and I mentioned our dear old Dumpy, and described him to our hostess, telling her what a docile, good-tempered creature he was.

"Yes, my dear," she said, smiling, "*I* know something about wombats too. If you look, you will see one under my chair. Here, Peter, come out!" and as she drew aside her dress, out waddled a fat old fellow, so like Dumpy, I could hardly have told them apart.

The natural homes of wombats are in rocky hollows, or little caves and crevices in mountains or gullies; and it is curious how small, sometimes, are the chinks they manage to squeeze their fat bodies through. They come out chiefly at night, and descend to lower ground, where the grass-tree and other plants grow, on the roots of which they feed, scratching for them with their strong feet and claws.

They are not generally eaten, being fat, coarse, and rankly flavoured. People who have been starving in the bush have eaten them; but I suppose we should not be very particular ourselves under those circumstances.

CHAPTER X.

Lina's Gossip *(Continued).*

"And as the Child sat there, a little mouse rustled from among the dry leaves of the former year, and a lizard half-glided from a crevice in the rock, and both fixed their bright eyes upon the little stranger; and when they saw that he designed them no evil, they took courage and came nearer to him."

The Story Without an End.

AND now I am puzzled—quite puzzled how to describe to you another of our native oddities; odder and queerer than you can fancy from any description. I have heard Mamma speak of the little English hedgehogs—indeed I know them from pictures—and I think you had better think of a hedgehog as a starting-point. Our *Echidna*,* or Porcupine Ant-eater, is four times as large, or more, and its thick-skinned coat is of coarse grey fur, with sharp quill-like spines, three or four inches long, sticking out from amongst it all over, and its short tail, which spreads out in a fan-shape, is all spines. Its feet are half-webbed, with long toes, and long, sharp, black claws; but its face is the strangest part of it, as instead of a mouth, with jaws and teeth, it has a long, narrow, round, bill-like snout, nearly twice as thick as a common lead pencil, and quite two inches long, with only an opening at the very end, through which the long, straight, sticky tongue shoots out with amazing quickness and dexterity, picking up the ants, on which the creature chiefly lives. You never saw a conjuror whose tricks of legerdemain were half so curious or entertaining as our queer ant-eater's method of catching his dinner.

Just above the top of the bill, where it is set in the fur of the face, are the droll little black eyes, surrounded by small spines, which gradually increase in size till they equal those of the back. The *echidna* eats small worms and

---

* *Echidna setosa.*

insects as well as ants, and often lives in the hollows of moist rocks. It has a sprawling, shuffling way of walking, but surely nothing ever could scratch and burrow so cleverly! Papa brought one from the hills, and put it down on a sandy beach, only intending to leave it there for a few minutes, but it at once burrowed down, and was wholly out of sight before he thought it would have begun to move. He had another carried down for Mamma to see, but as she knew it was impossible to keep such a creature in confinement with any comfort to itself, even if it could be maintained alive, she resolved to set it at liberty. We all had a good look at it first, as you may suppose, letting it crawl along the floor of the verandah, and when we were quite satisfied with our examination, Guy carried it to a part of the garden where there were some nests of ants which annoyed the bees, and there put it down. I followed him pretty closely, yet before I reached the spot, there was a circular ridge of soil thrown up, and the wonderful little beast in the centre, scratching so quickly, as he cork-screwed round and round, that he had quite buried himself in a few moments. We hoped he would stay and live in the garden, but we never saw or heard of him again. I suppose he would come up at night, and go off to some place he liked better.

If you ever noticed one of your English hedgehogs coiled up, with his little bristles all sticking out, you may fancy what a prickly ball our *echidna* makes of himself, as he adopts the same attitude of defence when disturbed or attacked by dogs; and very few dogs like to attack him, the spines are so long and strong and sharp, and are so thickly placed that there is not half-an-inch of the living ball undefended.

"Our bull-terrier, Grip, used to make very short work of them, though," interrupted Guy. "He was game to lay hold of anything. Anybody would think his mouth was plated like an ironclad, to see him pitch into them; only we never let him if we could help it, for the poor little brutes don't do any harm, and are of no use when killed."

"Old Jerry the shepherd says they're as good as sucking-pig," said Louis.

"I know; but he also says that sea-gulls are like partridge. I beg your pardon, Lina; please, go on."

The last *echidna* I saw was crossing the road just in front of us when Papa was driving me to town over the Tier, and my little dog began barking and

dancing round in a very innocent way, for I knew he would not dare to touch it; but Papa thought it a very unsafe place for Master Porcupine, so picked it up and carried it some distance off the road, and, when set down, it soon scuttled away among the rocks and scrub.

You are sure to have heard of the Duck-billed Platypus, or Water-mole,* which is found both here and in New South Wales. We have several times seen them, but never had one of our own, and I never heard of anyone attempting to tame them, except Dr. Bennet of Sydney, the great naturalist, whose account of several he tried to keep alive is very curious and interesting,



Duck-billed Platypus.

but all died very soon; and it is sad to read of the numbers of these rare and harmless creatures killed to assist scientific investigations into their forms and habits.

Papa says that a great deal of nonsense used to be believed about them, but that they are very singular little animals is quite certain. They are about a foot and a-half long, with short tail and short legs, the fore-feet being webbed like a duck's, and the round head looks as if it had on a queer mask, for the broad duck-bill that serves it as a mouth does not in the least look as though it naturally belonged to it; so that we can quite understand the unbelief of the persons to whom the first specimens were sent, who thought that parts of an animal and a bird had been put together to quiz or deceive them.

* *Ornithorhynchus anatinus.*

The fur of the platypus is of two kinds, a short, soft, fine brown coat, and an overgrowth of longer crooked, silvery shining hairs, giving a feathery appearance. The odd little creatures are very clever in the arrangement of their dwellings, which are always entered from a river bank, and consist of an ante-room next the water, then a winding gallery or tunnel, seldom less than fifteen or twenty feet in length, ending in a larger apartment, which is used both as their retreat from pursuit and as the nursery for their young. They have also a second entrance, beneath the water, by which they can reach home by diving. We have only seen them here by chance, swimming or splashing about in secluded nooks of rivers. They are not very rare in the north of the island. Guy was one day telling a servant of ours, an old bushman, that he had seen some dark-looking animal moving about in the water near a crossing-place, and Sam, listening attentively to the story, observed with great decision—

"*I'll* tell ye, Master Guy. It mun ha' been a clatterpuss." And we called them clatterpusses for a long time afterwards.

Another frequenter of river banks is the pretty Musk Rat, with whom also we have only a slight visiting acquaintance, and never had one for an inmate; indeed their amphibious habits would make it very difficult, if not impossible, to keep them in confinement, without proper zoological-garden contrivances.

I was once staying at a house placed on the banks of a river in which they were very numerous, and was exceedingly puzzled during the first night to think what could be making the fuss that I heard down in the water—splashing and scuffling in all directions, heavy plops in off the bank, and a general scrimmaging went on until I fell asleep. In the morning I went to the spot where the commotion had been, but all was still, and my friends told me that the noise I had heard was made by the musk rats, gambolling and playing, according to their usual custom in summer, when the nights were dark.

We sometimes saw them by day, swimming quietly across the river, leaving a long diverging wake behind them; but their demeanour then was so steady and business-like, no one would have suspected them of such mad pranks as must be carried on at night to make the racket I had been so mystified about.

Like the platypus, the musk rats live in holes which they burrow in the river banks, and we always thought them quite harmless, until we heard an old fisherman complain that they broke his nets and stole his fish.

They are pretty, gentle-looking creatures, with faces not unlike the water-vole of England; so Mamma says. They have beautiful soft brown fur, and a white tip to the tail, and are scented with a rather powerful odour of musk.

Little Winifred begs me not to forget to tell you of our pet bandicoots. I think she liked them better than the larger animals, for the kangaroos used to frighten her by hopping quickly up to her, and Dumpy the wombat perpetually upset her by tumbling about her feet.

The first Bandicoot* we had, Papa carried home in his waistcoat pocket, when it was rather larger than a common mouse. One of the dogs had killed the old one, and this little creature escaped from her pouch and was caught alive. The bandicoot has altogether rather a mousy character, in its shape, its



The Bandicoot.

long sharp face, bright eyes, wide-open delicate transparent ears, and little pink feet. The fur is light brownish-grey above, with dark stripes across the back, but white beneath; the tail is small and short. Freda called ours "Coota," which soon became its household name. It quickly learned to lap milk, and afterwards ate, besides that, bread and raw potatoes. When full-grown (about half as large again as a rat, and broader in proportion), we offered Coota his liberty in the garden, with unlimited advantages in the way of fruit and

* *Perameles Gunnii.*

vegetables, but he always came back into the house, and selected as his sleeping apartment Mamma's deep work-basket, where he burrowed down to the bottom, and curled himself up in some flannel. Here he slept all day, scolding and snapping at any intruding hand; but in the evening he woke up, and bustled out in a most energetic manner, with the air of having a great amount of business to transact in the smallest possible time. His first dart was always made into the corner where his supper of bread, milk, and potato was placed; and having eaten that, he began his evening's occupation of scampering about the room, just like a great tame mouse, running over our feet and up our dresses, almost too quickly to be caught; and as he evidently disliked being touched, we left off attempting to catch him. One evening we heard nothing of Coota, and on looking into his basket-bed, it was cold and empty. Whether he had changed his opinions concerning the value of freedom, or—much more sad to think of—whether Puss had contrived to elude our vigilance, and creep into the room, we never knew.



"Coota."

The second bandicoot we had was even more sociable. Its favourite retreat was below the waist of Mamma's dress, inside amongst the gathers, or, whilst it was small enough, in her sleeve; and many a slip and tumble had the poor little pet, when Mamma, not knowing where it was, rose hastily, and it dropped to the ground. His day-slumbers were thus continually interrupted, but, nothing daunted, he crept up into his favourite nest again at the first opportunity. Our short frocks did not offer the same tempting accommodation, but he would lie in my lap or Freda's, covered by our aprons or pinafores, as long as we would sit still and nurse him. His evening frisks were as droll and active as those of our first pet of his kind, and he was with us for some time, perfectly at liberty, and quite sleek and fat. One unlucky day we gave him a small bit of custard pudding, after eating which he rapidly sickened, and died in Mamma's hands, which he would not willingly leave from the time he became ill.

We would never have another, we are always so grieved to lose things that have grown fond of us, and seem to have such confiding faith in our being good to them.

"I think that is all I have to tell of the gentle animals I have known here," said Lina.


Flowers.
NATIVE FUSCHIA (CORRCEA SPECIOSA)
DO. LILAC (TETRATHECA GLANDULOSA)
DO. PEPPER (IN FRUIT) (TASMANIA AROMATICA)
Insect.
GREEN MANTIS (MANTIS RELIGIOSA VAR)
L. A. M.

"Well, Linny, I don't want to be a wet blanket on your scheme, but I'm afraid nobody will care about such descriptions," said Guy, who had finished his Naval Review, and was hard at work copying an elephant from a book of Eastern travels.

"Oh, Guy!" sighed Lina, despondingly.

"Were you not highly entertained by the stories about elephants which you were reading in that Indian book?" asked Mr. Merton.

"Yes, of course, Papa."

"And do you think they would amuse you as much if we lived in India, and had elephants of our own, so that you saw them as often and knew them as well as our horses and dogs?"

Guy hesitated. "I suppose not, Papa."

"Then, without for a moment exalting Lina's little word-sketches by placing them on a par with important books, do you not think that young people, to whom our native animals are as unfamiliar as elephants are to you, may derive amusement from them?"

Guy's misgivings were evidently not overcome.

"Are you thinking to get out of your share of the book?" said Louis.

"No, I am not. I've done my slice; part a week ago, and some yesterday, when the rain drove us in, and the rest this morning, when I was waiting for Papa. I don't know if it's any good."

"Read it."

"We will hear it to-morrow," said his father.

CHAPTER XI.

Oh for an old grey traveller,
By our winter fire to be,
To tell us of each foreign shore,
Of sunny seas and mountains hoar,
Which we shall never see.

MARY HOWITT.

ON the day following Giles's rescue, another heavy fall of rain, of several hours' duration, prevented much investigation of out-door matters, and the river, which had begun to fall slightly, rose nearly to the high mark of the preceding morning. No new calamity was reported. The washed-out families remained, perforce, inmates of the kitchen, ready and anxious to assist in any work they could find to do. Bessie Bruce was delighted to take Lina's dairy duty, saying it was "like old times," for she had been a favourite servant at the Mertons' before she married. Mrs. Johnson's brawny arms scoured and scrubbed every floor, bench, and table she could get at; and her girls, after helping to prepare dinner, and baking for the increased household, sat down to some plain sewing they had begged Mrs. Merton to give them.

Louis gladly employed the time in reading and drawing. Guy skirmished restlessly in and out, sometimes to the threshers in the barn, sometimes to Isaac, who sat in the stable-loft mending sacks, and sometimes to David, the crusty old gardener, whose great tribulation at the wreck of the orchard, his favourite labour during the past two years, fitted well with Guy's deep vexation and sorrow.

Mr. Merton "wrote up" his ledger, and some arrears of correspondence, taking one walk round the household before dark. All outside remained in the same dreary, disheartening condition. The pleasantest sight he enjoyed was the calf-house, where a party of sleek, fat calves, after being with their mothers all day, suckled and licked, happy and comforted, as calves always should be, were

cosily nestled down, clean and fragrant, snug and warm, amongst heaps of fresh straw. The cows and oxen, munching and chewing their evening meal, stood under a large shed, where they might lie all night if they pleased.

The dismal, monotonous roar of water still continued, with no perceptible abatement; and the whole scene around, as the grey gloaming darkened into night, was gloomy and depressing.

It was well to light the lamp before the usual time, draw the curtains, and shut out so cheerless a prospect. Tea over, and the usual work and drawing in progress, Freda climbed with her doll on to her father's knee, and, composing herself cosily in his arms, said in a comical old-fashioned tone—

"You can read your story now, Guy; we are quite ready to listen."

"Upon my word!" laughed Guy. "How small apples swim! Very well, little Miss Pert, here goes."

GUY'S GOSSIP.

It is quite certain that there are people of odd fancies and queer tastes in the world; but if anyone desires to see a blacker, uglier, more savage, and more untameable beast than our "Devil,"* he must be difficult to please—that's my opinion. I suppose those who bestowed such a name on him had pretty good reasons for it, and knew that they only gave the devil his due.

"My *dear* Guy!" cried Mrs. Merton, rather shocked.

"What's wrong, Mamma? *I* didn't name the beast, you know; and it *is* the name it's always known by. I can't help that, can I?"

"Perhaps not—but it is a very ugly one. Go on."

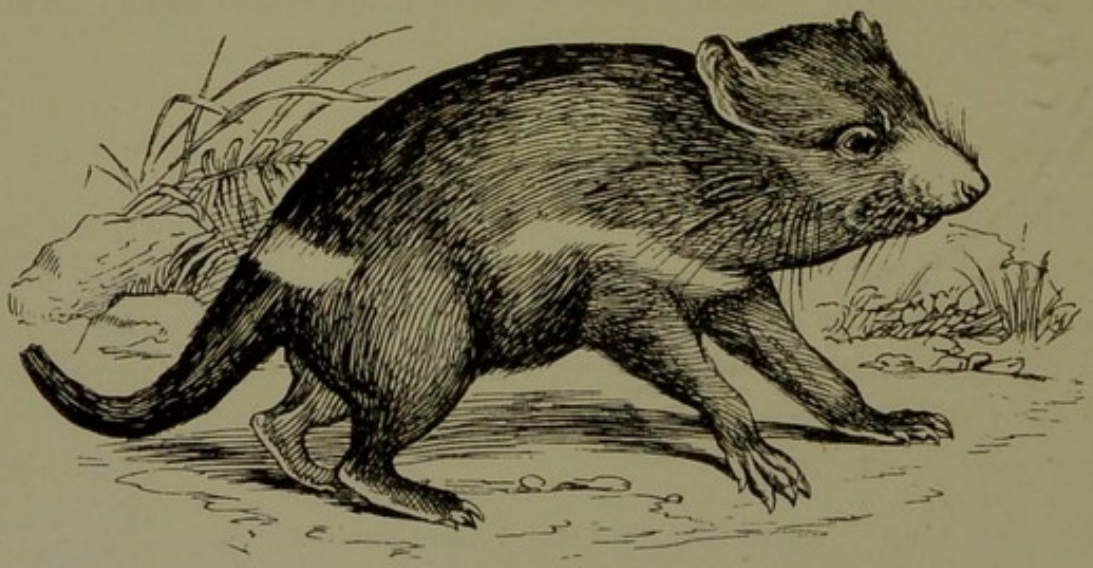
I've heard people say in joke, of others who had very wide mouths, that, when they gaped, their heads were off; but it seems true of this animal, his jaws open to such an extent, and a murderous set of fangs they show when they do open!

The head, which is flat, broad, very ugly, and with little skull-room for brains, takes up one-third the whole length of the beast, which is usually from a foot and a-half to two feet, some being larger. The tail sticks stiffly out, as if made of wood; the feet are something like a dog's, only more sprawly, and with

* *Sarcophilus ursinus.*

very big claws. It is an awkward beast, and cannot go much of a pace at the fastest. On fairish ground, a man can easily run one down.

One day I was out with Papa in the back-run, and we found a devil. I started full tilt after him, and came two or three good croppers amongst the rocks to begin with, but I held on, till all on a sudden he stopped short—I couldn't, so I jumped right over him. He gave a vicious snap at my legs with his big jaws, but, luckily for me, he was a second too late. I turned and knocked him over, and Papa came up and finished him—finished killing him, I mean. We don't show the brutes any mercy; they do too much mischief. The young lambs stand no chance at all with them; so we hunt them down, or set traps, or dig pitfalls—any and every way we can destroy them we do. Why,



Tasmanian Devil.

one winter, some years ago, one of Papa's shepherds caught nearly one hundred and fifty! They seem to go about in families or parties; for when you catch one you are tolerably certain of getting six or seven more, one after another, and then perhaps you will not hear of any for a good while. Of course they are much scarcer than formerly, and a very lucky thing, too.

I don't think I mentioned the fur—but it is not fur, it 's longish, very coarse, black hair, almost like horse-hair; and then as to fleas, *they swarm!* One of the men brought a dead one to the house one day for Mamma, and it was laid in the garden. Mamma and Lina were soon down on their knees beside it, peeping at its eyes and teeth and ears and all the rest of it; when Lina said, "Oh, look; how very curious! There are small, brown scales, like a coat of mail, all over it, under the hair." Mamma looked where Lina had parted the

long hair, and *didn't* she jump! Lina's coat of mail was just a coat of fleas. The *post-mortem* examination was cut very short, I assure you, the "subject" summarily disposed of, and two or three buckets of water poured on the place where it had lain. A pleasant kind of thing for a pet!

There are two sorts of devils—one is all black, the other has a white tail-tip and a white mark like a cross down the throat and between the fore-legs; but one is just as hideous as the other. I believe you cannot tame them, and I am very sure I shall never try. People who have made the attempt say they are as stupid as they are ferocious, and never seem to know one person more than another, but growl and bite at all alike.



TASMANIAN TIGER.

There is another charming fellow which all the people here call the Tiger,* but as a tiger is like a great cat, and this beast is much more like a dog, you will see how foolish such a name is. I believe naturalists call it the dog-faced opossum, and that is not much better; for although its head is something like a dog—though I never saw a dog as ugly, or with as big a mouth—the body is not a bit like that of an opossum.

In one respect it is like the devil. No care or kindness will civilise it in the least, even when taken quite young. We never tried to keep one, but have known those who have done so, and have seen the captive brutes—chained up, of course, and well fed, but not safe to go near.

These tigers are as large as the biggest kind of sheep-dog, and have a

* *Thylacinus cynocephalus.*

powerful, well-put-together sort of look. I fancy they must be very strong. If there were many of them, sheep-farming would be a bad look-out, for they are even worse than the devils, but we do not hear of them very often now. Their yellow-brown fur is short and stiff, and not very sleek, and has from ten to twelve broadish black stripes across the back, small ones beginning behind the shoulders, and larger ones coming over the loins and hind legs. This is the only point of likeness to a tiger that any one could find in them. We might as well say a gazelle was like a buffalo because both have horns. Our tiger's hind legs are singular, the lower joint being very short, with a callous sole all along it, on which he usually rests. A skin we have of one measures four feet six inches from the nose to the root of the tail, and the tail is another foot and ten inches.

They are not by any means swift, but seem to be very enduring, and can go on a long time at their usual steady canter. Very early one morning, some people Papa knows, who had camped out on the hills, saw a brush kangaroo hop past their fire. In ten minutes or so, up cantered a she-tiger, with her nose down, exactly on the track, evidently following the scent, and in another quarter of an hour her two cubs came by, also in the precise track. It was a very nice family arrangement, I dare say, for the dear mamma to tire out the poor kangaroo, and kill him, so as to have breakfast ready for her sweet children when they arrived. This quite proves they hunt by scent, so there 's another dog resemblance.

I think the animals for which Mamma and Lina have the most particular enmity are the Native and Tiger Cats,* because they commit such wholesale murder amongst the poultry; and on many a dark night do Papa and I jump up, scuffle on some clothes, and rush out at the sound of piteous squawks from the hen-house or duck-pen.

These cats, as they are called, are more like weasels than anything else, and I think, if their manners and customs were not so obnoxious, we might not consider them bad-looking; but on the principle "pretty is that pretty does," we cannot admire such remarkably ugly-behaved little savages. The tiger cat is the largest, sometimes weighing eight or nine pounds. The head is sharp and fierce-looking, with strong jaws and very carnivorous teeth. The fur is short and smooth, of a rich chestnut brown, with creamy-white spots—a very handsome coat, which is in request for making rugs. The tail is rather long and thin,

* *Dasyurus.*

covered with longish hair, which forms a brush at the end, whence the name of hair-tails, by which the creatures are known to naturalists.

The native cat is similar, but smaller, and its fur is an ashy-grey, with white spots. We have seen two or three skins quite black, spotted with white, but these are very rare.

Dark nights are usually selected by these bloodthirsty vermin for their visits to our feathered friends. The smallest chink in the walls of the fowl-house (which are usually made of boards or paling) serves them to squeeze through; and, once in, they go on killing as long as they remain undisturbed. An unfortunate bird is gripped by the throat, and some of its blood sucked; then another and another, till a dozen or more fine young turkeys or fowls strew the floor. If the poor things don't scream, or if the fowl-house is too far away from the dwelling for the inmates to hear them, the brute goes on killing and sucking till quite gorged; and then is, perhaps, found in the morning asleep—I was going to say on the field of battle, but there is no battle, as the poor frightened fowls don't show fight; it 's a regular murder of the innocents.

The thieves are so sly, too! They will creep in before the fowls go to roost, and wait, hidden in a corner, till the door is fastened and all quiet, before they begin the massacre. Not long ago, we heard the well-known signals of distress before we had gone to bed. Papa ran round to the fowl-house, went in, and saw a big tiger cat on the perch, where he had climbed up close to our best white Dorking cock. Papa soon settled *him;* but another got in afterwards, and killed that very same cock. The fowls got so terrified that they would not roost indoors any more, but took to the trees instead. Of course the cats can climb the trees too; but then the fowls can fly for their lives, at any rate.

The wife of one of our shepherds had a fine clutch of young ducks, which lived with their hen-stepmother under a coop. This in the day-time was propped on a stick, for them all to run out and in. At dusk, when the thriving little family had gone to roost, the coop was lowered down, and covered up with old sacks. One morning, when the good-wife lifted the coop to let out her hen and ducklings, there they all lay dead, and the poor hen sadly torn, for she was sure to fight her best for her children; and crouching at the back of the coop lay the tiger cat, which had clearly taken up his quarters before the brood had been secured for the night. Some of the sheep-dogs were within call, and very soon made an end of the cat, though they sometimes have a sharp tussle with the fierce little beasts, and get their faces terribly scratched and bitten. On very dark, rainy nights, we often know that native cats are close about the

house by the raging and barking of our dogs, which, if loose, will chase and worry them if possible; but the cats are very clever, and know how to take up such safe positions that, unless some of us come and rout them out, the dogs might tear about all night without reaching them.

We all believe that a tame cat of ours—I mean a real cat—Mamma's favourite Tom, known by the name of John, a great handsome tabby, kills native cats. We know he catches bandicoots, rabbits, and kangaroo rats, because be brings them in at night, to eat under the dining-table (a private entrance being arranged for his benefit, equivalent to a "latch-key"), and twice, when we knew that none of the dogs had been in the garden, a dead native cat has been found there. As John is four or five times their size, I don't see why he should *not* kill them; only, as he does not eat them, the good deeds are done on purely disinterested grounds. I have heard, too, of good rat-catching cats who do not eat their prey, so that makes John's supposed exploits more probable still.

John is a generous old fellow too. We often hear a queer, half-smothered sort of "*mow-wow-wow*" sound coming up the garden, and see John with some kind of game in his mouth. He lays it down and keeps watch, while he repeats the signal in more distinct tones, until the little lady-puss of the house comes out to accept and appropriate the gallant offering.

Of course dogs constantly catch what they know they must not eat, as well as things they will not, such as bandicoots and native cats. Papa had one faithful clever fellow of a sheep-dog, who always kept guard round the house at night, and was continually catching something. He regularly carried his "game" round to the front, and laid it either on or before the door-step, evidently with the intention of showing what he had done; and one or more native cats, kangaroo rats, or bandicoots used to be found there several mornings a-week.

"That was 'Mr. Boker,'" said Louis; "I remember him. We had been laughing at that picture in *Punch*, of the little boy looking at the old gentleman's bald head, and saying, 'Oh, Mamma, how funny! Mr. Boker's got another forehead at the back of his head!' and as our puppy had a great white spot in the same place, Mamma called him Mr. Boker."

"Don't interrupt Guy," said Mr. Merton.

"Oh, Papa, that's all I wrote, and I never expected to make a quarter as much; but when I once began, I found more to say than I thought there would

be. It can be cut shorter, you know; only, as Linny went into small matters, I did too."

"Unless you do, such sketchy little notes are of no value at all," said Mrs. Merton. "Careful scientific descriptions of all these creatures have been written by learned naturalists for learned people; the only ground on which there is room for our pens is the familiar every-day knowledge of little habits and peculiarities, which the greatest professors at home cannot always observe for themselves."

"It isn't likely, of course, that those big-wigs should keep tame 'possums and things as we do; but one seems to have so little to tell about them."

"I remember an old friend of mine in England, a good naturalist," said Mrs. Merton, "asking me to write descriptions of anything and everything I saw out here; and my natural remark was that I should not know what had been told before, nor what was most useful to be observed. His reply was—'Observe everything, and describe everything. Ninety-nine things have probably been better done before, but the hundredth may be a welcome addition to general information.'"



CHAPTER XII.

Wide o'er the brim, with many a torrent swell'd,
And the mix'd ruin of its banks o'erspread,
At last the roused-up river pours along.
Resistless, roaring, dreadful, down it comes
From the rude mountain and the mossy wild,
Tumbling thro' rocks abrupt, and sounding far!

. . . . . .

It boils, and wheels, and foams, and thunders thro'!
Nature! Great Parent! whose unceasing hand
Rolls round the seasons of the changeful year,
How mighty, how majestic are thy works!

THOMSON.

THE family had assembled round the breakfast-table on the following morning, when the maid came in.

"If you please, sir, Jerry 's in the kitchen, and wishes to speak to you."

"Give him some breakfast. I 'll see him presently. I wonder what news *he* brings?" said Mr. Merton.

"No more bad, I hope," sighed his wife.

"I hope not; but I fear we are not at the end of our list of calamities yet. I rode up to the big paddock this morning. A great deal of fencing is gone, everywhere; and about twenty acres of the wheat that looked so well are washed absolutely away—seed, earth, and all—leaving the plough-marks on the clay subsoil, like the joints of a boarded floor. The river burst over the bank just above, so the wheat-field got the first violent rush."

"And I was so proud of my ploughing there," said Guy.

"Yes, you did remarkably well. The loss of seed and labour is bad enough, but the soil being taken is far worse, being irremediable. It is so much improved freehold gone for ever. Tell Jerry I 'll see him in the verandah, when he has had his breakfast."

And in a short time the old man came.

"Mornin', sir."

"Well, Jerry, *you* were not washed out of bed, I hope?"

"No, sir. The flood wasn't up to my cottage, but I never see one near as high yet. I couldn't get over any way afore, and I was 'most carried off my legs now."

"Are your sheep all right?"

"All right, sir. It was while I was getting them safe on to the hills that the horses got on to the island."

"What's wrong with the horses?"

"Over their backs in water, sir."

"*What?*"

"Well, sir, you know the island, up by my place, where the river makes two branches—where you'd a pickernick on Miss Linny's birthday?"

"Perfectly."

"Well, I'd seen the horses all about there for a day or two—it's where the grass was burnt, and the feed's fresh—and when the rain began, they was on the bank o' this side, and they was there when I saw 'em on Monday at dusk. Well, you know how it rained all that night, sir, and the river rose very quick. In the morning I druv the sheep up the hill first thing, and then I looked for the horses, and couldn't see 'em nowhere. The hollow where the river parts round the island looked like a big lake, only with trees in it. The island was feet under water. I looked and looked all round for the horses, but ne'er a one could I see, nowhere."

"They can't be drowned!" cried Guy.

"No, sir; I'll tell ye. After a bit, as I was a-staring about me at the terrible flood, and the rain was a-pouring down as if it had just started fresh, I thought I see some'at move in the water, where I knowed the island were. I looked and looked, and got a little nearer, and then I was sure. It was a horse's head. The Missis's grey mare——"

"Oh Jerry! my dear old Nell?"

"Yes, ma'am, it was; and then I saw more heads—five altogether. Master Guy's horse had poked his head agin a honeysuckle tree, and the roan were behind him, and Gipsy and Captain. I knew 'em all, poor things!"

"But do you mean to say you could only see their heads?"

"Nothin' else, Master. And it seemed as if they got on the highest bit o' ground there was, to get even their heads above water; for sometimes there was

a move, and two or three heads went down, and then came up in another place. Some big logs came swirling down right amongst 'em, but they didn't seem to get hurt by them."

"You saw them there on Tuesday morning? Where are they now?"

"In the very same place, Master."

"And this is Thursday! and they have been in that fearful plight all this time!"

"They have so, sir. I never fretted so for anything as I have for them poor horses. I *cried* to see 'em, for I could do nothing else. I tried my best to get over here, and got nigh drowned myself, so I could only wait; and it was as much as I could do, with a big pole, to come through the hollow this side my place now. The water was right up under my arms."

"The idea of our having gone to our warm beds these two nights, and those poor good creatures perishing in the ice-cold water!" exclaimed Mrs. Merton, shuddering. "I could not have closed my eyes if I had known it."

"Then it's lucky you didn't, ma'am," said Jerry; "but nothing ever made me so sorry in this world, I think."

"Did you see them to-day?" asked Mr. Merton.

"O' course I did, sir—looked at 'em, and called to 'em just afore I started. I tried to get 'em to swim over, and got a bit of corn to coax 'em, but they durstn't, I suppose, till the water goes down a bit; their backs are above it now, so maybe they'll venture soon. I wanted you to know about it, sir, in case you thought of any way to get at 'em."

"If we had a boat, Papa, could we not tow them out?" asked Guy.

"In the first place, my boy, there is not a boat within reach, and even if there were, I doubt if we could use it. Those two branches of the river, you remember, have high steep banks on both sides; and even when only moderately full, the streams are like rapids, so that now I do not suppose a boat would be of much use. The flood will fall considerably by afternoon, and we will ride up and see what can be done to entice the horses to swim out, or they must perish of cold and hunger."

In answer to Mrs. Merton's kind suggestions, Jerry said it was of no use to get dry, as he must be just as wet again going back; neither would he have a horse, preferring to trust his own legs to carry him most safely; and away he went.

Bruce and Johnson anxiously reconnoitred their cottages, but the water was still about a foot deep on the floors, and all that could be done was

to wait patiently for another day before there was a chance of lighting fires within.

When Mr. Merton and Guy arrived at Jerry's cottage, the flood on the island had fallen so as to show the five wretched horses standing up to their chests in water, and moving slowly about a little at intervals. Guy had carried a sheaf of barley, strapped on his saddle, which he held up, calling to his horse as he was accustomed to do. Mr. Merton, too, called loudly, and the poor creatures turned and pricked up their ears at the well-known voices, but showed no inclination to move. After a little time, the old white Arab, Mrs. Merton's favourite, advanced a pace or two ; then, finding herself in deeper water, retreated again, and tried another place, and another, with like result. At last, as though impatient and desperate, she plunged forward, and was presently swimming in the deep water of the current. Carried down by it for some distance, she still struggled bravely, and, after a hard fight, scrambled out, and climbed up the high bank, neighing a little, and seeming only too glad to feel Mr. Merton's hand on her mane, and a halter over her head.

The other horses, with more or less hesitation, followed their chief—for the sagacious old mare was the acknowledged leader of the party—and all were brought home, and well cared for. It was long ere the poor animals recovered entirely from the effects of their cruel sufferings. Guy's fine young horse afterwards lost his coat, just as human beings lose their hair after a fever. The others only became partially bare of hair, but continued ailing and out of condition until summer. It was marvellous that they survived at all.

On the next day (Friday) Mr. Merton succeeded in crossing to the middle run. Cox, the shepherd, had then returned, but he had, as Guy said, been absent during the flood, and the loss caused by his wilful negligence had been most calamitous. Not more than a score or two survived of Mr. Merton's most valuable flock of pure merino ewes and lambs. Their usual feeding-ground was a flat, intersected by numerous little hollows, where the rising waters would encircle them in little groups, separated from each other, and from the rising slopes around, as on a number of islands : these soon becoming covered, the helpless creatures had been swept away, and drowned by hundreds. Carried into the swollen river, they rolled onwards to the sea, and the broad sandy beaches near the mouth were strewn for miles with the carcasses washed up in heaps by the tide.

This, the crowning misfortune of the great flood, was not only Mr. Merton's greatest loss, but the one he could the least patiently endure, seeing that all

would have been averted had the smallest effort been made. It was well known that that particular spot was liable to such visitations, and for that reason a resident shepherd was placed there, that the sheep might be driven to higher ground on the chance of heavy rain. But the prospect of an evening in a brawling tap-room was enough to tempt the selfish hireling from his easy duty, at the cost of well-nigh ruin to his master.

No attempt could for many months be made to restore the destroyed orchard. That, though a pleasure and a profit, was not a necessity, and no labour could be spared from the many other imperative needs. Not a word more was said of Louis going to school. Even his mother knew it could not be. Hard diligent work and strict economy alone could enable our poor friends to struggle through the difficulties which had accumulated around them.

CHAPTER XIII.

The keener tempests rise, and fuming dun,
From all the livid east or piercing *south*,
Thick clouds ascend;
Heavy they roll their fleecy world along;
And the sky saddens with the gathered storm.
Through the hushed air the whitening shower descends,
At first thin wavering, till at last the flakes
Fall broad and white and fast, dimming the day
With a continual flow. The cherished fields
Put on their winter robe of purest white.

THOMSON.

VERY dreary were the weeks and months of that wet winter. The most enthusiastic admirers of the Tasmanian climate found small ground for their wonted eulogy. The utmost that could be urged on its behalf was that "English winters were generally colder, and very often quite as wet"—a faint, negative sort of praise, only a degree removed from positive condemnation.

"And then," growled Guy, "it's such horrid waste, to be raining—raining—raining now, till the sheep are drowned, and the crops rotted in the earth or washed clean out of it—and those that arn't in, can't be got in. The garden's like a quicksand; it takes one over boots everywhere. And when summer comes, we shall be weeks and weeks and months without a shower, till the stock are dying of famine, and grass, grain, fruit, and vegetables are parched up and perishing for want of a drop of dew even. And the tanks, ponds, creeks, and rivers are all dry; it's a pity we couldn't store up a few hundred thousand million tons of the water we don't want now, against the time that we do!"

"That would be a nice little reservoir," said Louis, laughing.

"Yes, it would; and we could go dry-shod now about our work, instead of being nearly smothered in mud and slush. If anybody wanted to paint a

picture of Hercules in the Augean stables, I'd recommend him to look at our Isaac in the big pig-sty! I'm going to cut ferns for bedding in the calf-house; I got it cleaned out this morning. You may as well come and help, and Frank's quite big enough to carry a light bundle home. Come along, sir; if you're to be a farmer, you can't study your rudiments too soon."

And off swung Guy, singing at the top of his clear young voice—

"A flaxen-headed cow-boy,
I whistled o'er the lea."

Except in the high mountain-ranges, and the middle of the island, which is considerably elevated, snow is not frequent in Tasmania; but during this winter a heavy and very general fall occurred one night in July (answering to January in England), and great was the excitement of the young Mertons at sight of the strange white world to which they wonderingly awoke next morning.

Frank was eager to make snow-balls; Freda hoped Guy and Louis would build a snow-man (like one she had seen in a picture-book); and Lina, on household cares intent, inly determined to try if pancakes could really be made with snow instead of eggs, or whether it was only a joke to say so.

When they assembled in the dining-room, Mrs. Merton was standing at the window, rapt in admiration of a large tract of forest, the trees in which having been killed (by a ring of bark being taken off all round them), were consequently bare of foliage, which the living native trees never are at any season. The naked trunks, branches, and twigs, each outlined with snow on the upper side, exactly imitated an English forest in winter, and recalled to her, with a vividness almost painful, the far-away times and scenes of her girlish years. Her eyes grew a little dim as she bade the young people look at the picture—"Truer than you will ever see painted."

"Mamma, you're crying!" said Freda.

"Am I? I had travelled a long way into the past, little one, over a bridge of snow," said the Mother, with a sigh and smile. "Come to breakfast."

Frank's first essay in snow-balling was hardly to be pronounced a success. Guy's brisk return of his—fire, may we say?—happening to hit the back of his neck, the sensation of a cold trickle down his back did not prove an agreeable one.

A huge mass of snow was soon rolled together for the body of the snow-man. Legs were dispensed with, as demanding too much artistic skill to erect,

so he was set up on an iron tank—a legless, sitting figure, as hideous as a South Sea Island idol, with a head nearly as large as the body, surmounted by an old hat, and finished off with charcoal eyes and an old black pipe, to the great satisfaction of the juveniles.

A little *tête-à-tête* between Lina and her mother, just before dinner, resulted in a dish of delicious snow-fritters. But Lina was very near making the same mistake that others have done, by mixing in the snow some time before the frying began; the correct method being to make a smooth batter of flour and milk, having ready, in a cool place, fully half as much snow, which is quickly beaten up in the batter, at the last moment before it is poured into the pan.

"But, Mamma," said Louis, "you couldn't make nice fritters of flour and *water* and milk, so how can you of flour, *snow*, and milk—because snow's only water?"

"Very naturally argued," said Mr. Merton. "But there *is* a solution to the enigma; try and find it out."

"Because snow's cold, Papa," guessed Frank.

"What difference could that make in the hot pan?" observed Guy.

"I think I've found out," said Louis, critically examining his fritter. "When you look into it, the batter isn't solid, but full of little holes or spaces, like a sponge; and I suppose that's where the hard grains of the snow were; and the stuff was cooked so quickly in the hot pan, they couldn't fill up, and that's why snow makes light fritters."

"Rightly guessed, I believe, Louis. Every effect has its cause, and it is good mental exercise to seek it out, even though it concern nothing more profound than a pancake."

"They're very good," said Guy. "I'll get you more clean snow to-morrow, to make another dishful, Linny."

"Then remember to gather it lightly, and not pack it into a hard mass," said Mrs. Merton, "because that would be merely a lump of ice, and we cannot use that; it is the light fresh snow that is required, for its crystals to keep the batter open, as Louis found out."

"I quite expect another frost to-night," said Mr. Merton, looking at his barometer. "I hoped the snow would melt more quickly. My poor sheep don't find it quite so entertaining as you young folks do. Bring your axe, Guy; we will cut a few she-oaks for them and the cattle on the hills."

"Let me come too, Papa; I can use an axe now," said Louis; and away they trooped.

The tree called by colonists she-oak* is another case of misnaming, being totally unlike any description of oak. The foliage consists of long, thin streamers, jointed like the "horse-tails" of English brooks, which clothe the branches with waving masses, like great tufts of giant hair, and make a curious and sadly musical sound when the wind whistles through them. Cattle, sheep, and horses are all fond of the grassy-jointed branchlets when the tree is in fruit; but at seasons when there are not any cones on it, the foliage is often refused by animals usually fond of it. In times when grass or provender is scarce, it is a common custom to cut down these trees for the stock to browse on. The cones are of the size of a pigeon's egg, corrugated all over in rough points. The ground beneath the tree is covered by the shed foliage in a thick natural carpet, making the shade of a large she-oak a capital spot for laying the cloth on at a picnic. The wood is especially excellent as fuel, "a dry she-oak log" being an oft-coveted luxury on a cold winter's day; and probably the broad bright fire on the hearth, which lit up the cosy dining-room of the Mertons that evening, was mainly composed of such. Grates are comfortless and troublesome delusions in a wood-burning country: nothing like the open hearth, with iron hobs or dogs to rest the logs upon, for convenience and cheery comfort.

Another tree of the same genus, but with very much shorter hair (if the term be admissible), is accordingly called the he-oak. Both are valuable in the landscape for their peculiar olive and brown tints and remarkable aspect, utterly unlike any other kind of tree with which I am acquainted; and often, with their round form, and straight, pendant streamers, irresistibly suggestive of a somewhat unkempt head of hair.

* *Casuarina torulosa.*

CHAPTER XIV.

As once by the margin of rivers
Stalked those birds unknown, that have left us only the footprints.
What, in a few short years, will be left of thy race but the footprints?

LONGFELLOW.

GUY had entirely relinquished his drawing in an evening, and was busy with what he termed "a little fancy work," having undertaken to divide with his father the making of a new seine-net, ready for the summer-evening fishing, which he so much enjoyed in his visits to his Aunt Anne's sea-side cottage.

Mr. Merton also began work, hanging his netting to a stout hook by the fireplace. Louis was endeavouring to carve a little picture-frame for his mother; Lina sewed, and Freda threaded beads for a doll's necklace.

"As I drove over Spring Hill the other day," said Mr. Merton, "I looked down upon the very spot where the poor Hoopers were murdered in 1834, and I felt how devoutly thankful we ought to be—and I am—for the blessed change which has taken place in the conditions of our colonial life since those frightful times."

"What times, Papa?" asked Louis.

"The old, early days, my boy, when the number of white people killed by the aborigines averaged eight a-week of our then small population, and the tragedy to which I was alluding was one of the most terrible. A settler named Hooper lived in a pretty little valley, near the place at which the present high road winds up the hill. He had a wife and five or six young children. He had built a snug little cottage-home, and was an industrious working man, always at work, ploughing, clearing, digging, or otherwise employed. In those days we none of us, as a rule, ever ventured many yards from our doors without a loaded gun; not that we were in the habit of shooting the blacks—they were much too quick to give us the chance—but they were not likely to attack us if they

knew we had loaded firearms. Poor Hooper carried his gun daily on the handles of his plough, or kept it close beside him when at other work; but one morning, from some cause, he omitted to take it. Two or three days after, a person going to the cottage found that the whole family had been murdered by the blacks. The mutilation of the limbs, by breaking every bone, in their well-known manner, at once showed that the massacre was their work; and many years subsequently, a black "lubra"—as the women were called—described how she had kept watch, with others of her tribe, on a little hill close by, for the wished-for opportunity. They had patiently waited three days, or more, when at last they saw Hooper go out without his gun to fetch water. Instantly they rushed down and speared him; then the poor wife and her helpless family fell an easy prey. The object of the blacks was to steal the few little stores and provisions the unfortunate man had."

"What a horrid thing!" exclaimed Louis, whose carving had gradually been forgotten as his interest deepened. "Did the blacks really kill the whole family, Papa?"

"They did, my boy."

"Even the little children?" asked Freda, with tears in her eyes.

"Every one."

"But if the poor man had had his gun, it wouldn't have happened," said Guy.

"Possibly not. But the dogged perseverance of the blacks would, no doubt, have served them in the end. They waited patiently three days as it was, and would have waited thirteen, if needful."

"And you don't think the man had done any harm to them first?"

"Not the slightest. That is a mistake which is very generally made. People assume that the first stone, as it were, was thrown by the white settlers. *Nothing can be further from the truth.* The aborigines used to come about the farms and houses in a perfectly friendly manner, getting food and blankets and other things given to them. They benefited instead of suffered by the coming of the white people. That, in the long course of years, our occupation of the country would cause a diminution in their food, by the destruction and banishment of native game, is most true; but they were quite incapable of reasoning on the subject, and, as I before said, the first effects of English colonisation were directly advantageous to them. Amongst other gains on their part, a very important one was the acquisition of good dogs, given them by the settlers, which caught kangaroo for them, and saved them both fatigue and hunger. They then became very wasteful in their wanton destruction of

kangaroo, just like the North-American Indians with the buffalo. They killed and left them to decay, often not taking even the skins. Sometimes we saw them with a scrap or two of kangaroo-skin on, but I never knew nor heard of their sewing two together, although they were glad to wear the blankets we gave them. They were certainly the very lowest type of humanity; the ugliest, least intelligent, and least teachable of savages. I have often tracked them through the bush by the quantities of dead kangaroo left behind them. As I said, they did not at first exhibit the ferocity they afterwards displayed; but a Sydney black, named Mosquito, who had been tried for a very cruel crime, came and joined a tribe on the coast here, and seemed to teach and incite them to evil deeds; for directly after his coming the first murder * of a white man took place, and from that time they never ceased killing the settlers or their servants whenever they had an opportunity. Many a hair's-breadth escape I have had of my life."

"Oh, Papa! How?" cried Louis.

"In all sorts of ways, more than I have time to tell, and more than I now even distinctly remember, for the danger was ever present, and the occupations of every day were carried on under a pervading sense of haunting but unseen horror, that kept one's faculties on a constant strain of keenest vigilance. A phrenologist, who looked at my head not very long ago, was struck by the extraordinary development of what he called the organ of cautiousness, and asked if in early life I had not found special need for its exercise; as most undoubtedly I had."

"But, Papa," said Lina, "you must have been a little boy then, and ought to have been kept safe at home, away from such danger."

"I certainly was a little boy, Linny, but no allowance was made on that score. When I was only eleven years old, it was my duty to take the dogs out to catch kangaroo for meat, as my father's sheep were all of the valuable merino breed, and far too precious in those early days to be killed for the maintenance of the whole establishment. If I got brush kangaroo, I carried them home myself; if foresters, which were often very large and heavy, I had to go again and take a man to help me to bring them in."

"But, Papa," interrupted Guy, "I thought Grandpapa had plenty of convict servants at that time. Why were you obliged to do such things?"

Mr. Merton smiled. "To answer that *why* would involve a long story in itself, and, besides, the question is simply unanswerable. Your grandfather was

* *Vide* "My Home in Tasmania," by the Author. Murray, London, 1852.

as brave a man as ever lived, naturally noble, kind, and generous. I have seen him face imminent danger with the coolness of a stoic, and give credence and liberal aid to impostors whose pitiful tales were the most transparent fictions. As children, we honoured and yielded him implicit obedience, but the hand he ruled with wore an iron glove. Your supposition that there was not the smallest *need* for my being so employed is perfectly correct. Any one or two of the scores of half-occupied men on my father's establishment could have done my allotted duty; but it was his pleasure and command that the duty should be mine—and mine it was, no matter what the difficulty, toil, or danger; nor durst I have uttered or looked a remonstrance."

"It was very cruel," said Lina.

"My own dear mother," continued Mr. Merton, "was, you know, long dead, and a stepmother bore her name. We need not speak of her. Our present business is with my hunting expeditions, and one morning's work will serve as representative of many. You may suppose me starting at dawn into the bush."

"On foot, papa?" asked Guy.

"Of course. Horses were scarce in those days, and even had they been plentiful, I don't suppose I should have had the use of one. Leaving the sea behind me, and striking up towards the hills, after heading the stony creek, the dogs caught two brush kangaroo, which were as much as I could carry, and I turned again seawards, having made a half-circle of five or six miles, intending to return along the beach. As I neared the sea I listened repeatedly, in case any of the blacks should be about; and on quitting the forest for the more open sandbank, I crept along on my hands and knees from the shelter of one boobyalla* bush to another, until I could look down on the broad sands. I then saw that they were marked freshly by tracks of bare feet. The black tribe had evidently just passed by, men, women, and children, going north, the same direction in which I was bound. Had I been a few minutes earlier, I should have been in advance of them, plainly seen on the long stretch of sand, and, as a certain consequence, pursued and speared. I could not now be sure that all the tribe had passed; some might still be behind, and should I venture on the beach, I might be hemmed in between the two parties. I was very tired with my long rough walk, heavily laden as I was; but there was only one thing to do—to make my way back by the same circuitous route I had come, following up the creek—which, as you know, here means a small river—to the same spot where I had crossed it in the coming, and striking across the rough hills and forest for home.

Boobyalla (native name)—*Acacia sophoræ.*

"As I plodded wearily along, I came upon another set of tracks of the aborigines, and was sorely puzzled which way to go to escape encountering them; but, keeping the dogs silent, and close beside me, creeping along noiselessly and stealthily, and keenly listening for every sound that might warn me of the enemy's neighbourhood, I got safely home, to be then sharply taken to task for having 'dawdled' out so long, and straightway ordered off on some other task."

"That *was* hard!" exclaimed Guy.

"Yes," said his mother, "your father's boyhood was a very different one from yours. The rule under which he grew up was indeed an *iron* one. My heart aches now to think of the trials and hardships he endured when a mere child, and so needlessly. He was only your age, Louis, when he was sent to live out in the bush by himself, in charge of sheep."

"By *yourself*, Papa?" asked Lina.

"Yes, quite alone. But before the time your mother speaks of, I used to be sent out during the day only, sleeping at home in a tent, which, cold as it was, was better shelter than I got afterwards. It was sharp work, I can tell you, to get up before dawn on frosty mornings, and take my 300 merino sheep to their feeding-ground. Of course common sense would have converted some of our abundant timber into fences, and made secure paddocks for valuable stock; but common sense was, unfortunately, a rare commodity in our domestic government, whilst heroism, valour, self-denial, and tyranny abounded; and so we fought on, a hard and unequal fight, for many weary years, whilst other families, with not one quarter of our means or advantages, lived in ease and decent comfort."

"And when you had taken the sheep out so early, they wouldn't feed, would they?" asked Guy.

"Of course not. Even you know that now; and they had been better in their fold, and I in my bed, for two or three more hours; but I had to obey orders."

"You got breakfast first, Papa?" queried Frank.

"Not a bit of it. But in the course of the morning, when it happened to be convenient, a pannikin of tea and a piece of damper* were brought to me by any one who thought of it, or had time—perhaps by one of my sisters; and I did not go home at night till there was barely enough light for me to put my sheep into the yard. Then I had my supper, and went to my tent. This routine went on, wet or dry, for many months, when my 300 sheep were eventually joined to the large flock, and that occupation was gone."

* "Damper" is dough made of flour and water, without yeast or "rising" of any kind, and baked in the ashes.

"Did you have another such task given you, Papa?" enquired Lina.

"Oh yes; but I considered my next 'billet' quite a rise, a promotion in the world: it was the herding of the milching cows; and in this duty I was not obliged to go out until I had breakfasted. Then I took away my charge, often to a considerable distance for good feed, and watched them till they lay down in the middle of the day to rest. The banks of the stony creek I mentioned before was a good place for grass, and when I went there I used to amuse myself by making little boats of bark—or what I called boats—and sailing them in the creek, whilst the cattle were lying down. Or I sat under a tree and read, for we had a good though not large library, most of the books having belonged to my own mother and my grandfather. The poor little lonely cow-herd had some glorious companions in his solitude! Antique-looking, morocco-bound volumes, that one by one were carried forth in pocket or bosom, proved grand magicians, that peopled the dreary forest with heroic visions. Shakspere and his myriad creations lived beside me. Don Quixote and Sancho performed their feats of arms beneath the gum-tree boughs; and a group of gigantic old stumps served to personify the windmills. Many a time, whilst in the Don's company, the sound of my own laughter has startled me from my dream, and, terrified at the imprudence, I have sprung to my feet, and gazed in fear around, lest some hideous black shape, spear in hand, should have heard it too. A translation of Tasso's 'Jerusalem Delivered' was another favourite book, and that clever, quaint old work, 'The Turkish Spy,' instructed as well as amused me. Pope, Dryden, Goldsmith, Cowper, Thomson, all the English classics of that day, were read and re-read, thanks to the peculiar opportunities I enjoyed for study."

"How *can* you say *enjoyed*, Papa?" said Lina.

"My child, it *was* enjoyment; vivid delight, such as no reading since has ever given me, nor ever will; and perhaps, but for that peculiar opportunity, I might never have made myself so well acquainted with the works of those 'bards sublime.' I can tell you of another instance where tolerably extensive reading was acquired under odd circumstances. My noble, brave old friend, Allan Boyd, of the navy, has often surprised me by his apposite quotations, and intimate familiarity with the best authors, which I, having rarely seen a book in his hand, and knowing what a hair-brained scapegrace he had been, was at a loss to understand, and one day told him so. He laughed in his own hearty genial way, and thus explained the enigma:—'Well, my boy, I'll tell you. The fact is, when I was a middy, I was always unlucky in getting under terribly severe captains—regular martinets—and there wasn't a single first lieutenant

I ever knew who wasn't a Tartar. They all took a violent prejudice to me. Odd, wasn't it?' (And to look at his handsome, winning face, and perfect form, it *did* seem odd, till a droll, audacious twinkle in the bright blue eyes told of an irrepressible *something* that would very probably prove trying to the most patient of commanders.) 'And so they all got into the habit of mast-heading me. I found it very dull work to pass so much time aloft with no occupation, so I got books, and always put one in my pocket—for I knew I should be ordered up during the day—and it's astonishing how much I did read at that time.'"

"Was Mr. Boyd the friend that you said 'Midshipman Easy' reminded you of, Papa?" said Guy.

"Yes. I always thought Marryatt had him in his mind when he wrote; though the type is not a very uncommon one; and in 'Newton Forster,' the clever novelist has an incident very like the one I have just told you; so that mast-head studies are probably often profitable."

"I have no desire," said Mrs. Merton, addressing her sons, "that you should either be lone boys passing solitary weeks in the bush, or middies to whom mast-heading is a daily incident; but you will do well to bear in mind how much use may be made of odd, unregarded morsels of time, by always filling them by reading. Read systematically and studiously, if you can, but in any case *read*. Familiarity even with an old nursery tale may be useful in its way, as illustration or allusion. Your brain is as a boundless storehouse, preserving for your service the wealth of ages, and with room besides for medley collections of odd scraps, that may seem valueless when acquired, but sooner or later will every one find the nook or corner into which it fits. Never be idle. Let your mind be busy, if your hands are not.

"In life's unresting conflict,
Work—with soul and brain and nerve,
And when ye fail to win, take heart
In feeling ye deserve.
Be sure two God-sent helpmates
Of man, in's mortal coil,
Two guardian angels by his side,
Are Energy and Toil."

"What's that out of, Mamma?" said Guy.

His mother smiled. "Well, Guy, it's from 'a psalm of my own composing,' as our old parish clerk once announced in church."

CHAPTER XV.

Beneath a patriarchal tree,
I lay upon the ground.

LONGFELLOW.

ON the following evening, the fireside talk turned again to the subject of the early life of Mr. Merton.

"Were not you once saved by some of the black women, Papa?" asked Lina.

"Yes; I and our boat's crew were saved by them, that's certain. We had landed on the coast, a few miles from home, to make a fire, boil our kettle, sup, and sleep ashore. The boat was hauled up on the sandy beach; and the night was very dark—that inky darkness, in which nothing shows, unless it be the line of white gleaming surf—and being a dead calm, there was only the merest ripple on the beach. We habitually kept a sharp ear and a keen eye for all possible signs of the natives; but on this occasion we had apparently good reasons for believing the tribe usually frequenting that shore to be away hunting at some miles' distance. Accordingly, preparations for the bivouac were in progress, with less of vigilant caution than usual. Snatches of boat-songs were trolled merrily out, the frying-pan chattered of hot johnny-cakes, or some such delicacy, and a holiday-making mood generally prevailed. I sat by the fire, whilst the men prepared the meal, when one, who had gone to fetch in more dry sticks, uttered a sudden, quickly-stifled cry of surprise. All were instantly on the alert; and, to our astonishment, we saw several black lubras creeping rapidly but stealthily towards us, and making signs that we should be silent. Quickly and intelligibly they made us understand that an attack was to be made upon us, either when we were asleep, or perhaps sooner, the tribe being only a short way off, and the men ready and armed in their ambush, near

enough—so the women said—to hear us. The profound darkness alone had enabled them to creep down and give the alarm.

"Instantly all our preparations were abandoned, and the fire partially quenched by throwing the tea over it; such articles as anyone could snatch up on the instant were carried down and flung into the boat, which was shoved off more quietly and in briefer space of time than I ever knew that feat achieved before—or since—and we tumbled in as she floated away, and pulled literally for dear life. Noiselessly as we seemed to have made our departure, the savages had been aroused by it, and rushed down. The red gleam of the still glowing fire showed the swift black shapes, spear in hand, hurrying to and fro over the scene of our escape, and their shrill yells and howls of disappointment came ringing around us through the darkness. But for the friendly warning of the poor lubras, we should all have inevitably been butchered. I trust their humane treason remained undiscovered, or they would not survive the revelation. Poor creatures! they were so harshly treated by their own people, that such small benefits as they had at times received from us won this signal act of gratitude."

"That *was* an adventure!" exclaimed Guy.

"One I have no inclination to have repeated, I can assure you," said his father.

"Papa," said Louis, "I want to hear about the time when Mamma says you lived out in the bush by yourself."

"Well, my boy, the story 's not a long one. I was then thirteen, slight and far from strong for my age, for in childhood I was very delicate, subject to croup and coughs, and other ailments, which my own dear mother thought very serious; and in England I went in 'purple and fine linen,' and used to be flannelled and great-coated and 'caded' more even than all of you have been; so that I naturally felt with additional keenness the roughness and hardship of those early colonial days."

"And the provoking part of it," said Mrs. Merton, "is that nine-tenths of the suffering was not only avoidable, but totally gratuitous and unnecessary."

"Yes; I know now that the chief of our misery was wilfully encountered, being in great measure the result of my father's inexperience, and partly owing to other agencies; but at the time when daily labour was extorted from a weak boy like myself, and we drank out of tin pannikins, there were servants and artizans of all descriptions on the establishment, and in a large storehouse were

packed away all the house-plenishing for such a home as we had in England; plentiful services of glass, china, and delf, with quantities of wine, plate, and handsome furniture, waiting for the erection of a suitable mansion ere they might be used; the whole of which were subsequently burned, through the store taking fire, and were entirely destroyed, without having contributed to the comfort of anyone. So that you can quite understand it was neither from want of labour, nor of means to employ it, that my poor services were called into requisition at an age when I ought to have been at school. I have heard of an actor who, when he was to play 'Othello,' blackened his body all over, to carry out the character more faithfully; and our early colonial life seems to me now to have been planned on like principles, so that every possible or attainable difficulty, privation, and labour should perforce be encountered, that any pioneers of new country had ever met, or could by ingenuity devise."

"I 'm very glad we don't live in such times," said Louis. "But I want to hear your story, Papa."

"At the time when my very involuntary trial of a Robinson Crusoe life was made, my father was absent from the colony, and my elder brother partly reigned in his stead, and sanctioned, if he did not direct, my employment. Of the estimate *he* was likely to form of any hardship, you may guess when I tell you that, on our voyage out from England, when he was fourteen, he used to choose to lie on the floor of the cabin, without a pillow, in order, as he said, to harden him for a colonist's life; and as to personal fear of any description, he did not know the meaning of the word. Accordingly, I was started off, with 400 choice sheep, and a dog, Neptune, to an appointed part of a wild stretch of partially-wooded sea-shore, sand-banks, and grassy marshes, about four miles from the homestead.

"My outfit consisted of a blanket, an axe, a can to carry water in, a small frying-pan, a pint saucepan (to boil my tea), a pannikin, a little flour, tea and sugar, and a very little bit of meat; Neptune being expected to keep me in kangaroo.

"Arriving at my location, my first business was to look out for a sleeping-place, and I selected the lowest and thickest-foliaged honeysuckle* tree I could find. I first cut down a gum sapling for a pole, and poked that up through the branches of the tree; then cut a number of boughs, and rested them slantwise against the pole, on each side of it, leaving a small tent-shaped space below, just

* *Banksia Australis.*

big enough to crawl under. I then cut long grass and reeds to lay over and amongst the boughs, in rude imitation of thatch; but as I had not anything to tie or bind, I could not fasten it in any way. A few of the driest ferns I could find, laid inside on the ground, formed my bed. There was not any water good to drink within two miles, so I took my can and fetched some. By the time I returned, it was getting late, and very cold. I struck a light and made a fire. Lucifer-matches were not then invented, and I had only a flint and steel, with a bit of oakum and some dry grass. However, with a good deal of care I succeeded in getting a light, next boiled a little tea and sugar, and fried a bit of meat for my supper. I had brought a small piece of bread from home, which I ate with it. Neptune and I rounded up the sheep, which were not disposed to wander far after being driven, and I sat awhile by my fire, which was the only light there was, there not being any moon. The roar of the surf breaking along the beach sounded strangely near and distinct, and I listened to each wave as it tumbled over, tracing it the whole length of the bay shore, followed ever by another and another.

"I had passed nights frequently in the bush before, and knew pretty well the different bird-cries, and other nocturnal sounds, but I had never until now been utterly alone in the darkness and solitude. An owl hooted in the forest at some distance, and a mope hawk near to me called out and was answered by another further away. I never thought their cries dismal before, but, echoing through that profound gloom, they seemed terrible. I kept the fire blazing for some time, watching, half-sleepily, the dancing flicker of the flames, that darted up in long, rippling, glancing streamers, broke into fragments, and vanished. Then I thought of the natives, and the chance that some of them might be about, and see the fire. That thought roused me wide awake, and I stared round into the black darkness that lay beyond the few near trees on which the firelight shone, and listened with painful intensity to detect sight or sound of the dreaded savages. However, Neptune lay still, so I knew they could not be very near, for our dogs usually warned us of their approach by terrified howls. At last I got my blanket, rolled myself into it as closely as I could, coaxed Neptune to come and lie near me, crept into my lowly shelter, and went to sleep."

"Poor little Papa!" cried Freda, with a pitiful look, as she climbed into her father's arms, and laid her soft cheek on his.

"How very, *very* desolate!" exclaimed Lina; "I wish you would tell us it isn't true."

Mr. Merton laughed. "I wish, for the sake of the forlorn lad of those days, that it was not true, Lina; but, unluckily for him, it was, and much more than I can now recall to mind; for I have striven, and your dear mother has helped me, to forget, as far as may be, the intense wretchedness of those years of childish suffering."

"Your father showed me the old tree he lived under," said Mrs. Merton "once when we were out riding on the marshes, many years ago."

"But surely there was *some* one near—some shepherd or servant—*somebody?*" said Lina.

"Not a soul. I was perfectly alone the whole week; often walking ten, twenty miles a-day or more after my sheep, taking care that none were lost, and counting them every night."

"You *had* a yard, then?" said Guy.

"Not the ghost of one. I contrived to get them together and let them run past me, and so counted them the best way I could; often several times over, to make sure I was right."

"You said you had flour, Papa," said Frank. "What did you do with flour?—make puddings?"

"Nothing so good, my boy. I used to mix up some flour and water, and boil it, making a very poor sort of gruel, but it was warm and satisfying; and sometimes I kneaded up a tough kind of dough (only flour and water), and baked it in the frying-pan. If the meat I had cooked left any fat in the pan, that was quite a luxury. But all such matters of rough living were nothing in comparison with the loneliness. That was my great punishment—the dreary silence, without hearing a word, or speaking to a human being, the whole week through. I often used to wonder if my mother could see me—and then hoped she could not; because she would be unhappy to know I was so miserable. The little birds that roosted in the tree over my head seemed to me to understand all about it, and say to one another, 'Look at that poor lonely little boy. Let us sing and cheer him up. He has no other boy to talk to and play with, so he watches us as we hop about;' and I tried to make friends with them by throwing them crumbs from my rough meals, so they grew quite bold and familiar."

"I wonder if that's one reason why you are so fond of little birds now, Papa?" said Lina.

"Perhaps it had something to do with it; for the little birds were very precious then. And I used to envy the black swans in the lagoon, that were

so happy as they swam about together, talking, as it seemed to me, in their soft, musical notes. I wished I had been a swan, to have had other swans to live with, instead of being a poor lonely little boy. Each Saturday evening I was allowed to walk home, to fetch my week's rations and a clean shirt; and once or twice, by some rare piece of luck, I was permitted to stay all night. Oh! what happiness that was! To sit with my brother and sisters in a room again, with lights and furniture, and the piano, and eat my supper at a table, and then play a game of 'Pope Joan,' and go to a real bed, although still only in the tent, which my brother and I had shared for so long."

"Why didn't Grandpapa put up some rough wooden rooms, like the cottages you build for our shepherds?" asked Louis. "They are better than tents."

"I should think so. We should have considered ourselves luxuriously lodged in one; but such comforts were not for us. Those Saturday evenings were, indeed, as white days in my calendar; but when, as was usual, I had to go back at night, and find my way as I best could through the darkness to my tree tent, it was a cruel contrast to the light and warmth I left behind. Once I got leave to carry a cock and hen with me to my camp, and the merry crow of the cock in a morning was very pleasant as long as it lasted. But on one pitch-dark night I was awoke by a terrible commotion in the tree over my head, and the choking screams of my poor friends. A native cat had attacked them. I could not see anything, and had not a gun to shoot it if I could; so I lost my pets, to my deep grief, and of course was not allowed to have any more.

"Once some of the men-servants were sent out to the marsh to mow rushes for thatch, not very far from my abode, and it was a great comfort and treat to go and speak to them. I only wished their rush-cutting would last as long as my shepherding; but it was soon over, and I felt lonelier than ever. I had been leading this solitary, isolated life for several months, when about the end of May* heavy rain set in, with a tremendous S.E. gale, that blew without intermission for thirty hours. My poor bower-tent was no defence even from a shower—I had often found that out—and this deluge of rain streamed down through it everywhere, even before the wind scattered my roof, drenching me to the skin, putting out my fire, and almost washing me away. So for once I ventured to take the law into my own hands, and started for home; but on reaching the creek, which intervened between me and our homestead, I found it was so swollen by the rain that I could not ford it, and so my retreat seemed

* Corresponding to November in England.

effectually cut off. But a cutter, named the *Industry*, had been blown ashore in the gale near the river's mouth, and some of the sailors kindly put me across in a boat. Before I was able to go back to my dreary duty, my father returned home, made other dispositions for the sheep I had charge of, and so there was an end to my performance of the hermit of the marshes, for which I was very thankful. Not that my general employments were in the least more easy, but they did not inevitably include the condition of utter solitude which had made the lonely shepherding so severe a trial."



CHAPTER XVI.

Faint and wearily
The wayworn traveller
Treads on drearily,
Afraid to stop.
Wandering wearily, a sad unraveller
Of the mazes of the mountain top.

Old Song.

"THEN what did you do next, Papa?" asked Guy.

"My father had a thousand sheep going to town for sale, and my brother George and I, with two men (convicts, but good servants), were appointed to take them. We were all to walk, of course, and our horse was to carry the tea, sugar, and flour we were to use on the long journey of 100 miles. We reached a certain 'Long Point' the first night, but the horse did not arrive, so we had nothing to eat, but made a fire and lay down; weariness, I suppose, overpowered hunger, and we slept."

"Why didn't you get a kangaroo or opossum?" asked Louis.

"For several potent reasons. It was dark when we reached our appointed resting-place. We had not a dog with us to find game, nor a gun to shoot it when found. The unprovided condition in which our expeditions were sent forth was something remarkable. Next day also passed without the appearance of the baggage-horse; and still we were without food. I found a few mushrooms, which we roasted in the hot ashes, and ate; but perhaps mushrooms alone are not quite the best food for starving stomachs, for I became frightfully ill—convulsed with agonising spasms and cramps, and other symptoms of what we now call cholera. George believed I should die. I don't think I cared myself whether I did or not; my life in general was very wretched, and so that I might escape pain, I cared little on what terms. Without food, and of course without medicine, nothing could be done for me. I was laid as near the

fire as possible, but I had not a blanket nor overcoat of any kind, although it was mid-winter, and the nights bitterly cold, hard frost setting in at sundown."

"Oh, Papa! Papa!" cried Lina, "it is too dreadful to think of. How could they let you go away without proper clothing and wraps? Or how could you be sent at all in such a season?"

"It seems to me now, Lina, as strange as it does to you. All I know is that it *was* so."

"And you didn't quite die, Papa?" said Frank.

"I suppose not; though I must have been very near it. By the evening of the next day, when we had been three without food, the man and horse arrived with our slender supplies, and we had some hot tea and damper for supper. In the morning we started again, and drove the sheep another fifteen miles, to the Little Gull river, where an inlet of the sea had to be crossed. We carried some of the sheep over at low water—and that was a pretty cold employment too—and then forced the others to take the water, and go through after them. We put our flock on a sort of peninsula, the neck of which we guarded by making our fires there, and very wet and cold we were. I was still ill, and felt the frosty nights painfully. I had crept as near to the fire as I durst, and, weak and weary, fell asleep—for how long I cannot tell, but I awoke with pain. I had probably turned in my sleep, for my feet were in the hot embers of the fire, which had burned half of one boot, and all my toes were burned too. This was a real calamity, for my foot was dreadfully sore, and I had to go limping on through the frost, much worse off than before. From nearly every part of the track we were following, the views and scenery, as I know now, were beautiful; but at that time, rest, wholesome food, and a warm room to shelter me, would have outweighed, in my estimation, all the grandeur in creation. On the evening of this, our fifth day out, we reached a spot called the Duck-holes. Heavy rain had set in, and we gladly reckoned on getting a night's shelter in an old hut near; but, on examination, it was found to be too full of fleas to be a desirable lodging, even for such destitute travellers as ourselves; and we decided to camp out as usual, pulling out a handful or two of the dry thatch of the hut to enable us to make our fire. We had our supper of tea and damper, and lay down in the rain."

"No wonder you have rheumatism now, Papa, after such hardships and exposures as that," said Guy.

"On the sixth day we went on again, still near the coast, and in sight

of glorious sea views; all, alas! lost upon me as I hobbled along, lame and weak, only craving rest and ease from the acute pain of my sore foot. In six or seven miles more we reached the wide estuary of a river, which we could not cross; so turned inland along its northern shore, and over rugged, rocky hill-sides, which in many places became sheer precipices of upright rocks, like old castle walls. To avoid these, we had to ford the river repeatedly, which, as we left behind its broad salt-water expanse, flowed through narrow rocky gorges in a series of rapids."

"What an awkward road to drive sheep over!" remarked Guy.

"You could not easily find a worse; and by the time we reached our appointed halting-place, in a valley where the river and a smaller tributary formed a delta-shaped verdant flat, we were all about knocked up, both quadrupeds and bipeds."

"I should think so," said Louis.

"We had now been travelling six days without meat, but here a sheep was killed, and we supped heartily. Next day we remained in the same place, as there was good feed for the sheep, which needed rest, and we rested too, and ate mutton. Our eighth day's journey took us over a range of high, stony, rocky mountains, covered with gum-tree forests, and it was night, and a dark one, too, before we arrived at our camping-place, where a large bush paddock had been engaged for the sheep."

"Ah! then you were in civilised regions, and would get a house to sleep in," said Lina.

"A roughly-fenced paddock did not denote any great civilisation, and most certainly I saw no house appertaining to this. We selected the best she-oak tree we could find for *our* house, and lay under that. Next morning my brother walked into Hobart, fifteen miles, for further orders from my father, and returned. On the day following, George and one of the men took 500 of the sheep into town. I and the other man and remaining sheep continued where we were for a fortnight longer. The days were tolerably fine, but the nights were frosty, and bitterly cold."

"Were you still without blankets, Papa?" asked Lina.

"Yes, of course. Where was I to get blankets? They don't grow on gum-trees, or perhaps I might. We made fires at night, and lay as near as we dared, turning first one side to the warmth, and then the other. At the fortnight's end an order came from my father, that I and the man with me were to go with the remaining 500 sheep two days' journey to a ferry on the river Derwent,

and, having delivered them there, I was to go home. My father remained (as was his custom for many months in the year) in Hobart, taking a leading part in political life, and living in all comfort and luxury. It was dark by the time we had got the sheep crossed over in the ferry-boat, and then I started alone to walk fifteen miles to the first and only village on my homeward route. My trousers were in rags, and my burnt boots in holes. I went to the house of a settler whom we knew, and asked for some food. I found this family very poorly off, and short of provisions themselves; but they very kindly gave me a night's shelter, and a share of their scanty meal. As I travelled on next day, being very hungry, I called at the house of a man named Fish (I remember him well), and asked for a piece of bread, but it was churlishly refused. This *was* a new experience to me, for, though my home was not as liberal to me as it might have been, all passing strangers were most hospitably treated there. So I plodded on until nightfall, when I reached the foot of the rocky mountain range I mentioned before, and which I durst not try to cross in the dark. I had looked forward, dismally enough, to a night of cold, hunger, and solitude, but quite a pleasant surprise awaited me. Four or five convict servants had been sent here by the owner of the land to build a stock-yard, and they were very kind and compassionate, in their rough way, to the 'poor little chap,' as they called me. I know I was very thankful to them. They were not allowed any supplies of food, but had dogs to catch kangaroo for their sustenance. They had not even a morsel of salt to season the insipid food."

"Insipid! Oh! I thought you liked kangaroo, Papa? I think it's very nice," said Louis.

"Kangaroo, hung till tender, carefully larded and roasted, with a dainty stuffing, seasoning gravy, and currant jelly, as your mother has it served, *is* nice unquestionably, very nice; but kangaroo, newly killed, roughly cut to pieces, and boiled in water alone, without, as I said, even a pinch of salt, is as flat and unsavoury a mess as you need taste; but it allays craving hunger, and, after walking and fasting all day, I was very grateful for a share of the tasteless stew, to which my poor hosts made me heartily welcome. They gave me the best they had, poor fellows! They picked out the cleanest and largest kangaroo-skins for me to sleep on, and put me in the warmest place by the fire. They had not any blankets themselves."

"But, Papa," interrupted Guy, "were men-servants used in that way—sent into the bush without bread, or flour, or tea, or even salt, and without covering?

Why didn't they complain? Our men would, I know, if you served them so for one night."

"Our men, my boy, are free men, and can leave my service if they like. The unhappy fellows I speak of were prisoners—convicts, and in those early days their condition and treatment were simply what their masters pleased; always provided that those masters were personal favourites or useful tools of the Governor or his officials. Any complaint, however just on their part, would have cost them a severe, horrible flogging for 'insubordination,' and they knew better than to make any. Mute endurance of every hardship that avarice or tyrannical cruelty might devise was their sole chance of evading the most brutal and revolting punishments; and knowing what I do of the frightful sufferings wantonly inflicted on thousands of their unhappy class, instead of marvelling that some few escaped, and became what were called bushrangers, my astonishment is that the masses submitted to their lives of privation and torture, and did not rise in a general rebellion and massacre their tyrants. Men at that time were transported for such small offences, that a large proportion of those sent out to this colony were as good men as the average of hired servants now. The remoteness of this island, the length of time occupied in the voyage, and the want of any regular postal communication with England, all combined to prevent the Home Government from understanding the condition of the men after their transportation hither. The Ministers at home who were supposed to govern and control the whole system knew absolutely nothing of the atrocities committed here, in their name, on men who would have been sufficiently punished, as such offenders are now, by a few hours' or days' imprisonment, being comfortably lodged and abundantly fed the while. Many of the men who were here placed in authority over gangs of prisoners, acted towards them with a vindictive and positively fiendish malice and ingenious brutality that is difficult of belief by those who do not know the truth of the disgraceful facts."

"How far from home were you that night, Papa?" inquired Louis.

"About seventy miles. The next day I crossed the mountain tier, and fortunately, in traversing one of the gullies, I came upon an Arab mare of my father's, which, when a foal, had been a favourite playmate of ours, and which, known to be somewhere among these hills, I had been ordered to *find* and take home, with small chance of executing the command, unless, as had most luckily happened, she put herself in my way. Fortune, and my habitual kindness to animals, favoured me, and 'Dainty,' who knew me well, and was the most gentle and docile of her kind, suffered me to catch and mount her. Of course I

had neither saddle nor bridle, but my sore feet were relieved by sitting on her back, and it was very pleasant to have such a dear old friend for company. I could talk to her as we went along, and let her graze where any nice feed appeared. At night we reached the little hut, about twelve feet square, of a small squatter in the next valley, where I had my supper, and lay by the fire; and another long day's journey brought me to the sea-coast. I stayed the night at a sort of out-station of ours, where some of my father's servants did their best for my comfort; and another long day was ended by my arrival at home."

"How glad everybody must have been to see you safe back again!" sighed Lina.

Mr. Merton laughed rather grimly.

"Lina thinks," said her mother, "how we should all rejoice over the return of Guy or Louis from such a dreary expedition, were it possible that they, or any other boys, could now encounter similar hardships."

"Which it is not," said Mr. Merton. "And no sympathy was wasted on me, I assure you. My tattered garments and burned shoes were, I doubt not, replaced by sound ones, and I was told off to some other occupation forthwith, and most probably twitted with having been away 'pleasuring.'"



CHAPTER XVII.

Where'er I roam, whatever realms to see,
My heart, untravell'd, fondly turns to thee—
Still to my brother turns.

GOLDSMITH.

"TELL us some more stories, Papa," was Frank's petition on the following evening.

"Well, I went another expedition that same winter (1824). My brother George had an order for an additional grant of 1500 acres of land, and the object of our journey to Anson's Creek, seventy miles from home, was to fix on a spot where he should take it up. We went on foot, as usual. George was eighteen, I thirteen, at the time. Our entire joint equipment consisted of one knapsack, in which we carried a little flour, tea, and sugar; and we had a tin 'billy,' or small can, to boil our tea in; and one single-barrelled flint-lock gun. Two kangaroo dogs accompanied us, whose game was to be our food. The furthest station to the North, and the last habitation we were to pass, was a hut, about fifteen miles from the homestead, occupied by one of our own stock-keepers, poor Bob Gay! He was afterwards cruelly murdered there by the blacks. From thence we walked to Long Point."

"Which Long Point, Papa?" interrupted Guy. "There seem to be as many Long Points in the island as there are sugar-loaf hills."

"About the same; but the particular Long Point in question has since been called Seymour. Here we found a hollow log that we could sleep under, and with singular and unwonted prudence took some trouble, the next morning, to stuff it full of dry grass and fern, ready for lighting our fire on our return, meaning to shelter ourselves in the same retreat again. I told you before we had no lucifer matches, and the way we often got a fire was to plug up the touch-hole of the gun, and light a piece of rag by the explosion of the powder in

the pan; then, with dry grass, bark, and sticks, we soon made a fire. Various kinds of tinder-boxes were also carried by some people; all very clumsy contrivances beside those we have now."

"And next day, Papa?"

"Next day—that is, the day we filled our log with dry grass—we walked on to Anson's Creek, about twenty miles, and in view of the broad blue Pacific nearly the whole way. Small abrupt conical hills rose a little way inland, wooded to the summits, and with odd towers and spires of red granite cresting or flanking them in a singular and grotesque manner. The same beautiful granite formed dividing promontories, jutting out into the sea between the snow-white sandy beaches, and the vivid green of the creeping pig's-face plant—your mamma will tell you its long name ["*Mesembryanthemum æquilaterale*," said Mrs. Merton]—spread out over the sandy hummocks above high water in great carpets and curtains. We used to eat the fruit, as it is called, as I have seen you children do. That night, tired as we were, we managed to stick up a rough shelter of boughs and grass, making one nearly upright bit of wall, and leaning another against it, stopping one end, so as to leave space enough for us to creep in and lie down; for, remember, it was winter, and the nights were very cold. We made our fire opposite the open end of our little nest. Next day we walked over the marsh-land we came to look at, and my brother satisfied himself as to its worth and capabilities. So far we had done very well; we had got kangaroo, and shot one swan, and had plenty to eat; but our little supplies in the knapsack were nearly out. And in the afternoon rain came on, with cold wind from the S.E., both steadily increasing in violence. Our poor loosely-built grass tent was little or no defence against the searching, violent squalls. We and our gun were soon drenched. That night and all the next day the rain came down in torrents—cataracts. We finished our swan, and had only one leg of a kangaroo left. The poor dogs were footsore, and could not hunt any longer; and on the third morning of our miserable tent-life we resolved to start on our return. The wind and rain still came driving in from the sea, by the shore of which our course lay, and every little rivulet was swollen into a formidable and rapid stream. We could not get over these without walking sometimes two or three miles inland, to reach narrower and shallower places to ford. We did cross one at the bar, but the rapid current swept me away, and if George had not plunged in after and saved me, I should have been off to sea in no time."

"And drowned, Papa?" said Freda, pitifully.

"Small doubt of that, little woman, if my brave good brother had not

dashed in after and pulled me out; and even without drowning, I was nearly finished. The continued cold and wet outside, every thread of clothing upon us having been soaking for so many hours—days, I may say—and the gnawing hunger within, at last reduced me to a sort of half-numb agony of desire to sleep. Twice I purposely lagged behind, sank down on the wet beach, and was asleep instantly. Oh! how cruel I thought George, who came back to find me, and made me get up again. I prayed him to let me sleep, promising that, when I was rested, I would overtake him. He knew better than to leave me, and I know he had a hard task to force me along, but at last we reached the hollow log we had slept under before. How thankful we were that we had so strangely taken the precaution to fill it with dry grass! In all probability it saved our lives, for without it we could not have made a fire. The rain had lasted without intermission for above sixty hours, and still continued. I crawled in under the log, and slept—how long I know not, but George woke me up to swallow some hot gruel he had made with a little flour and water, which, with the sleep, quite revived me. But no sooner was I better, than George was seized with the most frightful cramps, and it was my duty to take care of *him*. Remedy there was none, save warmth, and the soaked condition of the wood and sticks made it very difficult to keep the fire alight. It was an awful time. My poor brother's sufferings were so terrible, I thought he would die in that lonely, wretched place. Gradually, however, his cramps abated, and towards morning the stars came out, and the rain ceased. Again we started, finding every creek a broad rushing torrent, and having to walk along their banks for miles and miles through the wet scrub to find safe fords where we could cross. The Douglas river threatened to bar our progress altogether, but, by going a long way inland, we at last found a rough natural bridge. A tree of immense height had fallen directly over the stream, and by straddling across its trunk we managed to scramble and shuffle along it; but this was no easy feat, for, being so very long, the tree swagged deeply in the middle."

"So you must have got wet," said Lina.

"We had not had a chance as yet to get dry, our soaked clothes being kept wet by the thickets, and by our having to wade through the brooks and lagoons. That evening we reached the bank of the Apsley river, which was too high for us to attempt crossing, so we kept on the east side, and in another mile or two came upon a lot of wallaby, which had been driven out of the river scrub by the flood. Our poor, hungry, foot-sore dogs caught several, which gave us all supper. We found a good hollow log, and made our fire in front of it, boiled

our share of the wallaby-meat, adding our last handful of flour to the mess, half soup, half stew, which we ate thankfully ; then dried our clothes, and slept soundly under the log."

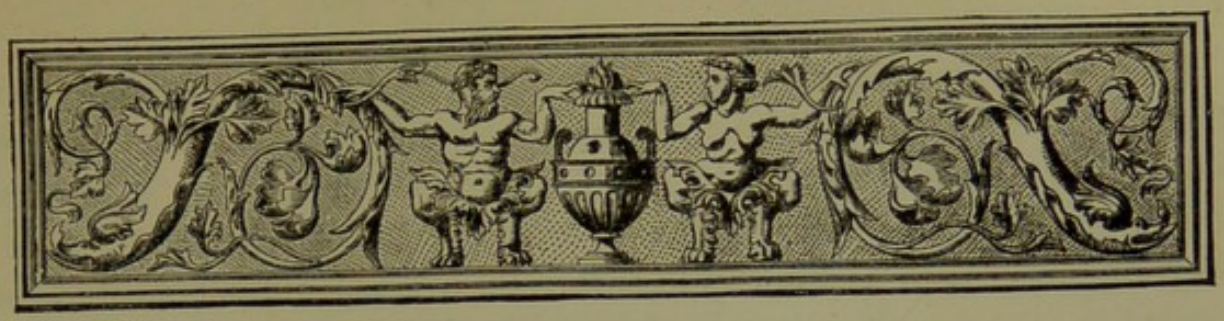
"Poor Papa! what dirty beds to sleep in!" said Freda.

"Well, I own that a comfortable four-poster, with all its clean and warm appurtenances, is a preferable commodity; but I can tell you that, after such a miserable time of cold and wet, our chilled limbs found the dry hollow of that log, with a blazing fire in front of us, positively luxurious."

"But you had done with the wet then, Papa?"

"The rain was over, but we had still many flooded rivulets and water-courses to cross; and next day, as we could not get over the Apsley, we followed it down to where it runs into the Big Lagoon, then crossed the lagoon at its mouth, where it was about a mile wide, the water being nearly up to my arm-pits, and freezing cold; so you see our clothes were not very long dry. We soon after reached our stock-keeper's hut, where we once more lay under the shelter of a roof, and finished our pedestrian tour by arriving at home on the following evening.

"And now, my children, if you are not tired of listening to such dreary narratives, I am of telling them; so good night."



CHAPTER XVIII.

Hear how the bushes echo. By my life
These birds have joyful thoughts. Think you they sing.
Like poets, from the vanity of song ?
Or have they any sense of why they sing ?
And would they praise the heavens for what they have ?
And I made answer, "Were there nothing else
For which to praise the heavens but only love,
That only love were cause enough for praise."

TENNYSON.

"WHO has any letters for the English mail ?" asked Mr. Merton one evening. "To-morrow is our last day for posting letters here for it this month."

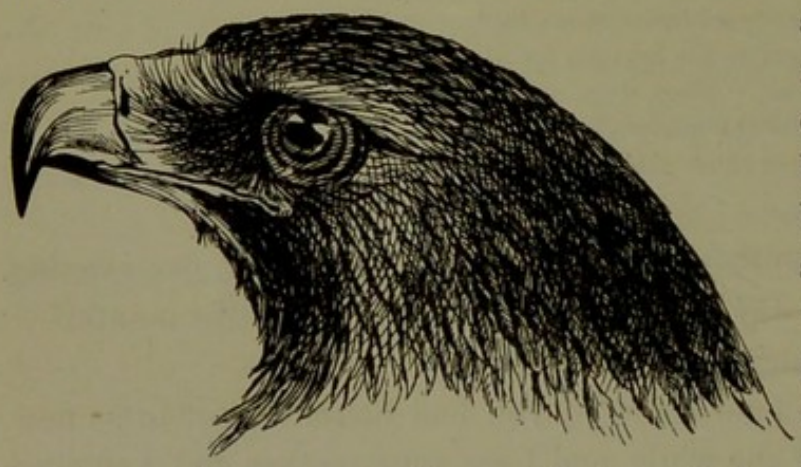
"I've a 'gossip' to send, please, Papa," said Lina.

"Oh ! very well. If I have not heard it, you had better read it to us now. Guy and I will do some netting the while, and I see your mother and Louis are going to draw ; so we are all ready to be silent and listen.

GWENDOLINE'S FOURTH GOSSIP.

Are you fond of birds, dear cousin ? If you keep any in cages, I think you must not say "yes" to the question ; because one cannot be cruel to anything one really loves, and to confine in a little, little prison creatures to whom God has given, as it seems, above all others of His glorious creations, the power of enjoying, and, I always think, the right to possess, the blessing of freedom, is so very sad, that I am sure no one would do it who honestly and humanely thought over, or tried to imagine, the amount of suffering which confinement must inflict on such beautiful, innocent things. A bird in a cage is so sorrowful a sight, that I wonder anyone can see it without pain. So I must take it for granted that you think as I do, and then you may like to know what little I can tell you about our feathered friends here.

I suppose his majesty the Eagle* claims first place. Mamma says she saw a Tasmanian eagle in the London Zoological Gardens, and that no other exceeded him in grand beauty. Of course I never saw any other, so cannot be a judge; but no representation we know of the eagles of other lands seems to convey an idea of their superiority to ours. Such a magnificent creature, with his proud head and peerless eyes! No other living thing has eyes approaching them in piercing, brilliant beauty. No wonder that he can look at the dazzling noonday sun. That they are fierce, despotic eyes, one cannot deny, but so wonderfully beautiful! Their power of sight, too, must be beyond anything we can realise, if it be true that, when soaring up so far away that the great birds are only discernible as small dark specks against the blue, they can distinguish their prey on the ground. And I love to watch them when, at a more moderate height, they circle slowly round and round in wide sweeps, gliding majestically along, and seeming scarcely to move a pinion. We do not often see them now. The royal birds have unfortunately a very bad reputation for killing lambs, and are consequently destroyed without mercy, and will, in all probability, soon be exterminated, like all other wild creatures here.



HEAD OF WEDGE-TAILED EAGLE. About one-fourth the natural size.

For a long time Papa refused to credit the stories of their lamb-killing, thinking, and wishing to prove, that they only came to feed on those already dead; but even he has been reluctantly convinced of their guilt. Sometimes, too, they seem to aim at far larger prey, as several singular but perfectly true incidents bear witness.

Once, on the farm of an old friend of Papa's, a favourite mare, placed alone in a small paddock of good grass, was seen wildly galloping round and round for so long a time that her master went to discover the cause, and then first observed two eagles following her, flying low, and almost brushing the terrified animal with their wings, and keeping steadily on their course just beside or over her. The mare, covered with foam and sweat, her eyes bloodshot and starting with intense terror, was evidently almost spent, and even after the

* Wedge-tailed Eagle—*Aquila fucosa* (Gould). *Aquila audax.*

eagles were scared away, was long in recovering from her terrible fright. At another place, some big yearling cattle were driven and frightened in exactly the same way by a pair of eagles, and Papa says that most probably, when the mare or the calves had sunk down exhausted, the eagles would have alighted, attacked and killed them; or, what I am sorry to say is even more likely, would have begun their savage feast ere the quivering life was extinct.

A farmer near, whose land lay chiefly on an open plain, only divided by fences of posts and rails, had a large number of pigs running out, principally sows with litters, from which the eagles used to take thirty or forty in a season, and might frequently be observed sitting on the fences, seven or eight at a time, watching their victims; and from their being able to see any person approaching from a long distance, they kept too keen a "look-out" to be often shot. They would alight on the ground, and drive the little pigs apart from their mothers, who invariably showed fight; but whilst they were courageously facing one or two eagles, others pounced upon the poor little pigs, and carried them squeaking away. It was provoking enough for the owner's family at the house to see this tragedy enacted before their eyes, day after day. One evening, as was his custom, the farmer walked down to look after his pigs, carrying his gun, and as he walked eastward, and the sun was very low, his own long shadow stretched before him. Suddenly another shadow rapidly passed his feet, and, turning sharply to see what was coming, his broad straw hat was knocked off by an eagle swooping over him. Not waiting to raise his gun to his shoulder, he fired and the bird fell only a yard or two off.

"Ah!" said Guy, "and I remember another case of Mr. Eagle's clever shepherding. I saw our turkeys cutting about, in and out of the little wattles, where the cattle have grazed off all the lower boughs, and as I wondered what was up, I ran down to see. There, on the fence close by, sat one eagle, and another was on the ground dodging the turkeys through the trees in the direction of his mate. They meant having one apiece, I know. I had not a gun, or I could have shot both."

Not long ago, there was a very sensational picture in a colonial illustrated paper, representing a poor brush kangaroo attacked by a swarm of eagles; the artist seemed to have drawn as many as his paper would hold, and the account given by the person who saw the incident was very sad and shocking. We know that they do kill kangaroos, and there are stories told here about their

carrying away children; but I shall not repeat to you anything that we do not ourselves know to be absolutely *true.* Pray remember that.

Mamma and I one day saw the drollest and prettiest subject for a picture that you can imagine. It would have been a prize for Landseer, Herring, or Harrison Weir, that wonderful bird-painter. You see we are not without appreciation of art, even in our remote hermitage-home!

At that time we children had four pet lambs, whose poor mothers had died, and the forlorn little orphans had been rescued by our own good, dear nursery governess, who fed them with new milk from a bottle, and, when nicely washed and delicately white, they were adorned each with a ribbon round its neck. Guy's lamb was named Busy, and wore purple; mine was Frisky, and wore pink; Louey's was Pat, with green; and Frank's was named Sampson, with blue. This was an odd name, you will think, for a soft, weak little lamb; but when Frank was a little fellow, he was so fat and strong that he was in fun called Sampson, and when asked what name his lamb should have, he directly lisped, "Thamp'n."

Our pretty pets lived in the day-time in a nice field of clover and grass, very near the house, and from an upper window Mamma and I saw an eagle hover low down over them, and then alight on the ground in their midst. The innocent, silly things stood round, peering curiously with their pink faces, and only looking inquiringly at the strange intruder; but Sampson deported himself in a manner worthy of his name. He was just in front of the eagle, and rising erect, and standing on his funny hind legs, he *butted* at it! Instead of pouncing on our poor lamb at once, as we expected, the eagle just lifted his wings, and gave a hop backwards, as if in sheer amazement, when Sampson again butted its soft, white head against his breast. I waited to see no more, but shouted as loud as I could, tore downstairs, and over to the field, when, at sight of me, his majesty rose and soared off, leaving the four lambs staring after him.

I have seen looks of unbelief in the eyes of people to whom Mamma has described this scene; but, however extraordinary, *it is wholly and simply true.*

Papa says that ignorance was valour in Sampson's case, as assuredly as that want of presence of mind lost the amazed eagle a dainty dinner, and saved our lambs.

On two occasions our shepherds have brought to us eagles, which we have kept for a time, because the only alternative was captivity or death, and

Mamma could not utter the warrant for execution. One had been shot at and hurt slightly in one wing, and the other, a young one, had a wing naturally misshapen, and could not fly. The first lived for some time loose in the garden, and after a resolute fast of three weeks when first captured, he ate heartily of raw meat, liver, &c., every two or three days, till a stupid servant either really mistook him for a wild one, as he sat on a fence, or pretended he did, and shot him. The second, despite his inability to fly, was continually getting out over the high paling fence of the enclosure where he lived, and as it was out of the question to permit such a freebooter to be at large amongst lambs and poultry, very exciting and troublesome, not to say dangerous chases ensued when he was missed, and at last, his wing having become strong and useful, he got away altogether. As he sat on his usual perch in his own little domain, we could look closely at him and appreciate his noble beauty, and note the enormously powerful grip of his great feet with their long black talons. But no amount of delicate attentions in the way of food ever seemed to make him like or prefer any of us. The one expression of his wonderful eyes was, as we read it, sullen indignation and disdain. And I think, to tell the truth, that Mamma (and I am sure I) was glad when our grand, uncomfortable pet had gone his own way and escaped his impending doom.

Papa has only once seen an eagle's nest, and that was many years ago, in a tree growing out of a very steep, unfrequented hill-side. He looked in, and saw two young downy eaglets, that opened round eyes and wide beaks on hearing a noise, thinking, of course, that the old birds were bringing them food. He soon after visited the tree again, but the nest was empty. It was a very rough, untidy affair, made of large sticks, but smooth and soft within.

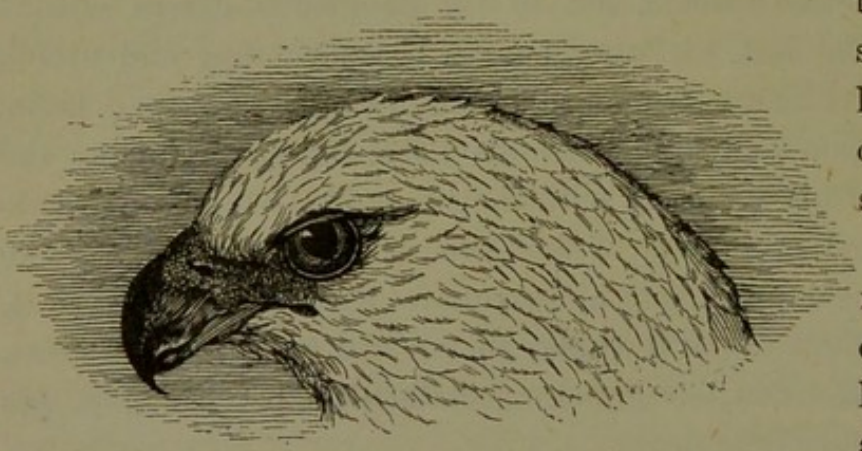
Many colonists call the eagle an "eagle-hawk," which is about as sensible and significant as if we said "goose-duck" when naming a goose.

The Sea Eagle,* sometimes known as the Fish Hawk, is, I think, as large and as lordly a bird as the former, and quite as rapacious, carrying off lambs, little pigs, or poultry with most provoking audacity. Aunt Anne and other people we know, who live near the coast, have lost the whole of several litters of pigs in one season; for the birds are so swift and wary, it is difficult to get a shot at them. They are by no means numerous, and usually build in inaccessible crags of high rocks, or trees on the summit of steep cliffs. The sea eagle's plumage is grey, with white breast; whilst the land bird is dark, sometimes nearly black.

* Sea Eagle—*Ichthyiaëtus leucogaster.*

"When I was at Aunt Anne's last year, and out fishing with Holdsworth," said Guy, "there came a sea eagle hovering quite near the boat, and all at once he swooped, and up he went again with a large fish in his hand—paws—claws, I mean. I always thought they caught prey in their beaks."

"No," said Mr. Merton, "I have often seen them carry off prey, but both those and the land eagles grip it in their talons. Not long ago, on the marshes, I saw a number of your mother's favourites, the blue cranes, and I also saw an eagle sitting on a tree near. Presently he flew down, seized a crane in one hand, as Guy calls it, and bore it back to the tree, where he perched with the disengaged *foot*—I should say—holding the limp, dead crane in the other. I did not stay to see him eat it."



Head of Sea Eagle. About one-fourth the natural size.

"And I did not finish my story, Papa. We went on fishing, and it was not long before the eagle came again as before, just hovering above, and again he made a grand swoop down to the water. When he rose, there was another fish in his grip. I saw him after—or one just like him—carry off a little pig in the same way out of the farmyard. Holdsworth knows of a sea eagle's nest in a great old blue gum-tree, that's been there ever so many years, and every year the birds make it up afresh, and bring new furniture, in the shape of sticks as thick as my arm or more, till, Holdsworth says, the whole concern would be a good dray-load."

I suppose hawks have even a stronger family likeness to one another than eagles. Our large Swamp Hawk* and the little Sparrow Hawk† also look very much like the birds we see in engravings and pictures of hawking; and if that picturesque but cruel sport were one of this century's colonial pastimes, our handsome birds could hold their own, methinks, with any in the world for beauty. What a prize our white hawk would have been in those old days! It would surely have been reserved for queenly wrists alone, with

* Brown Hawk—*Ieracidea berigora.* † Sparrow Hawk—*Accipiter torquatus.*

its plumage of exquisite spotless white, its only touches of colour being those superb eyes, with their irids of living amber, the black beak, shading off into yellow next the head, and the rugged tawny feet. I should think there cannot be a more symmetrical, perfect bird. Pity that one's admiration should be alloyed by fear that her glorious eyes have noted our brood of promising young turkeys, and that the foolish, helpless things may be picked up and carried away, one after another, to maintain that peerless form in good condition! Of course, hawks are shot at every opportunity, but they are as clever as they look, and I could not say more. The Crow* is their only rival in ability, and he is so nearly, if not exactly, the same as the English crow, that I need not further describe this very sly and sleek gentleman in black, whose adroitness in confiscating eggs, chickens, and young ducks must be seen and suffered from to be believed.

Our beautiful, beloved Magpie† is, I see, called by naturalists the "Piping Crow," so I conclude there must be cousinship between the black freebooter and our favourite, but their manners are widely different. The bright silver and jet plumaged magpie is innocent of all his relative's bad habits, and has besides the pleasant gift of a sweet, merry, carolling song, which we all particularly enjoy hearing. They come and sing on the grass-plot, as they pick up worms or grubs in the day-time, and on moonlight nights often awaken us by a serenade chorus under our windows. Mamma says some of their notes remind her of the English blackbird; and dear Mamma is so staunch in her love for all old-country recollections, it is a pity the magpies cannot understand how high a compliment is implied by the comparison.

We have often so far gained their confidence, that they would come when called, which we think is the most enjoyable way to have birds about us. They are very valuable on a farm, from the quantity of grubs and insects they pick up. If ploughing is going on, they follow closely in the furrow to seize their prey; and come so near to the spade, when any one they confide in is digging, as to seem in danger of being struck, though I dare say they keep too keen a watch to get hurt.

They are, more than any other birds here, cruelly victimised as (so-called) pets, and are often taught to say words and whistle bits of tunes not half so sweet and pleasing as their own cheerful songs, and most exasperating to hear, because they never finish a passage, but break off in the middle of a bar, with a

* Crow—*Corvus Australis* † Magpie—*Gymnorhina organicum.*

"*tra, la, la, la la, lee,*" put their heads knowingly on one side, and look as if they had achieved something particularly clever. Their plumage is about half-black and half-white, shining black satin and purest silvery snow, with the very neatest legs and feet possible; jet-black and *bien chaussee.*

Another bird, called here the Black Magpie,* has only a bar of white across the wing and tail feathers, and is a very different character altogether; very destructive in orchards and fruit-gardens, pecking and knocking down quantities of apples and pears, and eating cherries faster than a schoolboy! Three or four of them will soon strip a good-sized cherry tree; and they are so bold and impudent, that it is a difficult matter to scare them away. As fast as they are fairly hunted out of one tree, they assemble in the next, and will go on eating, even whilst a person is close to them; they will not *quite* let you put a hand on them, but very nearly. They have great strong beaks, and make an ugly squawking noise. I do not like them. In one orchard we knew they were shot in such numbers that the gardener used to collect them in barrow-loads. By burying them for some hours in the earth, to get rid of a peculiar odour they have, they are rendered fit to cook (being larger than pigeons), roasted, or in pies, or stewed. Papa is fond of them. I am not.

Very likely you have heard of the large kingfisher of New South Wales, which is generally called the laughing jackass; for all travellers in Australia mention it. We too have a "Jackass," a smaller bird, and not in any way remarkable, except for its merry gabbling sort of song; which, when several pipe up together, always gives one the idea of a party of very talkative people all chattering against time, and all at once.

Owls, like hawks, have a strong family likeness wherever they dwell, to judge from our books on natural history, and our large Owl† has the great broad face and peculiar eyes of the handsomest of the tribe. A very fine fellow he is indeed. Pallas Athene herself could not have possessed a more grave and sapient-looking familiar. It is now some years since we heard or saw one, or heard of one being seen. Although the services rendered by owls in catching mice and other vermin ought to win for them a safe-conduct everywhere, they, like every other creature, have been so wantonly destroyed by ignorant, stupid people, whose only impulse in the presence of bird or beast is to "kill—kill—kill," that they are now very rare.

---

* Black Magpie, Sooty Crow, Shrike—*Strepera fuliginosa* (Gould).

† Chestnut-faced Owl—*Strix castanops.*

Papa has told us that when he was a boy he had a young owl given to him, which he kept for some time. The mother-owl found him, and Papa used to see her bring to her captive nestling, mice, bandicoots, or other small animals every night, more than he could eat, until the son grew considerably bigger than his mother, and at last went off with her. An owl of the smaller species used to frequent our granary, and then a second—his mate, no doubt—came also, and they constantly went in and out by a broken pane in the window, finding plenty of sport, I daresay, among the pretty, mischievous little mice. Papa was very glad to have them about, and gave strict orders that neither they nor mope hawks should ever be killed.

Very likely, if these night-birds of prey had not been destroyed so wantonly, the rabbits would not have increased in our midland districts so as to cause great losses to sheep-owners, from their consumption of grass.

There is a smaller kind of Owl,* too, here, with bright piercing eyes and dark plumage. We once had one given to us, but all our kindness could not win his heart. He only made an angry "*chop-chop*" with his beak when we fed him, and would have bitten our fingers if he could reach them. So we gave him his liberty in the garden.

The Mope Hawk,† or "More Pork," is also a night-bird of prey, with brownish grey feathers of a peculiarly light, loose, gauzy texture, less smooth and compact than other birds, but seeming as though they must pass through the air the more noiselessly from their singular fluffiness, if I may use the word; and I really think the mope hawk's flight is even more absolutely soundless than the owl's. He is more like the English night-jar in countenance, with an enormous cavern of a mouth, that, when it opens, seems to lift the top of his head off. We had two young ones given to us, and were trying to feed them. Guy asked old Isaac if a whole mouse would not be too big for them to swallow; but Isaac's contemptuous reply was. "Too big?—not it. Try him with a hartichoke!"

They were a great trouble and distress to us in our endeavours to take proper care of them, and, as soon as they seemed able to do for themselves, were set at liberty in the granary, where there were plenty of mice.

The noise they make at night is a two-syllable cry like "maw-haw," which the early settlers familiarised into "more pork," and so gave that absurd name to the bird. It is a musical cry; and when several in different directions are

---

* Spotted Owl—*Athene maculata.* † Mope Hawk—*Podargus Cuvieri.*

calling and answering one another on a still night, we like very much to listen to them.

Another strange note sometimes, but now very rarely, heard at night is that of the Bittern;* a low, smothered *boom*—the word exactly expresses it. I believe ours is very like the bittern of Europe, a large, noble bird, with a fine eye, and a beautiful fringe of yellowish-brown feathers down his neck. They are very shy, solitary birds, frequenting the tall rushes and reeds on the borders of lagoons and rivers, where they can hide from sight during the day.

In quiet nooks of the river, where our pretty little native trout† play in the sunny shallows, we sometimes see one, or a pair, of handsome Kingfishers‡ watching and fishing. If a ray of sunshine gleams across their radiant blue and chestnut-coloured plumage, the bright spot shines like a jewel in the picture.

I suppose the Crane§ may be considered a relation of the bittern, though so much smaller and slighter. How appropriate is the French name of "demoiselle," given by their old naturalists to this pretty bird, in her dress of soft silvery bluish grey, with her graceful head and dainty gait, as she picks her way amongst the shallows of river or lagoon, looking so elegant and delicate, but snapping up the poor little fish or frogs with the neatest dexterity all the while. Once only we saw a purely white crane, as beautiful and perfect as the white hawk; "a demoiselle in her bridal dress," Mamma said.

---

* Bittern—*Botaurus Australis.*

† *Salmo Thymallus.*

‡ *Alcyone Diemenensis.*

§ Crane—*Ardea Novæ Hollandiæ.*



CHAPTER XIX.

GWENDOLINE'S GOSSIP *(Continued).*

"It may be very agreeable to read the descriptions of birds by naturalists, with all their long Latin names; but give me a quiet nook to watch them in on a fine summer's day. Their free and frolicsome motions, their glancing colours, their voices more expressive of joy, of life, of spirit, and of passion than any Latin; their habits and ways of living, all peculiar to themselves—this is a treat and a lesson indeed in natural history. I have thus seen the parrots in the Australian woods making the dusky gum-trees all alive."—MARY HOWITT.

THE parrot tribe contains the birds that are most common here; all so pretty, but some of them very destructive. The White Cockatoo* is unknown in our part of the country, but in the north they are, or used to be, much too abundant, coming down in flocks on newly-sown fields of grain, and picking out the seed. They are exceedingly "knowing" and wary, and have sentinels always posted aloft in trees, to give warning of danger to the marauders on the ground, so that shooting them is not by any means an easy achievement.

Their exquisitely white plumage has not any gloss or silvery shimmer on it, like that of the crane or magpie, but is like fruit with the bloom on, always covered with a fine soft powder, that leaves white marks on one's hands when stroking it, or on any dark part of dress it touches. At a friend's house where we were visiting, a tame cockatoo was so fond of Mamma, that the black velvet gown she usually wore was half grey with white bloom off Cocky's feathers. The beautiful crest and part of the tail are a lovely lemon-yellow, and the droll, sly, saucy expression the bird assumes when in a playful mood, rapidly erecting and depressing this top-knot, as if to point some particular remark, as it dances and frisks about, is very diverting. We never kept one tame, but have been on intimate terms with several belonging to friends, which are certainly most amusing and engaging pets, and *seem* happy in captivity, so long as the

---

* White Cockatoo—*Cacatua galerita.*

persons they are fond of will notice and talk to them; but they often look piteously sad, as they sit neglected on the perch, to which they are usually fastened by a long light chain. Although as tame and gentle as household cats, they unfortunately cannot always be trusted at liberty to follow their own devices, as these, it is found, usually result in the destruction of any article of furniture they may take the fancy to bite in pieces, for their strength of beak is wonderful, often serving them to get free from their iron fetters in an almost incredible manner. Much as we all like these clever creatures, we cannot feel happy or justified in keeping one under the restraint that is necessary.

They learn to talk well; but if there *should* be the possibility of their hearing objectionable words, those always seem to be acquired more readily than polite phrases, and are sure to be uttered at the most unsuitable times, causing shame and horror unspeakable to prim or pious owners, who may be quite unconscious of the extent of Cocky's vocabulary; and frequently a speech is brought out with such quaint and marvellous fitness to the occasion, that it is impossible not to believe it is uttered with understanding. A friend of ours has a very clever bird, which had one day sat mute, motionless, and unnoticed during a lady's long visit and prosy talk. At length she rose to go, when Cocky suddenly woke up, raised his top-knot, and danced about in delight, crying, with a *crescendo* expression—"Good-bye! *Good-bye!* GOOD-BYE! Hooray!"

Mamma many times tried to make a sketch of him, as he sat on his perch in the garden; but however sedate and still he had been before, the instant he caught a glimpse of Mamma and her book, he began to dance, cough, chatter, and frisk about, so that she could not catch him in the same attitude two seconds together. The pretty way he holds out his hand to a friend, mutely asking to be taken on to theirs, and his softly murmured "Kiss Cocky, kiss poor Cocky," as he nestles affectionately up to one's face, are quite touching. But he can scream and scold too! Their natural utterance is a very shrill, loud screech, which, given by a bird at your ear, is painfully piercing.

Papa once saw a very accomplished cockatoo in Melbourne, of the same kind as the last-mentioned one, but unfortunately the bird was not in the mood to exhibit his acquirements. Vainly his mistress coaxed and caressed him—"Do sing, Cocky; dear Cocky, please sing!" to which Cocky plainly and rudely replied, "I shan't. Sing yourself!" and when Papa also entreated, he turned sharply upon him with "You 're mad!" and then obstinately continued silent.

I think the happiest, certainly the most independent cockatoo I ever knew, was one belonging to Mr. Graham, of the Mail-coach Office, Hobart. It was

always at liberty, and used to fly down into town with its master in a morning, sit on roof, balcony, or lamp-post, or walk about the pavement near the office, all day, sometimes playing with Mr. Graham's dogs, or accepting very affably the attentions of passers-by. We always stayed for a talk with him when in town. In the evening, when his master usually went to the post-office at the time the mail started, Cocky would accompany him, and perch himself aloft as usual, with as wise and profoundly important an air as though he himself were contractor for the transit of all Her Majesty's mails in Australia. When the business was over, and the mail gone, Cocky flew home with his master.

I think the whole town lamented the death of this happy and popular bird. He had flown with Mr. Graham a little distance into the country, and was by him left for a short time, sitting in a tree. When his master returned, Cocky seemed ill and dispirited, and not long afterwards died. Clever though he was, poor bird! he could not relate what had happened to him, and I believe it was never known.

Another cockatoo in Hobart, that was allowed the enjoyment of his liberty, lived opposite a house where we lodged for some time, and Mamma, who I think could no more help taking notice of a bird than I could of a baby, soon made friends with him; and I have often seen her sorely puzzled how to coax him back into his tree, after he had taken possession of her hand or shoulder; for the moment he saw her crossing over to talk to him, he would come quickly down from the topmost bough of the tree to meet her, and talk to her in a soft, confidential sort of murmur, that seemed to say all manner of loving things. This cockatoo was taken to England some years ago, and we heard had been given to H.R.H. the Prince of Wales.

The native food of the white cockatoo in a wild state consists chiefly of the bulbs of small species of orchids, for the digging up of which the long upper mandible is well adapted. Large colonies of them annually frequent a range of white cliffs on the Murray river, South Australia, which are honeycombed by their nests.

We do not know an instance of the Black Cockatoo* having been kept tame. They feed chiefly, if not entirely, on grubs, which they get out of the trees, often tearing away masses of bark and wood to get at them; and such food could not be obtained for them in captivity, whilst the grain-eating white cockatoo is easily provided for with wheat, seeds, bread, and fruit; but it should

* Black Cockatoo—*Calyptorhynchus Xanthonotus.*

be carefully kept from any sort of meat and butter, as such diet will disorder the poor bird, and cause it to peck out its own feathers, and become a miserable, unsightly object.

The black cockatoos are very handsome, large birds, with the same primrose-coloured trimmings on their sable plumage as the others wear on their white garb; and it is very amusing to watch a party of them either at work or at play, or, as it generally appears, doing a little at both. They talk to each other in varied, and, as it seems, most significant tones, as some work away with their powerful beaks, tearing out great pieces of wood (till large heaps lie round the foot of the tree) to reach the fat white grubs they are so fond of; and others, wholly devoted for the time being to polite conversation and elegant deportment, sidle up and down the branches, bow, curtsey, advance and retire, and go through more graceful and entertaining antics than I could describe in a week. The elevation and depression of those wonderfully expressive top-knots is a grand feature in the performance, and when one can get near enough to enjoy a good view of it, I know nothing more pretty, curious, or amusing. I think Mamma would be content to sit motionless all day, watching them. She says they absolutely fascinate her.

When flying from place to place, they utter a loud screaming noise. We sometimes hear it high overhead, and count them as they fly, usually an odd number—five, seven, or perhaps thirteen; but we do not see them nearly so often as formerly. I am sorry so continually to repeat the same sad fact, that all our native creatures are diminishing and disappearing fast. The black cockatoos are perfectly harmless, neither touching seed, ripe crops, nor fruit; and as for the holes they make in the gum-trees, I think the settlers should be much obliged to them for assisting in the destruction they all carry on so vigorously themselves.

I do not know how many of the smaller kinds of parrots we have in Tasmania; and as all have long tails, I suppose they are really parroquets. There is the Blue Mountain Parrot,* with a good deal of green and yellow in his plumage as well; and the rare and beautiful Ground Parrot,† green, barred with black.

"Ah! but none of us have ever seen it," said Guy.

"I have," said Mr. Merton; "but not for many years now."

---

* Mountain Parrot—*Trichoglossus Swainsonii.* † Ground Parrot—*Platycercus flaviventris.*

Two or three other common kinds, chiefly green and blue, and the Rose-hill Parrot,* a most brilliant creature—a blaze of the brightest colours all together—scarlet and yellow head and neck, green back, purple and blue wings. I wish you could see a party of them, as they climb about the garden in the autumn sunshine, picking seeds, with all their quaint, droll attitudes showing off their brave attire.

"London sparrows *would* look dingy beside *them!*" interrupted Guy.

I never knew these so numerous as to do much harm, but the kind we call the Common Parrot is a dreadful pest, tearing corn stacks in holes, and pulling off the thatch so as to let in the wet, and when the corn is ripe in the fields they commit great devastation. For several years they took all our gooseberries; we had enough good bearing bushes to supply the table abundantly, make plenty of jam, and several casks of wine, yet all we really had for our own share was a couple of pies! Before they were worth picking, those wicked parrots destroyed the whole, and left heaps of the seeds and refuse under every tree. Shooting a few dozen seemed not to make the slightest difference in the swarms that descended on the garden; whilst the trees of a neighbour only a mile or two away escaped altogether, not having been discovered by our robbers. Raspberries and currants also suffered, but not to the same extent.

"Some one told me lately," said Mr. Merton, "that if the very first two or three parrots which come to a crop of fruit are shot, it is an effectual check to the invasion; but, as we have sadly proved, it is all but useless to begin shooting when the main body of the army has established itself in good quarters. We must try this preventive another year."

The smallest of our Parroquets† are the most lovely, delicate little birds, with plumage of the most vivid velvety green, just touched with coral-red and purple. They are easily tamed, or are tame naturally, becoming familiar as soon as taken, if young; and are very docile and engaging. But they rarely exist more than a year in their new artificial life, although most others of the parrot family are long-lived.

At two different times we have had one as a pet, but not in a cage. Both

* Rose-hill Parrakeet—*Platycercus eximius.* † Swift Parrakeet—*Lathamus discolor.*

would climb up our dresses and sit on our shoulders or heads, if permitted; run about and play with trifles on the table, such as thimbles or cotton-reels, just like kittens; or strip a pin-cushion of needles and pins with quiet, persevering determination. Often they went into ecstasies of fun, scuffling, chattering, and throwing themselves on their backs on the floor; the favourite place for this violent performance being where the window-curtains touched the carpet. We were warned that "some day" they would die in fits after such play; and after that we never allowed it to go on long, but it was very droll to see. They delighted in running about the table at tea or breakfast, going from one place to another to be fed with cake or sweets, and all our vigilance was needed to prevent them from eating butter. If taken away from anything they wanted, they would scold angrily, slip from our hands, and fly back to the very dish we had taken them from, very much like naughty, spoiled children. At dinner-time they were put in another room. They used to go with us into the garden and suck honey from the flowers with evident enjoyment, and often pulled our room-bouquets to pieces, nibbling the flowers that had honey in them. We fed them with bread and honey, sugar and fruit, and both were plump and in perfect plumage, evidencing excellent health. They do not learn to talk: their flight is very rapid, whence they are called the swift parroquet.

Our first of these exquisite little pets died in a kind of convulsion, and the second was, to our great grief, accidentally drowned.*

We never had a tame rose-hill parrot, but have seen many. Some of them learned to talk a little, and they live to a considerable age.

Another bird which often becomes very much attached to individuals is the lovely Bronze-wing Pigeon.† But these invariably meet a sad end. All we have known as pets (we never had one ourselves) have been shot in mistake for wild ones, because they will fly any distance, if their owner allows their companionship when he rides or walks out; and so they fall victims to their bold fidelity, and to the universal thirst for destruction. I do not think any of the pigeon or dove family can be more beautiful than this; it has such a sweet head, and such exquisitely-shaded plumage, with those radiant, jewel-like feathers on the wings, shining in the richest iridescent hues. I often think it quite a pity it should be eatable; although the fact of *not* being good to eat does not suffice to save many other birds.

---

* Its history was told in "Loved and Lost," by the writer. Day & Sons. 1861.

† Bronze-wing Pigeon—*Phaps calcoptera.*

There is a pretty bird, too, called the Ground Dove,* that we generally know as the "*rut-a-tut-tut*" bird, from the sound of the loud, rapid flutter it makes in rising on the wing when approached.

Quail are becoming very scarce; more, Papa thinks, from the increased number of English cats gone wild, which are so especially destructive to them, than from what he calls "fair shooting." Snipe we have not seen nor heard of near us for years, although they, like the quail, were formerly abundant.

The pretty, graceful Wattle-birds† are, unluckily for them, poor things, much esteemed for the table, cooked as snipe and woodcocks are in England. The great quantities shot every winter are fast reducing their numbers, and in many places where they once abounded they are now rare. I suppose you never saw a bird with ear-rings on? But our pretty elegant wattle-bird wears a pair of long pendant drops, shaded from the deepest amber to white, lovelier than any goldsmith's work. Its greyish plumage, too, is very beautiful; the feathers on the breast are long, pointed, and tinted with golden yellow.



WATTLE-BIRDS.

The Summer-bird is always welcome, as you may believe; its appearance, like that of your English cuckoo, being accepted as the harbinger of pleasant weather, and the time of roses. It is graceful in form, and wears a garb of the loveliest silver-grey, with a hood or opera-cap of black velvet. We have not an intimate acquaintance with it, but are always rejoiced to see the one or two usually visible at a time, flying along, or resting on high trees. Its song is a clear whistle of two or three notes, repeated at short intervals.

It may seem odd to you that, in this comparatively small island, there should be birds as well as flowers which, whilst they abound in some localities,

* Ground Dove—*Phaps elegans.* † Wattle-bird—*Anthochæra inauris.*

are nearly unknown in others not far distant, and which appear to us to possess the same natural characteristics. In most parts of Tasmania, the Miners * are troublesomely abundant, as their ravages in our cherry-trees at former homes have evinced; but where we now are, not a miner has been seen or heard in our time. They are the most active, bustling, chattering creatures imaginable; and in spite of their fruit-stealing propensities, I think we rather miss the long-familiar cry, which sounds very like "*Thief! thief! thief!*" Sportsmen dislike them very much, for, in the performance of their self-assumed duties as general busy-bodies and Paul Prys, the miners are always the first to detect the presence of any intruder, whether armed or pacific; and their quick cries and fussy demeanour—for they assemble in a fluttering, chattering mob over any suspicious object—frequently give the alarm in time for the otherwise doomed game to escape; and when a gentleman has been patiently crawling on his waistcoat for a score or two of yards through a wet swamp to get a shot at ducks, I suppose it must be a little exasperating to hear the miner's shrill warning overhead, which disperses the flock in all directions. Sometimes they assist *us*, as frequently, when a chicken-stealing crow or hawk is pursued, and takes refuge in a thick tree, a crowd of miners flutter and chatter round, till they attract attention, and the marauder is shot in consequence; so that we cannot attribute their love of interference to purely philanthropic or neighbourly intentions, and can only set them down as most inveterate gossips and busy-bodies.

"Worse than that sometimes, Lina," said Mr. Merton. "I remember, a good while ago, having fired at and wounded a wattle-bird, which dropped among some bushes. I loaded my gun again, and then went to pick up the bird. I heard the cry of the miner as I advanced, and soon found my wattle-bird trying to get away from a miner, which was holding on by one foot to a low tree, and grasping the wounded wattle-bird fast in the other, till I took it from him, and he then flew away. I recollect telling your mamma of the incident when I came home, for it struck me as very curious; nor can I now in any way account for the action of the miner, nor what prompted him to do duty as my 'retriever.'"

"Except," said Mrs. Merton, "that habit of busy interference, which appears to be the ruling impulse of their lives. I have so often watched them. No

* Miner—*Myzantha garrula.*

matter what is doing within reach of miners, they must have, as we say, 'a finger in the pie.' I know they will attack and torment wounded or helpless birds; and when there is nothing else to do, they are incomparable at 'nagging.'"

The miner's plumage is shaded grey, touched with black and yellow about the pert, pretty head. They build a cup-shaped nest, the size of an English thrush's, of fine twigs and grass.

CHAPTER XX.

GWENDOLINE'S GOSSIP *(Concluded).*

ALLEGRO.

How pleasant the life of a bird must be,
Flitting about in each leafy tree;
In the leafy trees so broad and tall,
Like a green and beautiful palace-hall
With its airy chambers light and boon,
That open unto sun and stars and moon—
That open unto the bright blue sky,
And the frolicsome winds as they wander by.

MARY HOWITT.

PENSEROSO.

How dreary the life of a bird must be,
Shut in from the sun, the breeze, the tree!
Captive and caged in a dull, close room,
Far from forest and fragrant bloom!
Swift wings cramped up in a prison small,
Quick ears unblessed by a kindred call;
Lonely and desolate, sad to see—
How wretched the captive bird must be!

L. A. M.

I HAVE written all this long letter, and have not yet mentioned the darling *little* birds, of which we are all so fond; and which, besides being so exquisitely beautiful, do us such good service by destroying insects and grubs of all kinds, that, without such sharp eyes and adroit beaks to keep them in check a little, would ruin all our gardens and desolate our cornfields. As Papa always says, "The little birds would do remarkably well without us, but we could not live without the little birds." It would be quite natural for us to like and preserve any *ugly* things which were of so much service, but how good and Divine seems the ordination that it shall be rendered to us by creatures of such surpassing

beauty! Surely, if people would only think of the Creator's mercy and beneficence, and how He must love the beings He has so adorned and perfected for use and beauty, and their own and our delight, there would be more pains taken to prevent their destruction! I wish all children were taught this as we have been, and knew how immeasurably greater pleasure there is found in being kind and loving to God's dumb creation, than in habitual carelessness or wanton cruelty.

Mamma says that our robin and the blue-cap have been described again and again, but to omit them from even my little gossip cannot be thought of; so you can only "skip" the next page or two if you know all I can tell you.

The Robin* is, Mamma says, certainly more brilliantly beautiful than his English namesake, the

"Russet bird with bosom red."

Black, red, and white are the colours of his dress, worn with perfect taste. The black is shining jet, the red, fire, and the white, snow. There is a little white spot on his tiny black-velvet cap, a white bar across his pretty wings, and his breast is a living flame of rosy, vivid scarlet. We have one especially favourite robin now, who has become, of his own accord, very confiding and familiar, and whenever we are working in the garden, he comes to look for his usual dole of grubs. When we find a good one, we call to him, and fling the grub high up in the air. Often, before it falls to the ground, a flash goes past, and Robin has the grub in his beak. Usually he flies on to the fence, or a fruit-tree bough, or a spare spade or fork stuck erect, and sits there to discuss the delicate morsel, always knocking it well about before eating it. Sometimes, probably when the hen is sitting or the young ones are hatched, Robin flies straight away with his beakful, and soon comes again for more. The quantity of fat, white earth-grubs he will dispose of in a short time is really astonishing. Often he startles us by darting down close to our feet, or spade, to pick up some small thing we should never discover. And with this unceasing vigilance, only imagine the swarms of insects which even one little bird must destroy in a year!

There are, I believe, several varieties of the robin here, but our familiar favourite is the only one we know well. The hen-bird is less showy in plumage than her brilliant mate. They make a beautiful little nest in a fork or hollow of a tree—a compact structure of dry grasses, moss, lichen, narrow threads of bark, and other vegetable fibres, knitted and bound together with cobwebs, and

* *Petroica multicolor.*

softly lined with feathers, wool, and hair, and sometimes with opossum-fur entirely.

We call the female of the Blue Wren* Jenny, she looks so like the little birds in the children's story-book, and wears just such a "brown gown" as Jenny did, very quiet and sober, so far as colour goes; whilst her mate, during spring and summer, flits about in raiment dazzling to behold, of gorgeous kingfisher blue, set off by velvety black. After his young ones appear, as though the cares of a family impressed him with more serious thoughts than his own elaborate toilette, Mr. Blue-cap also puts on a greyish-brown coat, and is no longer readily distinguished from the rest of the active, busy-like group that hop about the garden and shrubs with such ubiquitous celerity, flirting and frolicking, and cocking those funny little tails of theirs straight up, and even their heads, in all sorts of queer, quaint, rapid evolutions, and singing the while the sweetest, smallest little song you ever heard.

Until we learned the fact of his change of plumage, we often lamented the disappearance, and, as we feared, the death, of the head of the family, taxing our demure cats with wicked deeds of which they were not guilty. Mr. and Mrs. Blue-cap make a dainty little nest, generally in some low bush or a tuft of grass, and weave it with leaves and grass, and line it with feathers or fur.

I am half afraid you will laugh at my praise of our birds; but really, as I think of one after another, each seems more beautiful than the last.

The minute and delicate pencilling of the Firetail's† plumage is as soft and exquisite as that of a butterfly's wing, each tiny grey or olive-coloured feather barred across with wavy hues of a darker shade. Beneath, and on the head and wings, is a little black, and the back, above the tail, is deep fiery crimson, seen most plainly when the wings are spread in flying. If they were night-birds, we might fancy them Titania's torch-bearers.

Some humane, gentle friends of ours kept a pair of fire-tails as tame pets. A cage was their nightly abode and protection; but they, like our own parroquets, were accustomed to play about the room at liberty, and it was a great delight to watch their pretty, graceful antics as they flew or ran everywhere without the least fear, perching on chairs and tables, and peering about inquisitively, quite at their ease. A bit of thread a foot or two long, dropped on the floor, attracted them at once. Both would pounce upon it, each

* *Malurus longicaudus*—Blue Wren (formerly "Superb Warbler").

† *Estrelda Bella*—Fire-tailed Finch.



PLATE IV. CHAP. 7.

trying to pull it from the other; and the chirp, and flutter, and tussle that then began, used to send us into fits of laughter. To see such tiny things in a state of such intense fuss and excitement was irresistibly droll. Giving them two pieces of thread spoiled the game, unless they got entangled. The enjoyment was evidently not in the possession of the piece of thread, but in the contest to obtain it.

"A condition of mind by no means limited to fire-tails," said Mrs. Merton.

Their nests are usually grouped together, several in one tree; and, judging from what we know of their manners in human society, so many of these lively little birds living in close neighbourhood must form a very busy, animated community. The nests are large in proportion to the size of the birds, being as much as ten inches across, and formed entirely of grasses and stalks of plants.

The Diamond-birds * are daintily finished specimens of bird-plumage too. The clearness of their yellow and olive tints is enhanced by small, well-defined round white spots, more, I think, like seed-pearls than diamonds; only, I suppose, the exceeding loveliness of the tiny creature seemed to ask of its discoverer to be the namesake of the most precious of gems. We only know them from rare and rapid glimpses in their native state.

"I remember how one frightened Papa," said Louis. "We saw a little hole in a steep bank, and Papa knelt down to peep into it, and had just said, 'I believe it 's a snake's hole,' when, like a shot out of a gun, a diamond-bird flew out almost in his face. Papa jumped up *very* quick; he *was* frightened. Now were you not, Papa?"

"I confess it," said Mr. Merton, laughing. "I've seldom been more startled, for the moment. I was not thinking of anything but snakes in connection with the hole, quite forgetting that the delicate little diamond-birds make subterranean abodes also."

An elegantly-shaped honey-eating bird, called the Spine-bill,† of the same form as several kinds of humming-birds, but larger, is a very frequent visitor to our flowers. Its plumage is of grey, brown, and yellow, in lovely combinations, with a mark on the throat like a long beard. The long, slender beak and

* *Pardalotus punctatus.* † *Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris.*

pencil-like tongue are beautifully adapted for sucking honey. A large tree, of the small red fuchsia, which grows by my bedroom window, and is in blossom most of the year, is a favourite haunt for them; and as some of the branches stretch across the window, we within the room can observe the birds perfectly, as they throw themselves into a thousand graceful and queer attitudes to reach the flower-bells with their pencil-tongues. If the theory were true about the transmigration of souls, I should think these pretty honey-birds had been acrobats in a former existence, and their favourite position still is topsy-turvy, putting their heads in exactly the attitudes which seem most impracticable, as they hold on above with their clever, slender little feet, and get beneath the flowers they want to suck; but so quick are they, that our eyes are too slow to mark half their fantastic motions. Perhaps, instead of acrobats, they were once conjurors, clever in legerdemain. In obtaining the honey out of the flowers of a large Abutilon, which grows by our porch, they do not give themselves the trouble of reaching up the deep bells, but just perch on the flower-stem, and insert their sharp bills between the sepals of the calyx, right into the flower-tube. I have often seen them do it, and wonder how they found out such an ingenious "short cut" to the honey-cells.



SLENDER-BILLED SPINE-BILLS, on a spray of Abutilon. About one-third the natural size.

"By that marvellous faculty which we generalise under the name of 'instinct,'" said Mrs. Merton; "but of the range and extent of which we are profoundly ignorant. The Abutilon is not an indigenous plant here, and the birds in a purely wild state would never have met with it, so that the occasion and the device are both original; and the latter looks very much like reason, and a wise way of utilising a knowledge of cause and effect."

Some little birds, whose voices are very familiar to us, I do not yet know by sight. They say, as we fancy, some words quite plainly. Papa first noticed one of them when, one day, he was looking about for a fallen tree to serve him for a foot-bridge over a flooded rivulet, and the bird overhead continued crying, "Get over! get over!" and following from place to place as Papa kept searching along the bank, and so ever since we have called it the "Get-over bird." Another we distinctly heard calling, "Kitty wick! kitty wick! kitty wick!" whilst a third, perhaps Kitty herself, indignant at so public a repetition of her name, pertly asks, "Who are you?"

The pretty little White-eye* is, I think, the most defiant of all our bird visitors. Virtuously devoted to the destruction of insects for a great part of the year, and so our creditor for a share of the good things his vigilance has secured to us, he sometimes comes to reap his harvest with so numerous a "following" of his kind, that in some, but I must say very rare, seasons he is a little exorbitant in his demands. One year they appropriated nearly the whole of our sweet-water grapes along the terrace wall, coming in such swarms, and showing such astute generalship in the disposition of their forces, as baffled all pacific resistance; and we attempted no other. Eight or ten would cling to one bunch, making it, to all seeming, a cluster of birds instead of grapes, just pecking perhaps a third of each berry, and leaving the rest to waste and shrivel. We might quietly go and stand closely watching them, and only the glance of their saucy eyes betrayed their knowledge of our presence. If shouted at, and really scared for the time, they rose in scores, and flew round the corner, where they sat and chattered in a pear-tree till the coast was clear, when back they came again. Hoping to save some of the grapes in another garden, Mamma sent to get them picked; but here the little marauders had been still less disturbed, and the destruction was the more complete. A great basket of empty stalks was all we gained by the picking. We tried netting, but the bold nimble little birds darted through the meshes with perfect self-possession and success. So we began to despair of profiting much from our grapes, unless, in patriarchial fashion, we were to go and live under our vines whilst the fruit was on. For two subsequent years, however, the vines were left wholly unmolested by the white-eyes; and then, as if to punish us for begrudging so large a share as had once been claimed by them, *oidium*, that horrible scourge, took possession of the whole.

In addition to all our very own little birds, we share with you the pleasure

* *Zosterops dorsalis.*

of welcoming the swallows in spring, and are as fond of them as you can be. Papa is so afraid lest our cats should catch the young ones, when they first begin to fly from the nests under the verandah, that he put up some light rails, quite high up, just opposite the nests, for them to sit on, and there we can watch them—droll, round little things!—just able to balance themselves, and sitting with continually opened beaks, waiting for the busy, indefatigable old birds to feed them in turn. As soon as they are able to fly so far, the whole family go down to the river for a bathe, and then there is a long toilet performance gone through on the rail, as the wet feathers are preened and plumed in the sun. The old ones often fly into the rooms after flies. Once, as Mamma and I sat reading, we heard a faint chirping and fluttering, and for some time could not trace whence it came. At last we found that there was a bird down behind one of Papa's large heavy book-cases which filled a recess, and we were unable to get at it in any other way than by the removal of all the books, and lifting out the top and bottom sets of shelves. But we could not leave the poor bird to flutter to death, so we at once began, and soon had the tables and floor covered with books, much to Papa's astonishment when he came in. But the moment we told him, and he heard the poor faint little chirp, he helped us famously; and as he moved the cases away, a panting swallow flew out, and lit on the table, as if to recover itself, and then darted off through the window.

On one of our pleasant expeditions to the Schoutens, we saw a swallow's nest in a most singular place, and such a snug one! Many of the granite rocks there are shaped very fantastically; some of the great crags on the mountain sides are at a little distance so like towers and castles, obelisks and pinnacles, that it is difficult to believe they have not been built there by a race of bygone Titans; and the huge boulders, apparently worn by the long action of water into grotesque shapes, imitate all kinds of odd things. Near a bright brook, beside which we one day had our picnic luncheon, were many of these; one was like an enormous skull, but many times larger than the Megatherium's, and beside it was another, the shape of a lady's muff—only Glumdalclitch herself could not carry one of the size. And as we sat by the stream, we watched the numbers of swallows that were busy catching insects, or skimming and dipping in the water. One pair we saw always flying in and out of the granite muff, and when we scrambled up and looked inside the great round hollow, we saw the nest, high up above the entrance—for the hole was like a cavern—quite lofty within; so you may think what a sheltered, safe, cosy home the wise little birds had fixed upon.

I think I have now told you about most of the land birds here which are familiar in our daily life, and were I to extend my gossip to others with which we are not familiar, and go to books for memoirs of them, my gossip would be too long altogether; for talking or reading about beautiful creatures is very different from seeing and knowing them.

You had better come to us for a year's visit before all the native things are killed, and then you will think I have not said half enough of their beauty and interest.

CHAPTER XXI.

"Fresh fields, and pastures new."

AT the earnest desire of her husband, who thought that a little change of scene would be beneficial after the dreary winter, Mrs. Merton accepted the oft-repeated invitation of some friends, residing at the distance of a day's journey from her own home, to spend a week or two, taking with her Gwendoline and Winifred.

Mr. Merton drove them over in the tandem-cart, as no public conveyance had been established, nor were the roads such as to encourage an enterprise of the kind. In even using the word "road," I fear I may mislead my English readers; for unless they happen to be acquainted with some of the most remote and uncivilised corners of Great Britain, they will fail to realise what even the best of colonial bush tracks really are. If a high rocky mountain lie in the route to be traversed, the "road" usually goes over the summit, or as near to it as may be practicable; the utmost essay in road-making being usually the rolling aside just the largest of the rocks upon it, and leaving anything smaller than a hogshead as a trifle not worth noticing. If a swamp chance to intervene, it generally spreads over some acres, affording what can scarcely be termed a choice of evils, but certainly a wide selection as to the particular portion of the evil in question which shall be navigated; and it often happens, that after successive teams have made circuits wider and wider in extent, in the fallacious hope that such "circular sailing" would enable them to escape the deepest of the slough, the desperate travellers try back, and plunge straight through the midst, sometimes sticking fast, but more generally dragging through, to the sore suffering of their unhappy cattle.

A lady was one day telling our then Governor, Sir Thomas Gore Browne, of what she termed "a very bad road."

"A bad road," rejoined he. "Can ten bullocks pull a cart through it?"

She thought they could.

"Ah, then," replied the Governor, laughing, "it's not a bad road. We used to consider any road in New Zealand a good one that ten bullocks could pull through."

In some districts of our island the municipal road trusts have done good service in the improvement of country ways by bridging dangerous fords and by avoiding the worst mountain passes. But in many cases, ignorance of the simplest principles of surveying or engineering is but too evident, and the expenditure of the small disposable funds, with all but useless result, is the outcome.

Our friends could have sadly verified these observations as they pursued their journey. The destructive floods of the past winter had rendered even "made" roads worse than those left in primitive bush condition. In one place, where the road wound terrace-wise round the steep side of a mountain above a deep wooded ravine, in the bottom of which flowed a river, the outer portion of the road, built up of rocks and stones, was washed down, leaving a space something less in places than the width of the cart-wheels; and on reaching it, Mr. Merton set down his passengers to walk, he and Lina carefully leading the horses over the dangerous ground, which extended a quarter of a mile or more. In another, a causeway of earth, with the road on the top, had been thrown up across a wide marsh, leaving a small bridged opening for the usual river, but making no allowance for the enormous additional volume of water which covered the whole valley during floods. Accordingly, as a natural consequence, the causeway had been overflowed and swept away in great gaps of 50 or 100 feet long, necessitating a wide *détour* through a scarcely traversable, boggy swamp before the remaining portion of the causeway could be regained. A small amount of common sense and foresight would have prevented this loss of money and convenience.

For one adventure of the Mertons' short journey, however, no human sagacity could have been prepared.

At starting from home, Lina, when getting into the dog-cart, struck her foot somewhat painfully against a "tomahawk" (or small axe), and exclaimed, "Oh, Papa, that horrid thing! You always will carry it on a journey, and we have never wanted it yet."

"Never mind. We may."

And they did.

As they drove on, the good horses trotting merrily along another terrace-road round a very steep hill, with a wall of upright rocks on one side, and a deep gully on the other, Mr. Merton, after passing round a sharp angle, suddenly pulled up, looking earnestly forward.

A mass of rock, detached from the cliffs above, had fallen into the middle of the narrow road, completely blocking it up.

"What is to be done?" was Mrs. Merton's natural inquiry.

"Hold the reins, whilst I go and see."

A careful survey of the obstacle was anything but encouraging, but the need for prompt action did not then occur to Mr. Merton for the first time. He came back.

"The only chance for us to get on lies in my being able to heave the rock over, so as to draw the cart past it. You and the girls may get out if you like, for it must be a work of time, even if I can accomplish what I intend; and if I cannot, I 'm afraid we must go back to Rock-dell for assistance."

"Oh, Papa! and through that dreadful bog again!" cried Lina, whose especial horror was a swamp. Over rocky ground she could get out and walk, and was as brave and active as a chamois; but to sit still and be dragged through a quagmire by the poor struggling plunging horses was terrible both to her mother and herself.

"Hand me out the tomahawk, Lina," said Mr. Merton, hastily unhooking the leader's traces, and fastening the horse to a tree. "You will now see that I was not quite so unwise in bringing it. On it rests our hope of weathering this difficulty."

Throwing off his coat, he clambered down over the edge of the road, and began hewing away, and soon cut several tough gum-saplings (young *Eucalypti*), which he stripped of their branches and flung on to the road. Then, climbing back himself, he used one of the poles as a lever to lift the rock. As soon as the smallest space was gained, Lina, under his direction, inserted a thin wedge of stone, and then, as the rock rose a little more, a larger one. By diligently continuing the process, and replacing the levers with new ones, as they successively broke under the strain, the rock became tilted up, so as to admit stones beneath as large as Lina and her mother could carry, and at last, after nearly two hours' hard work, the mass of rock was finally upset on to the brink of the road. Freda was greatly disappointed at not seeing it plunge over, and go thundering down into the river-bed below; but as, by measuring the space, her father ascertained that the cart could just pass between it and the cliff above, he

was glad not to waste either time or labour. The quiet old shaft-horse drew steadily through, the leader was hooked on again, and the party continued their journey; but the long delay had almost exhausted daylight, and it had been dark some time ere they reached Walloora, the abode of their friends, Mr. and Mrs. Bexley.

A great barking in all directions, and the out-rush of two or three deep-voiced dogs, greeted their approach. Then doors opened quickly, whence long beams of light flashed athwart the gloom, gates were flung wide, and the tandem drew up at a broad verandah, whose clustering roses and Chinese honeysuckle added a fragrant greeting to the hearty welcome with which the Mertons were received.

Three daughters and two sons, of ages from eighteen to seven, formed the juvenile circle into which our young friends were introduced. Harry, the eldest, was a good-natured, good-looking young fellow, upon whom every educational advantage attainable in the colony had been lavished without stint, but whose chief, if not only real interest and amusement was in field-sports. Edgar, a boy of twelve, was absent at school. Lucy, sixteen, and Kate, fourteen, were pretty girls of average young-lady ability, with no particular bent of any kind beyond a tolerably complacent estimate of themselves, and a capacity for indulgence of every description. Little Janet, seven years old, was a happy, round dumpling of a child, delighted to receive a playmate so nearly her own age as Winifred, and the two were usually seen hand-in-hand during the Mertons' visit.

John Bexley, now a wealthy man, and a "worshipful," with "all things handsome about him," had begun his colonial career on a younger son's small patrimony, and, by unceasing industry and singular good fortune, had prospered in everything he undertook, until the thousands of his yearly income needed five figures to state them, and his ample mansion and comfortable homestead were models of luxury and completeness. His old friend, Harold Merton, on the other hand, with twice as much natural talent, and industry fully equal, had, from the outset of his career, encountered adverse fortune; and whilst golden returns rewarded the most commonplace act of the one, losses, privation, and disappointment had followed the brave, determined struggles and unquenched energy of the other. He was a practical illustration that "the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong."

Mrs. Bexley looked very much the right kind of woman to be her husband's wife. Comely, cheerful, and well dressed, she "became" her position well.

Perhaps, on a near view, an observer might discover that in her hospitality there was a large leaven of ostentation, so that it was not precisely of that kind lauded by the Apostle. A poor acquaintance, brought in to dinner by good John himself, would be less welcome in her eyes to a share of the family repast, than would be the advent of some magnate of the land, for whose entertainment the cook's utmost skill must be put in requisition. She was not equal in point of family to Mr. Bexley, but her dower of a few thousands had been one of his early advantages, and assisted his advancement; yet from her usually keen enquiries as to the rank or connection of others, it might be surmised, by those unacquainted with the peculiar weaknesses of the universal family of—perhaps *snobs* is too strong a term, yet there is not another that suffices—that in her own belongings flowed the bluest of patrician blood.

On the morning after their arrival, Gwendoline and Winifred, eager to see the beauties of the place, were taken by Lucy and her sisters into the garden, which was picturesquely laid out in terraces down a slope to the river's edge, and they were admiring some fine tame swans, both white* and black,† which swam up quite boldly to be fed, when the breakfast-bell rang, and the party trooped up to the house.

The morning passed quickly, for Mrs. Merton and her daughters, in delighted exploration of the conservatory and hot-houses, and their treasures of curious and lovely plants, many of which were new to Lina, though well known in former years by her mother, to whom they were as welcome as old friends.

The Bexleys rather chafed at this long lingering amongst the flowers, and Kate openly avowed her opinion that "the houses weren't worth coming to, till the grapes and pineapples were fit to eat."

In the afternoon some young visitors arrived to play croquet on the lawn, which, irrigated and continually mown, rivalled an English one in verdure and velvety evenness. All the guests remained to dinner, and a dance wound up the evening; so that to Lina, who usually led so retired a life, the day was full of interest and excitement.

The two fathers had enjoyed a long ramble amongst "improvements"—a word which too commonly implies a weary pilgrimage for the doomed guest, but was in this instance a pleasant renewal of an old friendship, and a really interesting inspection of many new and valuable farm implements and

* *Cygnus olor.* † *Cygnus atratus.*

machinery which especially delighted Mr. Merton, who returned home on the following day, leaving his wife and daughters for two or three weeks.

"Have you any nice ferns near?" asked Lina one day of Lucy Bexley.

"Oh yes, lots in the steep gully over the hill. Why?"

"Because I should like to get some to take home and plant in a little rocky fernery I have in the garden."

"Harry! here's Gwendoline Merton wants ferns. Can't you go with us to the fern-gully to-morrow?"

"Well, yes; I suppose I can, if I like."

"Then you must like. So mind, we'll start the first thing after breakfast, and then we shall easily be back by lunch-time."

Freda was eager to be one of the party, but her mother decided otherwise, considering the walk too long for her; and the promise of a ride on Janet's own little pony, instead, quite consoled her for her disappointment.

CHAPTER XXII.

In dells where the forest shades fell dimmer,
In deep, green, silent glens—silent, except the fall
Of tinkling streams, that made a monotone musical—
The feathery fern-trees dwell, with palmy crests outspread,
Close interwove and overlapped in canopies o'erhead ;
Upborne on massy columns, whence taper ribs upspring,
And leafy traceries flow from their mazy clustering !
Whilst round each pillar, wreaths of polished verdure cling
With long and shining fronds, in graceful garlands drooping
Adown, and down, till into the spray of the tiny cascade they 're stooping.
Some of my Bush Friends in Tasmania.—L. A. M.

THE three girls, carrying baskets and a trowel, and Harry, with his gun and kangaroo dogs, set forth in good time, Lucy's little Skye terrier trotting along too.

For a couple of miles their way lay through the open forest-land of a wide hill-side, gradually rising, until, on gaining a little stony ridge, the gully, or fern-valley, lay deep below them, and Lina gave a cry of admiration as she gazed down.

The whole valley beneath was filled with noble tree-ferns* of all sizes, their graceful umbrellas of feathery foliage in many places touching and overlapping each other, without leaving a stem visible. From the centre of each crown of adult fronds the young ones of the coming season were springing up, with their brown in-curving heads forming a second crown of peculiar and most graceful form—a circle of crosiers, in fact; and their perfect "lines of beauty" making such infinitely various and exquisite combinations as would distract the ablest composer of arabesques to imitate with his pencil. Above the verdant domes of the tree-ferns arose tall, slender sassafras trees,† as

---

* *Dicksonia Antarctica.* † *Atherosperma moschata.*

minarets; and giant *Eucalypti*, bare of leaf or branch for perhaps 150 feet, towered up aloft, lifting their diadems of myrtle blossoms high into the sunny air above.

"If you go on picking flowers at that rate," said Harry, looking at the cluster Lina had gathered, "we shall want a cart to carry them home."

"And they 're all common things," said Lucy.

"Not common to me. Several of these I never saw growing, though I know them, because Mamma has made drawings of most, and I am very glad to find them. This is the flower of the large *Coprosma** that bears the red berries. It belongs to the coffee tribe. And here is another pretty greenish bell,† putting one in mind of Solomon's seal; and, from the leaves and its curious way of growing, each stalk one complete plant, it must be the blossom of those lovely little turquoise-coloured berries I have seen. And these orchids—the dragon‡ and the spider§—and these queer helmets, both the plain one‖ and that with the feather in it,¶ and this darling little bright blue one,** are all so lovely I could not pass them by. I have only picked one of each kind to press and keep, for Mamma has always taught us not to gather flowers in waste. I have seen her quite unhappy when she has observed people plucking quantities of flowers only to throw away again."

"La!" exclaimed Kate, "as if it mattered. They 're no good."

"Oh yes; many bees, both native and honey-bees gone wild, feed on these flowers; several of our pretty native birds, too, are honey-eaters; and though all the flowers we might waste would not, perhaps, make much difference, still it must make some, and the flowers are far better growing and making all places beautiful where they are, than dying, and being of no use."

"The path lies down here," said Harry, pointing to a narrow track amongst the tall brake fern that skirted the ravine.

"Let 's go on to the next turn, Harry," said Kate, "and then Gwendoline will see the waterfall. I can hear it now."

They went on until, at a short curve in the track round a projecting mass of rock, the cascade burst into view. A stream of silver, framed in cliffs of jet! Pouring from a considerable height down a dark chasm in the mountain, the water fell into a deep black hollow, and then, suddenly changing its character

* *Coprosma hirtella.*
† *Drymophila cyanocarpa* (the fruit is given in Plate 4, chap. vii.)
‡ *Diuris sulphurea.*
§ *Caladenia Patersonia.*
‖ *Pterostylis cucullata.*
¶ *P. squamata.*
** *Caladenia barbata.*

from the grandly sublime to the softly beautiful, it went dancing along, under and amidst the ferns, round mossy rocks and lichen-tinted trunks of hoary old trees, sometimes sleeping stilly in a shadowy pool, and anon tumbling in a sparkling little fall over logs and boulders.

"Now then, look alive! Sharp 's the word, and down you go!" cried Harry, not quite comprehending Lina's silent, delighted pause of rapt admiration at so new and glorious a scene, but carefully helping her in her descent as they scrambled beside the water-course, until the fern-trees they had looked down on from above, almost as an undulating carpet of verdure, now rose overhead, their



Tree-Fern Forest.

wide-spread feathery crowns varying in height from two to thirty feet, and in all imaginary variety of form and grouping—some, as Lina said, like very tall feather umbrellas, and others like green-cushioned foot-stools; and all around, on rocks, tree-trunks, and fern-stems, such a world of beauty in mosses, lichens, and smaller ferns as she had never before beheld.

They had wandered on for some distance, each step seeming to Lina to bring them amidst yet more perfect and wondrous loveliness, when, just before them, a fine brush-kangaroo bounded over a log and vanished into the thicket.

"By Jove, what a chance!" exclaimed Harry, as the dogs rushed away, and he, cocking his gun, leaped after, crying, "I 'll be back directly."

"Can you find us again?" called Lucy.

"Can a duck swim?" was the rejoinder. He was out of sight in another instant, and very soon the sounds of the chase died quite away in the distance.

Lina's face probably told of her uneasiness at thus losing their guide, but the girls ridiculed the idea of any danger, and all were soon intent on their fern-collecting, climbing over the huge prostrate trees, jumping from rock to rock across the rivulet, and wandering all about, but, as they believed, still keeping near the spot where Harry left them. Time flew by unheeded, so busy were they in searching for, digging up, and safely packing away in damp rags the delicate little roots of the treasures.

Lina was in ecstasies of delight as she found, one after another in quick succession, so many of the lovely ferns which abound in such dark glens as the one into which her young companions had led her. One fern-tree trunk of the hundreds around, she averred, would find her occupation for a day, clothed and garlanded and fringed as it was with various species of filmy ferns, all so exquisitely delicate in material and graceful in form. Semi-transparent, fragile, and minute in their fairy-like delicacy, each seemed lovelier than the last—some emulating the lightness of feathers, and covering their brown, rough home as with plumage of the daintiest green;* whilst the giant brother, whose tall form they draped, spread over them wide-reaching protecting arms, as though to ward off all inclement extremes from their frail beauty. On mossy rocks by the brook-side were even tinier growths, with fronds not an inch in length,† yet branched and subdivided, and tipped with crests of *sori* in such miniature completeness, that Titania, if she ever "revisit the glimpses of the moon" in Austral climes, might commission Cobweb to decorate with them her festal robe for evening revelry.

I see a book advertised and pleasantly noticed in the English papers—*A Fern Paradise;* but could the eloquent author once behold an untrodden, unspoiled Tasmanian fern-valley, methinks he would feel that he had applied the epithet too soon. Unhappily, the greedy Vandalism, which covets and destroys at a blow, has desolated nearly all the fern-groves near

* *Hymenophyllum rarum, H. unilaterale, H. crispatum, H. flabellatum, Tricomanes venosum, Asplenium laxum, Polypodium grammitidis*—all growing on tree ferns in shady valleys.

† *Hymenophyllum tunbridgense.*

Tasmanian towns. Only in remote nooks can such now be found in primeval beauty.

Ferns of larger growth* than the delicate little parasites grew beneath the shade and beside the brook: many of these were old acquaintances, others new to Lina, whose rapture at such acquisition at first amused, and then rather mystified Lucy, who, though when called upon earnestly for answering admiration owned they were "pretty enough," yet rather contemptuously dismissed them as "only common ferns, after all."

At length their young voices, which had rung out with gay mirth and chatter almost incessantly, gradually left long pauses in the chorus; the search after plants grew very languid, and Lucy, flinging herself down on a fern-trunk, exclaimed—

"Well, I 'm tired; that 's a fact; and I 'm hungry too. It must be lunch-time, I 'm sure. Then, looking at her watch for the first time since starting, "Oh! have you any idea what o'clock it is? *Past four!*"

"Where can Harry be?" said Kate. "I 've neither heard him nor the dogs since they went away."

"If Harry gets a good run after the kangaroo, he 'd never think of it till it 's over," said Lucy. "I vote we get home as fast as we can, or we shall be too late for dinner as well as lunch. Come along, Lina, this is the way;" and, gathering up her basket, she set off in perfect confidence, Lina and Kate following.

But all made much slower progress than in the morning. They had walked a long distance, much farther than they guessed, since Harry went off; for in such valleys one part is so like another, and the pathless labyrinth of fern, tree, and thicket often so devoid of any distinctive feature, to any eye but that of an experienced bushman, as to be deceptive in the extreme.

After plodding on with almost silent perseverance for another half-hour, Lucy, who kept ahead, cried out, "Oh! here *is* a strange place! I 'm quite sure I never was here before."

When her weary companions came up, they all, as by one impulse, sank down on the ground to rest and gaze.

Here was a level floor, of probably half-an-acre in extent, without any small growth whatever, but thickly strewn with the dead dry fronds of the fern-trees,

---

* *Pteris incisa*, *Polypodium rugolosum*, *Imesipteris tasmenis* (or tree-fern), *Gleichenia dicarpa*, *Lomaria discolor*, *Polystichum coriaceum*.

which grew all over the space at nearly equal distances; the straight brown stems like columns, and the overarching and interlacing features like the groined arches of a Gothic vault. No peep of sky could be discerned, but a dim glimmer of subdued greenish light fell here and there through the dense canopy above, and appeared beyond the lengthened vistas of the irregular aisles of columns. The silent, dusk solemnity of the place would have been striking and a little "gruesome" at any time; the liveliest chatter would have died out at the threshold; but to the weary, hungry, and, we may now own, frightened girls, it seemed especially weird and awful.

Lucy, however, who was the most courageous of the triad, still endeavoured to put on a brave face, and observed—"Well, Gwendoline, when you first came down into the valley, you said it was like fairyland, and I think now we must have got into an ogre's den."

"It 's a great deal more like a church," sighed Kate.

"Or like what is called a crypt," said Lina. "Mamma has books of prints of old cathedrals in England, and this is just like one of the underground vaults beneath them. It is very beautiful, and very wonderful; but I cannot enjoy it as I should have done in the morning. If you never were here before, we must have missed our way out."

Lucy looked very grave. "Well, to tell the honest truth, we have."

"Then what 's to be done?" asked Lina.

"Why, we can see very plainly here where we came into this queer grotto, or dungeon, or whatever you call it; so the best thing is to turn round and go out the same way, and keep as straight on as we can. We shall find the bank of the valley on the side we got down, and when once on the top of that, the road home is plain enough."

"Yes, if we can see," said Kate; "but I 'm sure it 's above an hour since you said it was four o'clock, so there 's not more than two hours' daylight left."

"And there is not any moon now," said Lina.

"I know. So we had better put our best foot foremost, and get along;" and Lucy, suiting the action to the word, turned her back on the wonderful natural architecture of the fern-grove, and plunged through the scrub with admirable resolution, leaving, as did they all, many a torn fragment of attire on the sticks and thorny shrubs in their route.

They struggled on, with weary feet and anxious hearts, for some time longer.

"Look at your watch, Lucy," said her sister; "what o'clock is it now?"

"Half-past six, I think. The sun must be going down, for I can scarcely see."

Kate burst into tears. "What *shall* we do? What shall we do? We never shall get home any more."

Lina made no outcry, but the tears began to fall. She was thinking of her mother's distress and anxiety at her absence, but went stumbling after Lucy, who, without speaking a word, plodded on again. Suddenly she stopped short, with an involuntary cry of surprise. The others hurried up.

"We are back again in the church!" and Lucy pointed to the pillared space before her, now plainly seen by all.

"It cannot be the same. Perhaps we have found another," said Kate, hopefully.

"No; here is the bunch of ferns I left where we sat. We have come back again into the very same place the very same way," cried poor Lucy, in a despairing tone.

"It is really an enchanted valley, I think," said Lina, through her tears.

"And whilst I believed I was going so straight, I've been only coming round again," sobbed Lucy. "It is getting so dark now, I could not see at all much longer."

"Surely they'll come to look for us," said Kate.

"I daresay they will, but I am quite sure we have come a long way. I never heard anyone speak of this strange place; and Papa, or Harry, or other people would have mentioned it, if they had ever been here."

"If only we had a compass," said Lina, "we should know which way to go."

"If we only had some dinner, we might not die of hunger," moaned Kate.

"Or some lucifers, we might make a fire, for it is getting very cold already."

"We have never 'coo-ee'd,'" said Lina. "Suppose we try. Harry might hear us. Let us all 'coo-ee' together, to make more sound. Now then—one—two—three—*Coo-ee!*"

No response came, and darkness rapidly increased. Again and again they "coo-ee'd," but the silence was unbroken.

Kate was sobbing and crying wildly, "Mamma, Mamma! Oh, we shall never see home any more! I shall die of cold and hunger, if the tigers don't eat me."

"Don't be a fool, Kitty," said Lucy, shaking her rather roughly. "Isn't it as bad for Gwendoline and me? and you don't hear us howling like that. I'm afraid it is not of any use trying to get away now until daylight, and this

is a better place to stay in than the wet scrub and deep beds of rotten leaves. We shall be drier here, at any rate; but it 's very horrid."

"I would not care for anything, if only Mamma knew I was safe," was Lina's lament, thought and spoken many a time, as, worn out with fatigue and terror, hungry and very cold, the poor girls drew closer and closer together.

In spite of all their fright and misery, they fell asleep for a few minutes at a time, only to awaken to keener terror and suffering, as the wild cries of owl or mope hawk or booming bittern sounded through the thick darkness, and several times the patter and *thud* of night-roaming animals passed almost beside them. Dandie, the terrier, who coiled himself at the feet of his young mistress, acted as a most vigilant sentinel, and boldly challenged every sound, proclaiming his readiness to do battle against all intruders. Lucy had tried to make him leave them early in the evening, thinking they would follow, and so be led homewards; but the too-faithful little dog stoutly refused to budge an inch, evidently believing that his proper place was by the side of his mistress, come weal, come woe.

Whether that seemingly interminable night appeared longest to the shivering, awe-struck girls in their cold, dark lair, or to the almost distracted mothers in the luxurious and silent house, it were hard to tell.



CHAPTER XXIII.

Onward ! thro' the swamp, the marsh,
And scrubby moorland, rough and harsh,
With shout and wild halloo !

Lost.—L. A. M.

THE day at Walloora had passed a little wearily to Mrs. Merton. At every turn she missed Lina, usually her constant companion, and neither Freda's prattle nor Mrs. Bexley's hospitable attentions could quite overcome a half-anxious desire for her daughter's return.

When luncheon-time arrived without the girls, Mrs. Bexley took it quite coolly. Harry was with them, so they were well taken care of. Harry was an excellent bushman, brave as a lion, and so charmed with Miss Merton, he would take care that she and his sisters were safe—and so on, and so on—pouring forth the fulness of maternal pride and love; for Harry, her first-born, was faultless in her admiring eyes.

With some difficulty she persuaded Mrs. Merton to accompany her in a short drive to return some visits which neighbouring families had made to her guest. Freda and her friend Janet were also taken, and as at one house they found a large party of young people assembled in honour of a little son's birth-day, the two children were delighted to join in the games and dances, so that the carriage only reached home as the first dinner-bell rang, and the last gleams of twilight were fading out of the sky.

To Mrs. Merton's anxious enquiries came the alarming reply that the party had not returned. Mrs. Bexley herself looked perplexed, but said at once—

"Don't be alarmed. They're all right. I know how it is. Harry has taken them round by the Thorntons. He said this morning he must see Ted Thornton about the cricket-match; and once they got there, there'd be no escape till after dinner."

Mr. Bexley, coming down stairs in his evening dress, wondered to find his gentle guest seated on a hall chair, pale with anxiety, and in tears; but his wife quickly gave him her explanation of the cause.

"Gone with Harry!" he exclaimed. "Why, Harry joined me two hours ago down the river. Here he is. Harry, where did you leave Miss Merton and your sisters?"

"In the fern-gully below the waterfall. What time did they come home?"

Mrs. Merton's fear became agony. "Oh, Harry, they're not home! They must be lost! Come and show me which way you went!" she cried, hurrying to the door.

Mr. Bexley caught her hand and led her within. "My dear friend, you cannot, and—pardon me—you *shall* not attempt to go out. If needful, I will go, and take every man on the place with me, but you must be content to rest here. I must first learn all particulars I can."

He proceeded to question Harry very keenly, soon eliciting the truth.

"And do you mean to say that, for the brutal pleasure of chasing that kangaroo, *you deserted your trust*, and left those poor children by themselves in that labyrinth?"

"I did go back, sir, as I said I would, but I didn't find them, so I thought they had come home."

"*You thought!*" echoed his father, in supreme contempt.

"John!" cried his wife, "don't be angry; I daresay the girls have gone to Thornton's. We can send the carriage for them."

Mr. Bexley thought that was possible too, and that at all events the chance should be tried, and went himself to give the order. In a few minutes they heard the sound of wheels rapidly retreating, and he returned.

"Now then, have dinner instantly. If you had not suggested sending to the Grove, I should not have waited; as it is, I may as well eat something before I go, in case the children are not there. *They'll* be famished, poor things! Come, Mrs. Merton, we are in the same boat, and you must do as I do, and have some dinner."

"Do—there's a dear soul," said Mrs. Bexley. "John's grieved and vexed enough as it is, and if you fret so, and don't come in, that'll be another trouble to him."

But a more uneasy, anxious group have rarely assembled round so luxurious a table. Every ear was vainly strained to catch some possible token of the absent ones returning; and the conversation was almost limited to Mr.

Bexley's abrupt queries, and Harry's half-sullen, half-sorrowful replies as to their probable whereabouts.

The Grove, whither the carriage had been sent, was little more than three miles distant; but the night was very dark, and the roads bad, so that an hour and a-half elapsed before the returning wheels were heard. All hurried to the door.

Had the girls come?

No—nothing had been heard of them at Linden Grove, but Mr. Thornton, with his sons and servants, had at once prepared to go out in search of them.

"God bless him!" cried Mr. Bexley. "Now then, Mary, pack me a basket, quick, with some bread, and meat, and wine, and give me some warm shawls; and, Walton, do you and the other men in the house make haste and come with me to the falls."

"Why not call up the gardeners and the rest?" said Mrs. Bexley, whose alarm had now become intense.

"Because, if we fail to-night, we shall be glad of fresh help in the morning," replied her husband, very seriously, as he hastily changed his dress.

"I suppose I can come?" asked Harry.

"Please yourself—*you're* not likely to be of any use, judging from your previous performances;" and with a hurried kiss to his sobbing wife, and a hearty pressure of Mrs. Merton's hand, Mr. Bexley departed with his troop, the lantern carried by one of the grooms being watched by the two mothers as long as it remained visible.

A sad and weary vigil was theirs that night. No one thought of going to bed, until Freda, sitting on a stool by the fire, fell asleep, and toppled over, and was then sent away, with Janet Bexley, in Miss Brewer's charge.

Hour after hour crept on. Every few minutes the hall-door opened, and one or both of the anxious watchers leant out listening; or Mrs. Merton laid her ear to the ground in the carriage-drive—imagining she heard distant footsteps—but none came.

The table stood ready laid with a dainty meal; the kettle sang by the fire; the clock over the chimney-piece ticked off its weary seconds; and the hours, as they struck, seemed the saddest of all voices through that long, long night.

Overcome by exhaustion, the poor weary watchers must at length have slept, for they were awoke soon after dawn by the entrance of Harry, who had come to summon the other men to aid in the search. His father and the rest had penetrated into the dense scrub as well as they could—not very

far in the pitchy darkness—had lit fires on the high bank, fired guns, cooee'd—but all in vain. No answering noise had reached them; and now they were going to form a *cordon* round the entire valley, and so work up to a centre.

"And then," said Harry, "we must find them."

His torn clothes and scratched face testified to his own exertions and eager desire to remedy his fault.

His father, he said, kept the basket of provisions he had taken for the girls sacredly untouched, so that Harry was thankful for breakfast, of which he persuaded and encouraged his mother and Mrs. Merton to partake.

"And then," he added, "you had better both go to bed. Be quite sure we shall find the girls soon, now it is daylight; but they cannot be home for two or three hours, and you had better sleep the while. Promise me this, that I may tell my father;" and, seeing it was their only rational course, the poor mothers consented.

Taking a reinforcement of nearly a dozen men, and a rough breakfast for the party already out, Harry speedily returned to the waterfall, which was nearer the starting point of the search. Here he found his father and their good friend Mr. Thornton, with several other neighbours, arranging their plan of action. Some deemed it wholly useless to spread their band out to the extreme opposite end of the valley, fully four miles distant in a direct line, the proposed circuit being ten or twelve; whilst Mr. Bexley contended that all would be incomplete, and probably ineffective, unless this were done.

"I will take that division myself," said he, "with my own two best bushmen, Crawford and Brookes."

Both the men named stepped forward with gratified looks, touching their hats. Harry ranged up beside them.

"Yes—you too."

"I brought your old hunting-horn, Father."

"An excellent idea. Thank you, Harry"—and Harry knew himself almost forgiven.

"If you and Crawford carry guns, it is enough. I'll take the basket and the horn, and Brookes the shawls, though they'll scarcely be wanted now. Never mind—take 'em."

"I brought a little billy,* sir, with a drop of tea in, to warm for the young ladies," said Crawford, a wiry, weather-beaten, clever old stockman.

---

* A tin can, with a lid, commonly used for bush tea-making.

"All right—now come along. We have a two hours' walk before us."

"I've horses here, Bexley, if you'll have them," said Mr. Thornton.

"Many thanks. But you know as well as I do that we can go better afoot through scrub and over rocks. Keep to the plan we agreed on, and may God give us luck!"

By this it was nearly nine o'clock, and the whole party—about thirty men, some mounted, but the majority on foot—spread themselves out over a long line of bush-land skirting the valley of ferns, into which they plunged singly at various points; those who had horses leaving them safely secured on the bank.

Mr. Bexley was partly piloted by Crawford, whose knowledge of every part of the district where human foot had trod was universally acknowledged and deferred to; but he carried a compass too, for his own re-assurance.

After walking for about two hours, Crawford looked carefully at the trees near them.

"Now, sir, this is where one of us could strike in, and the rest at fifty or sixty paces apart, along this stony rise."

His master consulted the compass.

"Yes. Quite right. We are now looking across the valley, directly towards the head of the fall. So if we go down here and keep straight on, we must meet some of the others. I'll begin here; and remember, when any of you hear a 'coo-ee,' to listen *silently* for a good half-minute afterwards before replying, or we may drown the poor little voices we want to hear.

"All right, sir."

Harry and Brookes were the next to go into the scrub, and old Crawford the last, leaving a somewhat long interval between the point of Brookes' entrance and his own, his never-failing faithful companion, a sagacious old sheep-dog, closely following his master.

They plodded on alternately through dense thickets of tea-tree,* dogwood,† prickly mimosa,‡ and more prickly coprosma;§ and through the damp dusk aisles and columned labyrinths of fern-trees and sassafras.‖ Crawford paused and listened frequently. Solitary shots were sometimes heard from the seekers on the opposite side, and now and then a shrill but distant "coo-ee," but nothing indicating discovery of the lost ones.

"Good Lord!" ejaculated Crawford, "what on earth has become of 'em?

---

* *Leptospermum lanigerum.* † *Bedfordia salicina.* ‡ *Acacia diffusa.* § *Coprosma nitida.*
‖ *Atherospermum moschatum.*

Seems as if they was just clean swallowed up and gone. Can't make it out—nohow. Can *you*, old dog? I'll light my pipe, at any rate."

And the old man sat down despondently on a fallen tree, with the dog at his feet. The pipe was barely alight before Blucher lifted his head, pricked up his ears, and leaped up upon the log in eager excitement.

"Speak up!" cried Crawford, and the dog barked loudly.

A small "yap-yap" and a faint "coo-ee" replied.

"You met a heard my heart stand still!" said Crawford afterwards.

"*Find 'em!*" he shouted. And how he blundered on after his dog over fallen trees, slippery boulders half under water, rocky hollows, and deep chasms of the foaming brook, he never knew; but presently a little Scotch terrier leaped upon him, and another headlong charge through the thick damp growth brought him in sight of old Blucher, with Lucy on her knees, hugging and kissing him, Lina and Kate crying for joy, and the noble old dog, who seemed to understand it all perfectly, as I believe he did, wagging his tail furiously as his share in the demonstration.

Kate almost jumped into Crawford's arms.

"Oh, you dear, darling old man! how good of you to find us!"

Lina knelt down trembling, saying to herself—

"Thank God! thank God! I shall see Mamma again!"

The stout old bushman's eyes filled with tears too, as he cried, "The Lord be blessed!" Then quickly recovering himself—"But first thing, I'll signal the Master, and comfort him and everybody else."

Whereupon he fired off both barrels of his gun at a few seconds' interval, and then, quickly loading, fired a third shot.

"That 's to say you 're found," he explained. "Master fixed it. Three shots, one after another. Now I'll make a fire and warm this drop o' tea. The Master 's got nice things for ye; but here 's just a mouthful to begin with;" and he unfolded a snowy napkin, containing some slices of bread and butter, which the poor girls thankfully devoured, declaring nothing was ever so good before.

The tea was not suffered to get "fairly warm," as Crawford avowed, ere that also was eagerly shared from a bright little tin cup; the old stockman continually interrupting his ministrations by uttering ringing "coo-ee's," to draw Mr. Bexley to the spot.

"One *man's* coo-ee 's just like another. If you young ladies will only try and give one good 'un, it would be worth all mine."

So once more they raised the cry together. Three answering voices sounded

near, and in a few minutes, scrambling through the thickets, came Mr. Bexley and Harry, to be half-smothered with caresses, Brookes quickly following.

How sudden was the rebound from misery to delight! How instantaneous the revulsion of feeling, and the almost total oblivion of what seemed life-long agony!

Revived a little by the tea and bread, and infinitely more by the knowledge that they were safe, the girls, though very weak, exhausted, and footsore, could soon laugh at their own torn, forlorn, draggled condition. Lina's sensible attire of a tough holland dress and stout boots had fared the best, but the more elegant and elaborate costume of the Bexleys, and their more fragile *chaussure*, had, as Harry phrased it, "come to grief" most completely. With his knife and a piece of twine, he fastened the soles and upper parts of his sisters' boots together, to enable them to be of some little use, and the shawls brought by Brookes made welcome coverings for garments rent much beyond a picturesque degree. Lina alone had retained her hat, having taken the precaution of tying it fast down with her scarf. The others had lost theirs in the evening's scramble, and their long hair, towzled and dragged by the scrub, was perhaps the most forlorn-looking feature of all.

As a quartette of short-hand writers would have failed in any attempt to take down one-tenth of the rapid and manifold questions and replies of that first momentous half-hour, during which the basket was explored and emptied, it may be as well to say that Harry was despatched to hasten home with the glad tidings, having Mr. Bexley's compass and Crawford's directions to assist him in steering a straight course; as it was now ascertained that the part of the valley into which the young wanderers had penetrated had not been previously known or explored, although Crawford was sufficiently acquainted with the whereabouts to guide the party on their return.

After a laborious struggle, they at length reached what the girls ever after called the "enchanted church," where they had passed the previous night.

"And where we all said our prayers, Papa," said Lucy, "as well as we could for crying; for we thought we should never see any of you again. And you can't think how cold it was! and so pitch-dark! Oh! so dreadful!"

"And we so hungry," said Kate. "We tried chewing some of the leaves and twigs, as we have heard of starving travellers doing; but they tasted very nasty, and we thought they might be poison, too."

"I believe we might have eaten the roots of the common fern," said Lina, "but none grew where we were."

"And did you never hear us last night?" said Mr. Bexley. "Guns were fired at intervals, and we all 'coo-ee'd' and shouted till we were hoarse."

"Once Lina said she heard a gun, but only once; so we did not suppose it was fired for us."

"I don't expect, sir," said Crawford, "that you was within three mile of this all night, and you wouldn't think how sounds and voices get smothered like in such a thicket."

"We heard you to-day plainly enough," said Lina; "but not so very long before you found us. And one queer noise puzzled me, but Lucy knew it was your hunting-horn; so that cheered us most of all."

"I cannot understand how you got to such a distance," said Mr. Bexley.

"Why, Papa," replied Lucy, "we must have come a long way at first, after Harry went."

"The hair-brained blockhead!"

"And then we kept tiring ourselves to death last night, and always getting back to the same place; and this morning I tried my very best to get out, but I did the very same thing again;" and Lucy's tears fell anew at the remembrance of her failure and vexation. "So then Gwendoline said she would try and lead; and she started off from the opposite side of the church, and kept on a great deal straighter than I did; and we were fighting our way on, hoping to get out somewhere, when Kitty hurt her leg and cried out, and directly after we heard that dear old dog bark."

"It was Miss Kate as he heard, then," said Crawford. "I knew he'd heard something, by the way he pricked up his ears and went on; and then I says to him, *Speak up!* and the little dog yapped again."

"We tried to make Dandie show us the way out," said Lucy, "but he would not stir from beside us, and cuddled up close to us at night, and growled quite fiercely when anything made a noise. We heard kangaroos go thumping by pretty near us, and lots of opossums chuckling in the high trees far up over our heads, and four or five mope hawks went on calling to each other all night."

"Yes," said Kate; "and if it is 'more pork' they say, as many people think, it was very unfeeling of them to talk of pork to us, who were famishing."

"Poor children!" said Mr. Bexley, pitifully. "Poor hungry little Babes in the Wood!"

"But, unfortunately, we were the babes without the blackberries," said Lina.

As the weary, limping girls and their stout escort neared the waterfall

others of the seekers joined them, who, having heard the signal-shots, and also seen Harry, did not wander further, but waited at the appointed rendezvous until the found-lost arrived.

Foremost, with a glad and hearty greeting, was Mr. Thornton, who urged them to go to his house at once; but finding that proposal could not be entertained, continued—

"Very well, Bexley, if you won't, you wont. But there's the carriage waiting ready in the road just by the corner. I'll put you and the girls in, and send you home straight. That's the next best thing."

As indeed it was.



CHAPTER XXIV.

The timorous hare,
Grown so familiar with her frequent guest,
Scarce shuns me.
. . . . .
The bounding fawn that darts across the glade
When none pursues, with mere delight of heart,
And spirits buoyant with excess of glee.

COWPER.

The swan with archèd neck,
Between her white wings mantling proudly, rows
Her state with oary feet.

MILTON.

NONE of the party at Walloora felt much inclination for long rambles during the next few days, although a night's sound rest proved a precious restorative, both to the weary girls and their terrified mothers, who had gone through by far the largest amount of real suffering.

Lucy insisted on giving Blucher a weekly ration for life, and a chain-collar of silver, with her initials and the date of the valley-adventure engraved on the plate. Crawford was endowed with a liberal pension; Brookes had a handsome present, and all the other men assisting in the search were well rewarded; whilst many a public charity and private need benefitted by John Bexley's munificent and often anonymous "thank-offerings."

A visit to the poultry-yard and the deer-park, which were close at home, pleasantly occupied one afternoon. The complete range of buildings, and the spacious divided yards for the various fowls, delighted Mrs. Merton and Lina; and in a large aviary, where they were being reared to turn out on the estate, Lina first saw English pheasants and partridges, Mr. Bexley being very fond of experiments in acclimatisation.

In the deer-park, which was enclosed by a very high close paling fence, and consisted of about forty acres of undulating land, partially wooded, and sloping to the river's brink, the noble red and fallow deer excited Lina's exceeding admiration. English hares too, half-tame, and undisturbed by the approach of the visitors, leaped about among the long grass and fern. Several fine forester kangaroo and a pair of emu also shared with the deer this pleasant domain. Lina was engrossed by her interest in a tame fallow doe, which ate biscuit from her hand, supplied from Mr. Bexley's capacious pockets, when Freda cried—

"Oh! Mamma, is that an ostrich?"

Mr. Bexley laughed. "Why, you little Cockney, don't you know your own country-folk! That's an Emu.* Here, Tom! Tom! come and make this young lady's acquaintance."

Tom and his mate, hearing the well-known voice, poked their long necks out inquiringly this way and that, and came stalking gravely up to the group, and, suddenly quivering all their harsh, singular plumage, made the odd shivery sound peculiar to them. Freda retreated a little as the great birds came up; but Lina, completely occupied by her interest in what to her was a new creature, gazed at them intently and unmoved.

"Mind, Gwendoline! they might peck your eyes out. They do peck at bright things, you know," cried Harry. "See! Tom's making for Papa's ring."

"Ah! diamonds are brighter than Lina's eyes," said Lucy, laughing.

"And now he's coming to the steel buckle on Janet's hat."

But Janet, with a cry of "Keep him off, Papa! I don't like it," got behind her father for shelter.

"Every glittering object takes their attention, and attracts their brilliant eyes," said Mr. Bexley. "And no doubt, could they now follow their own impulses unchecked, every chain, brooch, button, or other ornament they see would be adroitly picked off, and in all probability swallowed as speedily."

"Swallowed!" echoed Lina, in amazement.

"Yes. A list of the hard substances, such as nails, knives, pieces of iron, glass and earthenware, buttons, stones and all imaginable collections that have been found in the stomachs of pet emus after death, would astonish you. People have been known cruel or thoughtless enough to give them copper money, which, I believe, killed one or more of the emus in a public institution."

"How horribly wicked!" exclaimed Lina.

---

* *Dromaius Novæ Hollandiæ.*



Emu and Young.

"Yes," said Harry, "I 'd like to diet such brutes on brass farthings and nothing else for a week. Here 's some maize, which our birds find agrees with their constitutions even better than shingle nails; though they stole no end of those when the carpenter was at work on the new house for them. He could not make out where all his nails went to, till one day he caught Master Tom here lunching out of his tool-box."

"Are there any emus wild in this island?" asked Lina.

"They have been very rare ever since I came to the colony," said Mr. Bexley, "and I have not seen a wild emu these thirty years. There *may* possibly be a stray pair or two in some very remote places."

"And I recommend them to stay there," said Harry; "for if they 're caught sight of, they won't be emus long. It 's a great pity everything 's being killed off at such a rate."

From the deer-park our friends proceeded to a very favourite resort of Mrs. Merton and her girls, a large enclosure surrounding a piece of water of considerable extent, where both native and other waterfowl lived freely and happily, protected from human disturbance, and supplied with abundance of food. In some parts tall reeds and bulrushes formed a complete shelter, where the birds could remove from sight or intrusion; but usually the broad, open water was populous with Black* and White† Swans, Cape Barren Geese,‡ and ducks of various kinds, with pretty blue cranes walking daintily along the shore-shallows.

The black swans were tame enough to come at Mr. Bexley's whistle and call, and eat the corn and bread with which his home-coat-pockets were always supplied. Lina was delighted to see the broods of grey downy cygnets swimming along with the proud old birds, and often climbing on their mother's back, and sitting snugly amongst her puffed-up feathers, with only their droll little heads peering out.

Sharp arguments were sometimes carried on as to whether the black or white swans were the most beautiful. The heads and bright coral bills of the black were unanimously declared to be the handsomest and most intelligent, and their soft musical voices bore away the palm in that particular. But when the majestic English birds came on, down the lake, with, as Harry said, "every stitch of canvas set, studdin' sails and all," it was useless for even the most patriotic Tasmanian to pretend that any other bird could excel them. So the

* *Cygnus atratus.* † *Cygnus olor.* ‡ *Cereopsis Novæ Hollandiæ.*

final decision was, that the "honours" were equally divided, and that had Paris himself been appointed judge, he must have halved the apple between the two.

Mr. Bexley promised Lina some cygnets of the black kind to take home for the adornment of their own river.

"And," said he, "what you 'll have to look out for is, not to tread upon them. When we first had ours they were quite young, and we kept them in the garden in the front of the house in the day-time, for fear the poultry or dogs might hurt the poor, soft little things, and whenever we went out they would creep close to us, trying, if we stood still for a minute, to sit on our feet; and so, from their extraordinary love of our companionship, and their perfect confidence, they were in perpetual danger. Then, when grown up, they were just the same—poking their heads in at the kitchen window, or walking through the house, till I made this home for them."

"I have never yet seen black swans quite wild," said Lina.

"I daresay not, they have become very scarce. No one coming now to this colony, and seeing the rarity of these and all other native creatures, would credit the abundance in which they existed in the early days, which your father remembers from a more distant date than I do. The wide shallow bays and extensive lagoons on the east coast were alive with swans at that time. You might have reckoned them, not by hundreds or thousands, but by *acres,* and the wild ducks the same. Whatever quantity were shot, it was impossible to make any perceptible diminution in their myriads. The sad change from dense population to absolute scarcity has been caused by the greedy, sordid, cruel trade that people carried on in their eggs. The pioneer and ringleader of these wretched hucksters was a captain in the army, stationed at a central point on the east coast as a police magistrate. This gallant, noble officer had a boat and crew allowed him for the public service, and these he employed in a systematic raid upon the swans' nests, far and near, round the bays and lagoons I spoke of. Hundreds and thousands of dozens of eggs were taken every season and sent up by him in the Government boat for sale in Hobart. Humbler, but equally greedy traders, following Captain M——'s example, and continuing the traffic for a long series of years, had nearly succeeded in wiping the black swans from the face of the waters. I don't believe there would be one alive now in a wild state, had not an Act been passed in our Parliament for their protection in the breeding season; and how all of us who dared to advocate such an unheard-of measure were ridiculed and assailed with all manner of abuse, perhaps your father and I know best. However, the bill was passed, and others of like

tendency also, to be, I trust, followed by more, until every native animal, bird, and fish shall be at any rate secure from utter annihilation." *

"That egg-stealing is such a mean, cruel thing," said Harry. "One cannot believe anyone guilty of it who was not a regular 'Noah Claypole,' for it seems just equivalent to his 'kinchin lay.'"

"When the swans were more abundant," said Mrs. Merton, "they frequently passed from one place to another at night, flying high overhead in large flocks, invisible of course; and I used to enjoy listening to their soft, pretty cries, heard at first far in the distance, then gradually swelling on the ear, until the full chorus sounded just above one, and then died away again, like

'Horns of Elfland, faintly blowing;'

or, as I thought before Tennyson's lines were written, like harp-notes struck in octaves."

"What handsome birds are those with the bright blue on their wings?" asked Lina.

"Fine fellows, are they not? They are the Mountain Ducks," † replied Mr. Bexley; "though why they are so called, it is hard to say. We had some of those, too, in the yard at the house, for some time, but they were too tame by half. We could not keep them out of the rooms, so they were sent here. And, look! there's a dark bird close to the reeds—that's a Musk Duck: ‡ the plumage is very sombre and loose-looking—not so sleek as most other ducks; the tail, too, is singular, little more than a small fan of short quills. The head of the male has a kind of black leathery excrescence under the bill that gives it an odd expression, and the whole bird has a strong odour of musk, rendering it quite uneatable: I wish you could see it better, but they are still very shy, though they have lived here some time now. The pair are not often seen together; even in a wild state, they frequently live alone for a long time. They

* On October 4th, 1860, the Act introduced by the Hon. Charles Meredith for the protection of Black Swans was passed in the Tasmanian Parliament (24 Vic., No. 20). Other bills of like tendency were passed during 1874 and 1876, and on May 5th, 1879, "An Act—42 Vic., No. 24—to Consolidate and Amend the Laws for the Protection of Game"—now in force—which includes the following native animals and birds:—Black Swan, Cape Barren Goose, Wild Ducks, Teal, Wigeon, Plover, Emu, Ground Dove, Bronze-wing Pigeon, Quails, Wattle-birds, Kangaroo—protected during the breeding season; Magpie, Black-backed Gulls (*Larus Pacificus*), Silver Gull (*Bruchi Zema Jervia Jamesonii*)—protected entirely. Also, imported Pheasants, Partridges, Grouse, Hares.

A Bill has just been passed depriving hares of protection, on the plea that they would otherwise become too numerous!—Sept. 27th, 1879.

† *Casarca tadornoides.* ‡ Musk Duck—*Biziura lobata.*

build a nest of dry reeds on the bank, or sometimes on an old stump. When the young ones are hatched, the mother bird is very vigilant; and should any danger threaten, they get upon her back, and she dives with them to a place of safety. I never saw this done, but Mr. Gould, who knows a great deal more about all our native creatures than we do, and whose splendid works have done so much to make the world at large acquainted with them, relates the pretty motherly act, so we know that it is so."

"And there's a dear old Black Duck," * cried Lina, "with such a brood of little ones! How pretty they are! Papa once brought four about the same size home to me. He had caught them by wading into a lagoon after them, thinking he should like to keep them tame, and had a place made, fenced in with a plank wall at least two feet high; but they were no sooner put down inside, than they were out and off in four different directions, and out of sight. As to catching them again, it was just useless to try. But they got together, and lived about the pond in the garden, and under the bushes and hedges, till quite large, and then we ceased to see them; so I suppose they went down the river to their relations."

"If we were to come to the lagoon early some morning, or late in the evening, you would see some Bald Coots,† but they are not always out on the water by day. In former years they absolutely swarmed in many of the lagoons, and used to pull great holes in the corn-stacks at night. Of course we could fence them out from the stackyard, but at one place near a lake, where I tried to grow oats, they conquered me altogether, coming out in such squadrons as to blacken the ground, and devour all the seed as fast as it was put in. I tried my best, you may be sure, but all was of no use, and I had to leave off cultivating there."

"What black birds are those running along, and jerking up their white tails at every step?" asked Lina.

"Where? Why, those are bald coots. Very pretty birds, too, are they not? I can admire them now; but in that old time, if I had been told that one day I should keep any of my then tormentors as pets, I *should* have been amused. 'Circumstances alter cases,' don't they? We had some very tame, but I gave them away, and these have not grown so familiar. You would be amused to see them eating corn from the ear; they hold it in one hand just as a parrot does."

---

* Black Duck—*Anas superciliosa.* † Bald Coot—*Porphyrio melanotus.*

CHAPTER XXV.

And Eve, within, due at her hour prepar'd
For dinner, savoury fruits, of taste to please
True appetite. . . . . .
. . . With dispatchful looks in haste
She turns, on hospitable thoughts intent
What choice to choose for delicacy best,
What order so contriv'd as not to mix
Tastes, not well joined, inelegant, but bring
Taste after taste upheld with kindliest change.

MILTON.

Oh! if to dance all night, and dress all day,
Charm'd the small-pox, or chased old age away,
Who would not scorn what housewife's cares produce,
Or who would learn one earthly thing of use?
. . . . . .
Trust me, my dear, good humour can prevail,
When airs, and flights, and screams, and scolding fail.
Beauties in vain their pretty eyes may roll,
Charms strike the sight, but merit wins the soul.

POPE.

MRS. MERTON had been absent from home three weeks, when a letter from Guy to Lina arrived one evening during dessert. Lina, with a glad little cry, broke the envelope, and then checking herself, and colouring violently, laid the precious epistle beside her plate.

"Read your letter, my Linnet," said Mr. Bexley, seeing his favourite's little dilemma, "and tell us how they all are at home."

She glanced quickly over the brief missive, and suddenly looked very grave.

"Oh, Mamma! poor Nancy has gone home ill, and they've got that stupid girl of Black's to cook for them. Guy says her blunders are great fun, as good as Sophia's; but Papa must be so uncomfortable! Does not it happen unluckily, now you and I are away from home?"

"I think it's lucky you *are* away, if the cook's gone," said Lucy. "*You* could do no good."

"No good? Oh! dear, yes; I could take care that everything was well cooked and neatly served."

Lucy laughed contemptuously.

"Now, Lina, how absurd! You don't mean to say that you—an accomplished young lady—know how to *cook?*"

"Indeed, Lucy," said Mrs. Merton, "Lina is a very tolerable cook, and, were she now at home, would so well supply the place of Nancy, that no failing or omission would be observed by anyone."

"Do you really mean that Lina would roast meat, dress vegetables, and make puddings?" said Lucy, in a disdainful tone.

"I should be ashamed of her if she could not. I have always acted on the belief that my duty, as a mother of daughters, next to training them to be good, is to teach them to be useful."

"But, dear Mrs. Merton, surely young *ladies* ought *never* to go into the *kitchen?*" argued Mrs. Bexley, with impressive emphasis.

"I should sincerely commiserate all such young ladies, if ever they became wives in these colonies, or even in England," replied Mrs. Merton, with quiet earnestness. "No girl knows what vicissitudes may attend her lot in life. No human wisdom can assure to her unchequered affluence; and even should she enjoy such, it may not always command for her perfectly able and trained servants. So that in any case, even with the most secure and brilliant prospects, she ought to be skilled in all those duties which are truly and significantly summed up as 'woman's work.' Then, if rich, she can direct her household with independent judgment, and see that each member of it does justice to his or her branch of service. She will neither be unreasonably exacting, nor an ignorantly negligent mistress. Her house will be neat and orderly, her family comfortable and well served, and her servants diligent and cheerful. Should she see more of the dark side of Fortune's mantle than of its silver lining, her knowledge of domestic work will be yet more essential; and her cottage-home, with perhaps only one untaught girl as maid-of-all work, may be made a nest of quiet and even elegant comfort; whilst ignorance, and its woful sister, fine-ladyism, would create anarchy even in the mansion, and of the cottage make a den of misery and discomfort. A man of naturally angelic temper (may I say?) *deteriorates* under the influence of dinners raw or cindery, and rooms chaotic and ungarnished. And (may I also dare to hint?) we do meet with

some husbands who are not of the angelic type, and whose backslidings from the courtesies of courtship to the grumble and anathema of discontented married life might often be prevented by a little wifely care and cleverness."

"*Hear, hear!*" cried Mr. Bexley. "I 'm a living evidence of the truth of every word Mrs. Merton has spoken. For, having by nature one of those angelic tempers myself"—cries of Oh! oh! from Harry, and tittering among the girls—"it has been maintained in perfect preservation by the best wife in the world, who in our early days made our bush cottage as bright as a new pin, and cooked the dinner to a turn——"

"Do hold your tongue, John," interposed Mrs. Bexley, fidgetting and reddening.

"And, now we have a good house over our heads, knows how to make that as handsome and comfortable as any man's home need to be; and all she has to do now is to teach the girls to be as clever as herself."

"All very fine, John. But I hope our girls will be superior in many ways to what I was; and they 've got their studies to attend to now. They 'll pick up housekeeping fast enough after awhile."

"When I was a girl," said Mrs. Merton, "my own beloved mother held somewhat similar ideas. Not that she despised culinary skill—which, like most ladies of her time, she possessed in perfection, as well as an unusual share of intelligence and accomplishments—but she wished my youth to be devoted to gaining other instruction, and thought I could learn the lore of domestic duties afterwards, when, to use the usual delusive phrase, my education was finished—as if the education of any rational being ever could be finished! The longer I live, the nearer I find myself to the beginning of mine."

Mrs. Bexley laughed outright.

"You? why, I always heard you were such a learned lady, you knew everything. Dr. Smith here the other day said you understood botany, and—and——"

"Geology," put in Harry.

"Yes, I daresay that was one—and lots more of that sort of thing. And we know how you can draw and paint; and I 've never heard anybody play the piano and sing like you yet; and the other day, when those foreigners came to dinner, you and Lina beat even Bexley, jabbering French. And as to fancy-work, and millinery and plain sewing too, they 're all at your fingers' ends—no matter what—and then to hear *you* talk of beginning your education; I wonder at you!"

"You enormously overrate my small acquisitions," said Mrs. Merton,

laughing. "But I was going to tell you that I found the error of my dear mother's system when I first had a home of my own to manage in the colonies, and very heartily lamented that I had not thoroughly learned to practise a housewife's duties when I had enjoyed the opportunity. Shall I ever forget the agony of making my first plum-pudding!" and Mrs. Merton laughed merrily at the recollection.

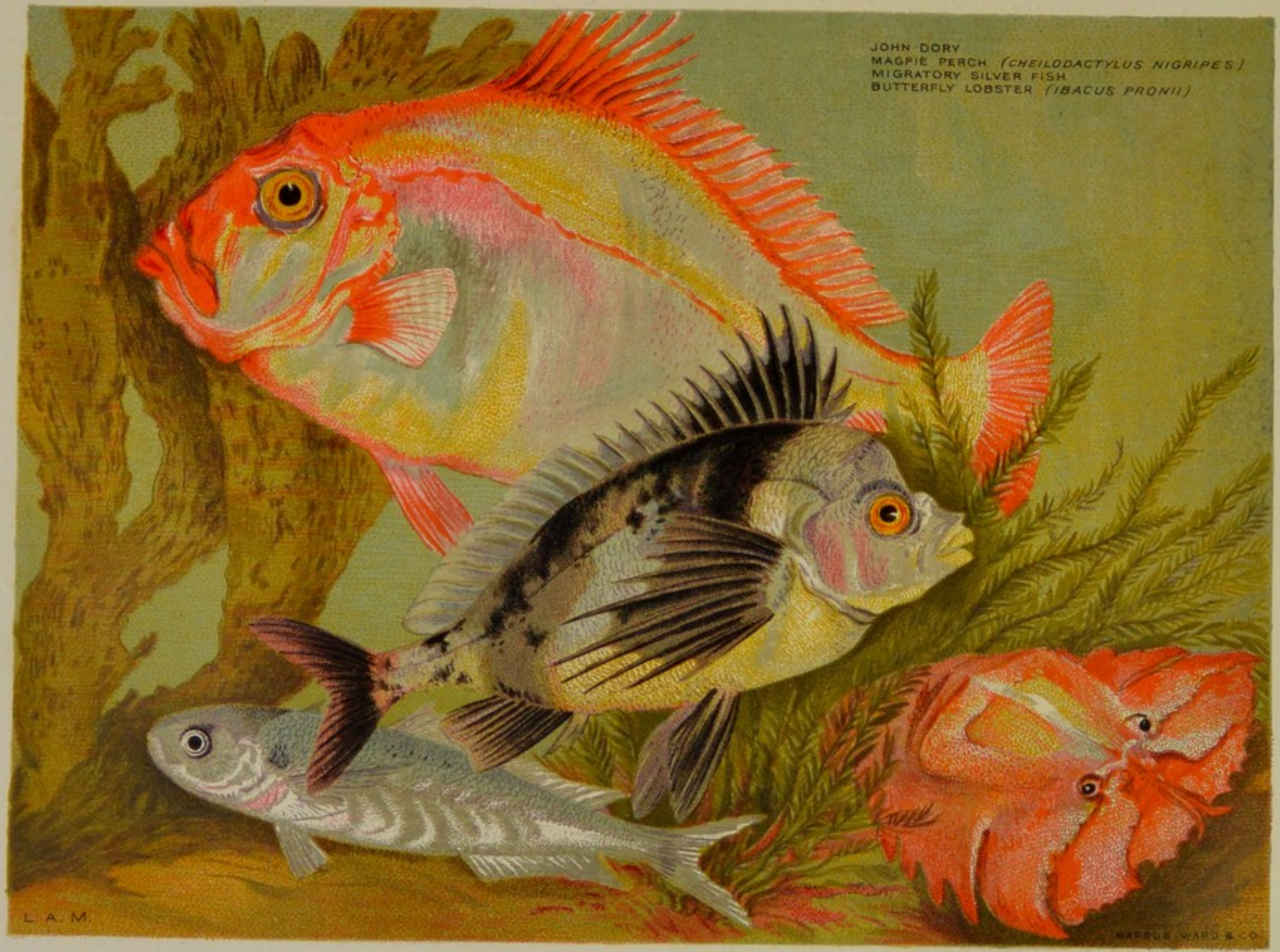
"It 's not a very agonising matter now, seemingly," said Mr. Bexley; "so tell us how it was."

"Well, I don't think I should have suffered so much had I been left quite alone with my task; but we had two very decent married emigrant couples as servants (for Harold wished to spare me the presence of convict women in the house, if possible), and one of the wives acted as cook, the other as dairy-woman. I have no doubt now that either of them would have made our Christmas pudding, after a fashion, but I had said I would do it myself. How bitterly I repented my rash resolve, words cannot express! However, I collected all the ingredients as well as I could divine what they must be—raisins, currants, flour, suet, sugar, candied peel, spice, brandy—all beaten together with milk in a stiff batter. I buttered the mould well, and desired Hannah to continue beating the batter for another five minutes. How thankful I should have been had she uttered a word of advice or comment! But my two sedate serving-women looked on, with attentive, and, as I thought, mercilessly-critical eyes, in silence. I tried to think of anything else that ought to go in, but in vain; and the fatal crisis of putting into the pot was imminent, when the kitchen-door opened suddenly, and little Ruth, the cook's daughter, came in with some eggs in her apron.

"'Oh, is the puddin' done, ma'am? I thought you 'd maybe rather have duck-eggs for it.'

"I could have kissed her on the spot! I wonder I didn't. My credit and my pudding were saved. With—as I flattered myself—perfect and dignified composure, I broke the precious eggs, added them to the batter, put it into the mould, tied it down, and saw it into the pot; but not until that crucial test of a pudding, the eating—when it proved excellent—did I feel absolute assurance that I had not composed an original kind of soup instead; and, like Dickens' good Mrs. Cratchit, when the weight was off my mind, I honestly confessed that I had had my doubts as to the quantity of every article in the composition.*

* Mrs. Cratchit said that, now the weight was off her mind, she would confess she had had her doubts about the quantity of flour.—*Christmas Carol.*


JOHN DORY
MAGPIE PERCH (CHEILODACTYLUS NIGRIPES)
MIGRATORY SILVER FISH
BUTTERFLY LOBSTER (IBACUS PRONII)
L. A. M.
MARCUS WARD & CO.

Next day I sent into Sydney, procured a copy of Dr. Kitchener's *Cook's Oracle*, and, following its precepts, dashed off into curries, omelets, and other good things, with confidence and success, and have gone on collecting culinary wisdom ever since; for I am thoroughly satisfied that, to know how economical and appetising dinners should be served, and, failing expert servants, to be able to take the work into one's own hands, is no despicable item in the desirable knowledge of 'how to make home happy.'"

"Ah! a fine pudding you'd have had, with no eggs in it!" observed Mrs. Bexley.

"And what sort of a pudding would our Lucy make, if left to herself?" asked her husband.

Mrs. Bexley rose.

"If you're going to talk nonsense, John, we'll go"—and the mothers and daughters and guests soon dispersed through drawing-rooms and verandah, John Bexley meanwhile saying to himself—

"But Lucy, and the young ones too, *shall* know how to cook, and to do true woman's work, or, by George, they shall learn nothing else. A parcel of trash and vanity—that's what they learn now, like the rest of the girls. A smattering of languages—not one thoroughly understood. A tasteless squalling and strumming, in the name of music, that, though they're my own daughters, sets my teeth on edge. I don't believe one of them can make herself a frock, or me a shirt; but all over the house there's a lot of rubbishy 'fancy-work'—as they call it, being devoid of either fancy or invention—that costs more time, money, and eyesight than would serve for mastering some useful trade or noble science. I'll stop it, as sure as my name's John Bexley."

Long and earnest was the discussion held by him and his good wife in sacred privacy that night.

After breakfast next morning—

"Linnet!" quoth Mr. Bexley, "I've a wager of twenty pounds depending upon you—will you win it for me?"

"Oh! I? What about, please?"

"Why, I've bet twenty sovereigns—money down—that you will cook the dinner to-day, entirely yourself. I've secured your mother's consent, and have given our cook a holiday till to-morrow morning."

"I believe he's gone mad!" said Mrs. Bexley, hastily leaving the room.

Lina's colour went and came, and her heart beat, whilst her little white teeth compressed her under-lip, ere she spoke.

"Oh! how could you, Mr. Bexley! I really do not think I can. I never did, you know, anything like the dinners *you* have."

"*I* think you can, my love," said Mrs. Merton, encouragingly; "and I am sure you will try."

"I don't understand your patent roasters and ovens, and all those things," said poor Lina.

"Perhaps not; but the kitchen-maid does, and will attend to all that. Your task is to prepare and compose the dishes, and see that they come to table all right; just a plain, farm-house dinner. There's a kangaroo for soup, a turkey, a leg of mutton, and some rabbits. I leave the selection of sweets and 'kickshaws' to yourself. And, my dear little girl," added Mr. Bexley in an undertone, "in complying with what may seem to you a queer, unreasonable whim, you will do me an essential service. Remember that—and fear nothing."

So Lina, donning a large apron, and tucking up her sleeves, entered upon her unexpected occupations of chopping, larding, stuffing, trussing, making pastry, custards, and creams—Susan, the good-natured and highly-amused kitchen-maid, taking care that the ovens were properly heated, and all requisite utensils ready, but all the responsibility resting on Lina. Long before her task was done, she quite enjoyed it; the appliances in the capacious, well-furnished kitchen and larder were so complete and convenient.

Lucy came and looked in once or twice, half-amused and half-angry, and poor Mrs. Bexley skirmished uneasily about; but her husband, who was evidently on guard, summarily ejected both, lest, as he said, they might assist Lina, and claim to divide with her the merit of her success.

Punctually at six, the gong sounded as usual, and Lina, who had been dressed some time, but had resumed her apron whilst she superintended "dishing," and gave final touches to gravies, &c., doffed it, and, passing in with the rest, took her place, a slightly heightened colour being all the visible evidence of the morning's duties.

The dinner, excellent in every particular, was enjoyed and eulogised, as it deserved to be. Mr. Bexley was triumphant, his wife somewhat silent and subdued, convinced against her will. Harry openly taunted his sisters with their comparative ignorance, when his father interposed.

"Say no more now, Harry. We are going to enter on a new system altogether. We all see that a young lady is in no whit less ornamental because she is useful, and I trust it will not be very long ere we sit down to a dinner of Lucy's cooking; for, from this day forth, both she and Kate will add housewifery

to their other lessons, and in turn act as their mother's disciples—apprentices—*aides-de-camp*—whatever title they like best, in every department of domestic arrangement. They cannot have a better teacher, that I know, and I hope they will endeavour to do her credit. But of this they may rest assured: unless they learn how to use a frying-pan, I'll lock up the piano; and if they don't very soon make me a shirt a-piece, with needles and fingers—*not machines*—I'll confiscate every scrap of fancy-work in the house."

The girls pouted a little, and a few tears fell silently and unremarked; but though their father was usually indulgent to a fault, they knew that when he did "pass a law," as they called it, law it was in that house; and they had the good sense to accept the inevitable without an openly uttered murmur. But poor Lina felt that she had, all unwittingly, become a *bête noir* to her young friends, and with loving gentleness strove to regain her wonted pleasant place in their affection. Lucy, whose frank though hasty temper yielded at once, put her arm through Lina's, and drew her away for a private catechising.

"Now, you naughty girl, a nice mess you've got us into, with your extra cleverness! Papa would never really have made drudges of us—much as he often growls—if Mrs. Merton and you had not confirmed all his horrid, old-fashioned notions. I'm very angry with you."

"But indeed, Lucy, you should not be, for it is a very good thing to know how to be useful in a house, and—now don't be shocked—I am quite fond of cooking nice dishes, and seeing Papa and all our dear people enjoy them."

"I don't want to get my face scorched at the fire, and my hands made all rough and coarse for anybody else's sake, I assure you," grumbled Lucy.

"Oh! that's it, is it?" said Harry, who joined them. "Come now, compare paws, you two. Ah! I knew it. Your do-nothing fingers are not in a bit better condition than Gwendoline's, and not half so well shaped either; they're thick and dumpy, and hers are quite taper."

"I didn't make my fingers," said Lucy crossly, snatching away her hand.

"And, Lucy dear," coaxed Lina, "your hands need not become coarse in the least, in doing all that you will need, in learning to cook and to do housework either. Look at Mamma's hands, after so many years of constant work of all kinds. Few fine ladies' hands are nicer, I am sure; but she takes care of them, and likes me to do the same. We keep our old kid gloves for house wear, and have a pair always in our pockets, which we put on when dusting or sweeping, or putting things in order in the house, so that we are often busy for hours without a soil on our hands. If we did not keep the house neat ourselves,

it would soon be terribly untidy; for we do not have nice parlour-maids like yours, and when the girls we employ first come, they have not a notion of what we mean by the words *clean* or *neat*."

"I wouldn't be bothered with them," said Lucy.

"Then we should often go without any help at all, and that would be much worse. They *are* provoking, but what can you expect from a sawyer's or a shepherd's daughter, who has probably never been in a better dwelling than her father's hut? Mamma is very patient with them, if they are willing to learn, and many of them grow into quite clever servants. Mamma says it is like keeping a finishing school, she has had so very many to teach; and generally as soon as one becomes really able to do her work without constant direction, and is some comfort in the house, she leaves to be married, and another new pupil comes to be drilled into the rudiments as cook or housemaid, obliging us to take up the pudding-making or dusting again."

"I should let things go till the new girl learned," said Lucy.

"Oh dear, that would never do," laughed Lina. "We could not have Papa vexed and made uncomfortable; and, besides, visitors *always* come if you're not ready for them. If no stranger enters the door for a month, some one who you would wish should find the house nice is sure to arrive if carpets are up or any ugliness afoot. That's a rule without an exception."

"I suppose it is. If we have not so good a dinner as usual, strangers always drop in. Ah, well—if anyone had told me a week ago that I should be ordered to cook, and shouldn't be cross for a month over it, I would not have believed them; but, if no worse than you say, I suppose one can bear it; I fancied any kitchen-work must be so dirty."

"What we do ourselves is not, because there is always some girl or boy or man to assist, though they could not be trusted to cook. I never cleaned a saucepan, nor scrubbed a floor or a table. I *have* cleaned knives—that's easy enough—and I often clean the silver and wash glass and china if we have awkward or 'unlucky' servants, but I daresay you will not need to do even that. Mamma or I always make the preserves, but we do not clean the preserving-pan. I am sure you will not mind your kitchen-work half as much as you fancy."

"I begin to think so too. Come and try that new duet with Harry. I'll play the accompaniment."

"But you never explained what Guy meant by the new girl being as good fun as Sophia," said Harry. "What did *she* do?"

"All sorts of queer things—and *she's* presumed to be an experienced cook—serving two pies on one large dish, like a pair of fowls, and the Governor was dining with us that day; chopping up quail, and frying them with a quantity of onions—that was when Mamma and I were away from home, you may be sure—and other like barbarisms. And one day she put her head in at the dining-room door, saying in a mincing tone—'The—ah! mutton for the *jerrico*, if you please, Miss;' and the children did not call harricot by its proper name for a long while after. Another time she said to Mamma, 'You see, 'm, you *wants* a knowledgable pusson for *your* cook. It's lucky you come across *me*. What use would some o' them hignorant gells be to a lady like you? You might horder a hamlick, or a frogleysee, or a dish o' rustles, and they wouldn't know how to make such things.' And Mamma said she had to think for a minute before translating the unknown words into omelet, fricassee, and rissoles. Guy was particularly tickled by hearing her declare that 'the reesins and currins, and rice and spice, and things as grows in this country, ain't half as good as them as grows in England.' Poor Sophia! I think her ignorance and conceit were about equal."

CHAPTER XXVI.

"Oh! welcome guest,
Though unexpected here."

A MONTH passed quickly away for Lina and her little sister, and pleasantly for their mother also; but the thoughts of home duties, and of the dear ones left, as it seemed to her, far too long without her loving ministrations, determined her not to accede to any more entreaties for delaying their return. Not, however, till the letter had been posted which fixed the day for Mr. Merton to come for them, did she let her warm-hearted friends know what had been done.

"Ah, well," said Mr. Bexley, after a hearty grumble, "a wilful woman will have her way, I suppose. Your sex have had it too long to alter now. You must come again soon, that is all. And now I want my Linnet for ten minutes. Put on your hat, child."

Walking briskly down the garden to a seat under a huge weeping willow, he sat down, signing to Lina to do the same, before he spoke.

"Linnet, I want to know which you'd like best—a grand piano, the same as Lucy's; or Selim, and a new habit and side-saddle."

"Oh, Mr. Bexley!" was all that the astonished Lina could utter for the moment, but a rosy flush of delight told better than words the effect of his question.

"Because, my dear, I wish to give you a keepsake, and what you would really like best, and would give you most pleasure. So which shall it be?"

"You are so good—too kind, Mr. Bexley."

"Not a bit of it. Well?"

"But please—if you only would—I'd rather——"

"Have a dozen silk gowns? Very well."

Lina laughed. "Oh no, no, no; I never had one in my life."

"The more reason you'd like them, perhaps."

"No, indeed, nothing like that. Only I wish——" and she stopped again, blushing violently.

"Jewellery?" guessed Mr. Bexley. "Very well; what shall it be?"

"Oh no. But Lucy's piano cost above a hundred and fifty guineas; Mrs. Bexley told me so."

"Very well. What then?"

"And you would give *me* one the same?"

"The very same. Would not your pretty songs go nicely to it?"

"A hundred and fifty guineas!" murmured Lina. "Oh, Mr. Bexley, that money would make me so happy, if you would only do something else with it. Don't be displeased with me—pray, don't—but it would almost keep my brother Louis at school for three years, and he *is* so anxious to go; and since that dreadful flood, Papa found he could not afford it, and we are so sorry Louis has to work instead of being at school. I am afraid I have done wrong in speaking, but—but——" and poor Lina's brave speech was choked by tears.

Her listener's eyes looked half-inclined to follow suit.

"*Wrong?* God bless the child. A girl of ten thousand, that she is. And you'd rather send Louis to school than have a horse of your own, or a new piano?"

"Oh yes, yes; it would make me so happy—all of us so happy—how could I thank you enough? But then, again, Papa might not like my speaking of it—I'm afraid I've done wrong."

"Don't you trouble your dear little heart about it. Louis shall go to school with our Edgar, or my name's not John Bexley. I'll settle all that. But I'm sorry I'm not to go shopping for your fairing, eh?"

"I am so afraid Papa will be angry. You know Papa's very proud—no, not proud exactly, but independent, you know, in some things, and——"

"I knew your father before you did, little woman, and I'll make it all right; only leave me to do it my own way, and let this little matter be a dead secret between you and me, till all's settled."

"Thank you—thank you—but I may tell Mamma? She will be so glad."

"Tell Mamma? Well, yes, if Mamma can be trusted," said Mr. Bexley, smiling, as he tucked Lina's hand under his arm, and, after picking for her a handful of choice flowers, sent her off with the happy tidings to her mother.

As much amusement and hospitality as could be compressed into the three

days Mr. Merton allowed himself with his generous old friend having been conscientiously achieved, the morning of departure arrived. If all the gifts that were pressed upon our friends had been accepted, they would have needed a baggage-waggon for their conveyance; as it was, so many precious packages of ferns, plants, and cuttings, besides the basket of cygnets, were stowed away in the dog-cart, that the feet of its occupants found but scant accommodation—Mrs. Bexley's own last contribution being a closely-packed basket of substantial dainties and wine, for luncheon on the road.

All loving farewells were spoken, and Mr. Merton was starting, when a reminder came from Mr. Bexley.

"And mind you bring Louis over next month, to meet Edgar, as we arranged."

"All right. God bless you."

The little conspiracy between Lina and her kind host had evidently prospered.

The journey was performed without any special incident, and as the last road-gate was shut, and the windows of home were seen through the trees, gleaming brightly in the shining sun, one or two short barks of welcome from the quick-eared watch-dogs were followed by a glad shout, as Guy and Louis, with the shorter-legged Frank in their rear, came racing down the drive to meet the travellers.

"Guess who 's come!" cried Guy, as soon as the first greetings were over. "Papa! Mamma! do guess."

"How can I?" said Mr. Merton. "Some very unpleasant person, whom you dislike extremely, to judge by your manner."

"Oh yes! a dreadful bore," laughed Guy; "but you don't guess."

"Seeing is knowing, not guessing," said his mother, pointing to a tall, bearded figure advancing across the lawn.

"Oh! Uncle Cyril, why did you come out? I wanted them to guess who was here."

"This *is* a pleasant surprise," said Mrs. Merton.

"Where have you dropped from, old fellow?" cried her husband, heartily clasping the outstretched hand.

Cyril Forrester, thus gladly welcomed, was an old and valued friend of the Mertons, and though not related to them, was always styled "uncle" by the children; and being a lone man, without living kinsfolk, he said the brevet-rank he enjoyed under his friend's roof was all the family title he possessed, and so

encouraged its continuance. Having a small certain income, which sufficed for his bachelor needs, he still liked employment, and cherished the idea of some day making a fortune, when the favourable opportunity—not yet apparent—should "turn up." He had for the past three years been on a sheep-station in Riverina as a "boundary-rider," with several other gentlemen, as well born and educated as himself, for "mates," each receiving a salary scarcely sufficing to provide the rough clothes they wore; and Mr. Forrester, after struggling on bravely against hard work, heat, and privations of all kinds, until serious illness set in, was now invalided to Tasmania for such recovery as might be possible.

A happy circle, and a merry one too, met around the tea-table that evening. The young people were allowed to linger later than usual, and the elder trio declined to look at the clock when they at last retired.

CHAPTER XXVII.

The serpent, subtlest beast of all the field,
Of huge extent sometimes, with brazen eyes,
. . . . .
Wondrous in length and corpulence.

MILTON.

VERY pleasantly busy was the whole family next day. Lina, with garden-apron and stout gloves, trowel in hand, unpacked her treasured ferns, and planted them in the shady nook where her brothers had formed for her a suitable abode for them with soil and pieces of rock. Louis, whilst assisting her in his usual quiet, kindly way, listened to her admiring descriptions of the well-kept and extensive grounds and gardens at Walloora, well-pleased, too, to find that he was destined to see all the wonders for himself so soon, and to have his cherished but almost abandoned hope of school realised, though Lina left unrevealed her own generous share in his good fortune.

Guy was hard at work digging over and carefully weeding a border for his mother, to make a nursery for the cuttings and young plants she had brought home, whilst she sat by, trimming and preparing her treasures, and hearing—albeit the narrative somewhat retarded the digging—details of all the domestic events of her absence. How many goslings had been hatched, and how the crows took all the fine brood between breakfast-time and noon, to the intense disgust of old Isaac, who had carried his gun about ever since, without getting a shot at the thieves. How a hawk took one of the turkey-chicks, and how Guy "dropped him pretty quick, and he dropped the chicken, but the poor little beast was quite dead." How Linny's cow had such a pretty calf, all white; and so on—a chronicle of farm-yard news, highly interesting to those immediately concerned.

Frank and Freda were wholly engrossed by the little grey cygnets, feeding

them, and sitting down with them on the lawn, and delighted to see the bold little birds cuddle up close to them, and squat down all together, basking in the sun.

Mr. Merton and Mr. Forrester, meanwhile, went on a general tour of inspection round the farm, and on visiting the fencers who were at work near the river, found that a large black snake had been killed by them that morning, although so early in the season, the warm sun having probably enticed it out.

In the evening, when the matter was again alluded to, Guy enquired—

"How big are the snakes in Riverina, Uncle Cyril?"

"Six or seven feet long is no unusual size for black snakes.* I have often killed them as large, and heard of one that measured nine feet. Sweet-looking creatures they are! and they show fight too. I generally carried my gun when out boundary-riding (that is, going round the outskirts and divisions of the run, and seeing if the wire fences are secure, and mending them, if broken)—there's nothing like a gun in a snaky country—but one day I met a monster, and, as ill luck would have it, I had shot away all my powder at wild ducks, so I threw the gun at him, thinking to settle him that way, but, I suppose, missed him, for he went sailing round and round and over it, biting at it again and again. I had to wait a good bit to recover my gun; but at last he left, and I got it again, and followed him, and had another 'shy,' but the long grass prevented my seeing well, and I don't think he was touched. Again I picked up the gun, and got in front of the snake, took good aim, and disabled him, so then I finished him with a stirrup-iron; he was close on seven feet long."

"What a brute!" exclaimed Guy.

"But in the country further north there are serpents—of the Python family, I believe†—really tremendous fellows, more like the boa in size. A man named Jock, on our station, told me a story, which I'll tell to you. He was once up in Queensland, driving a bullock-team, and a mate of his, Sandy, had charge of another. One morning he started early to look for the bullocks, leaving Sandy asleep at their camp. He was a good while away, yet when he got back, Sandy was still lying as when he left, but across his body, with its head resting on his chest, was a huge serpent, sixteen or eighteen feet long, and as thick as a man's thigh. Jock did not know that these big fellows have no deadly poison fangs, and he feared that his mate had been killed by it. Half-

* *Pseulechis porphyriana.*

† "Python is Indian only; probably *Morelia variegata* or *Liusis fuscus*, commonly known as 'Carpet Snakes.'"—Prof. M'Coy.

paralysed by grief and terror, he crept as near as he durst, knelt down, took steady aim at the snake's head, and fired——"

"Well—and then?"

"Sandy jumped up—the snake didn't."

"I'm glad the man was not killed," said Guy. "Snake stories are generally horrid; but I heard one yesterday that made me laugh. Papa, you know Tom Allen? Well, he saw a Black Snake* the other day, and it went under a little she-oak, leaving a third of it outside. Tom pulled out a boot-lace, and tied one end tight round the tail, and the other end round the stick, and left it so, telling his people at home how he had 'tethered a snake.' Next day he went the same way again, and there lay the snake, stiff and cold. It had been a hard frost all night. Tom's sisters had been teasing him to get them snake-bones to make bracelets of, so he would not lose a dead one, but doubled it up, put it in his pocket, and rode off towards home. As he was cantering along, he felt something moving, and saw the snake's head poked out, and the glittering eyes looking up at him. He yelled, and his mare bolted in a fright. He was so terrified he had not power to check her, but she luckily made for home. All he could do was to shake furiously at his coat, and so they dashed into the yard, he shrieking 'Stop the mare! stop her!'

"Old Allen stood at the barn-door, staring at him, and exclaimed—'The lad's drunk! No—he hasn't had time to get drunk! He's gone stark mad! he's mad!' Still Tom yelled, and the more he yelled, the more the mare plunged about, till one of the men caught her, and Tom tore his coat off, and the snake tumbled out. It's really dead now."

Mrs. Merton shuddered. "Such a hair's-breadth escape is much too terrible to laugh at."

"Well, Mamma, but it must have been so absurd too."

"The blacks are more afraid of snakes than even we are," said Cyril. "The *gins* (wives), who are wandering about and coming to the station at all hours, in a general way, know quite well the season when snakes run at night, and won't stir after dark if they can help it. They say, 'Too much black fellow walk about' then. One dark night, as I was riding home through some trees with low branches, I put up my hand to break one off, and a small snake was on it, which bit me sharply as I laid hold of him."

"Not a venomous one?" said Mr. Merton.

---

* *Hoplocephalus curtus.*

"That 's more than I know; but I tied a cord pretty tight round my wrist at once, cut and gashed my hand with my knife all round the bite, and sucked the wound, and I felt no more of it. Accidents and narrow escapes from snakes are so continually happening, that I only wonder at the comparative rarity of fatal cases."

"Had you any other kinds of snakes where you were?" asked Guy.

"Several. The Carpet Snakes* are the largest, frequently twelve feet long, but not venomous. They climb trees very quickly, and live on birds and opossums. We were camping out one night, and I nearly asleep, when my companion roused me to look at two carpet snakes in a tree close to us. They were apparently at play with one another, gliding and frisking among the branches. I believe they kill their larger prey by compression, as the boa constrictor is known to do. The Brown Snakes,† which abound on the plains, are deadly, and the blacks dread them more than all the rest. They add wonderful celerity of motion to the usual list of snake accomplishments, and when you see one, you must be prompt; for unless you have him very quick, he will have *you*. They are literally like lightning, in their dart and spring. They run from five to six feet long, and are very slender in form. The Mallee Snake‡ is another very venomous one. The largest of these I ever saw was killed at the station, in our forge. The old blacksmith had been busy outside for some little time, and on coming back into the shop, saw a mallee snake lying inside, just across the doorway. A dray-axle happened to rest against the wall, which the man dropped upon his unwelcome guest, crippling it, when he soon killed it. This snake I saw measured. It was eleven feet six inches in length, of a dirty ash-colour. I killed many of them three and four feet long, but none like the blacksmith's friend. They are a serious and much-dreaded peril in the dense mallee scrubs, where they run in the thick tangled growth overhead; and when men are riding through after stock, they get bitten from above and killed."

"Are there not large iguanas near the Lachlan, where you were, Cyril?" asked Mrs. Merton.

"Yes, plenty—from four to seven feet in length; the long slender tail being more than one-half of that, or two-thirds, I should think."

"Very ugly things, are they not?" said Lina.

"I never could think so. Of course they are reptiles, and that 's an ugly word; but they are beautifully marked with black and white, and are such

* *Morelia variegata.* † *Diemensia superciliosa.* ‡ *Hoplocephalus curtus.*

active, clean-made, clever-looking, bright-eyed creatures, that I always admired, and rather liked them. When I have come upon one suddenly, and stood still, I have been amused to see it lift its head up and look curiously at me, evidently taking a careful observation of the phenomenon; but if anything startled it, off it went at once, and up a tree, if one chanced to be near. They usually ascend cork-screw fashion, but, if watched, are careful to keep the tree between them and the observer. The blacks kill and eat them, and dogs generally chase them. One day I was out on the plains, and saw a man at a little distance, to whom I had just been speaking, suddenly fling himself into extraordinary contortions, yelling like a maniac the while. I followed up to see what had happened. The man's dog had chased a poor Iguana* through the grass, in the direction of his master. The terrified lizard, not seeing any tree to run up, had accepted the man as the only visible substitute, and mounted to his shoulders almost at a bound. I could not dismount for laughing, for I knew there was no danger, except for the iguana. The man threw himself down and rolled on the ground, and the dog killed the poor beast."

"But there are more kinds of lizards?"

"Half-a-dozen, I daresay. The wide, hot plains abound with them, of all sorts and sizes; and the various species seem to run into one another, so as to make it difficult for anyone but a naturalist to mark out the distinctions and definitions. The largest Yew Lizards† are eighteen or twenty inches long, with a large, broad head, and a moderately long tail; all are dark-coloured, but some have a smooth, others a very rough scaly skin, clearly denoting different species. The next in size‡ have a short, thick, bob-tail, and two little horn-like excrescences on the head. Those of the third size§ have a still shorter tail, looking as though cut off abruptly; a fourth is less still.‖ In all, the head is large and broad. There are thousands of them all over the plains, and my dogs were continually killing them."

"Do the blacks eat them?" asked Louis.

"I am not sure that they never do, but I think not. I never knew them eat one. They devour the eggs of all lizards whenever they find them. I came upon a couple of blacks one day very busy scratching up the earth to the depth of more than a foot. They had been trying to unearth an iguana, and lost him, but had found a quantity of eggs—fifty or sixty, I daresay, and of all varieties

---

* *Hydrosaurus varius.* † *Grammatophora cristata.* ‡ *G. barbata.*
§ *G. muricata.* ‖ *G. ornata.*

of form—round, oval, short, long, straight, and crooked, of a dingy white colour. 'What will you do with them?' I asked. 'Eat 'em,' was the laconic reply. I think they roasted them first."

"You spoke of long grass," said Guy. "I thought there was not any long grass in those hot places, Uncle?"

"If you were to see the plains about the Lachlan, in what we call a good season, they would astonish you. I have seen the grass over two feet high for miles and miles of country. The wild-oat grass would cut from one to two tons an acre over hundreds of miles."

"And do not the station owners make hay of it to feed their wretched animals in years of scarcity?" asked Mrs. Merton.

"No—I never knew it done; though one would think that anyone with common sense *would* do it. What the flocks and cattle can eat, they do, and get 'rolling fat;' and what is not eaten, rots; and perhaps the next season is one of drought and consequent starvation, but no one ever lays up the abundance when it is given. I did urge our chief to have a few stacks of hay made, if only for the station horses; but I was only laughed at as a Johnny Newcome, so I shut up, and said no more. If I had a station of my own there, *wouldn't I make hay?* that's all."

"It does seem senseless and improvident, to the last degree."

"It is; and many other things equally improvident are done daily on stations where the general privation and the shortcoming in personal comfort is trying enough. Heaven knows, life there is hard, inevitably; but many things might be done, which are not, to render it less miserable."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

'Tis born with all : the love of Nature's works
Is an ingredient in the compound, Man,
Infused at the creation of the kind ;
And though th' Almighty Maker has throughout
Discriminated each from each, by strokes
And touches of His hand, with so much art
Diversified, that two were never found
Twins at all points—yet this obtains in all,
That all discern a beauty in His works,
And all can taste them : minds that have been formed
And tutor'd, with a relish more exact,
But none without some relish, none unmoved.

COWPER.

"UNCLE CYRIL," said Freda, as Mr. Forrester lifted her and her doll on to his knee, "did you ever see an emu? I've seen two."

"And I must have seen two hundred, one time or another, little woman; but not many at once, except one awfully hot day—a day to be remembered as hottest even amongst the scorchers I have experienced. The poor emus had got down into the creek amongst the lignum bushes for a little shade, and I saw over a hundred then, in different family parties."

"What are lignum bushes?"

"Ah! now you have me, Freda. I do not know what a botanist would call them; they are something like cane, but with large leaves, which all animals are fond of, and they grow about eight feet high in the creeks and gullies. I usually saw emus in parties of about seven, eleven, or perhaps thirteen, not more, together, and seldom near enough to observe them. But once, as I was busy at work, stooping down, mending the bottom wire of a fence, I saw a lot of emus coming gradually nearer and nearer. I wanted to finish my job, and also not to scare them, so I went on very quietly, and they came quite close, peeping and

prying about, stretching their long necks, and watching me with their keen bright eyes, as if curious to examine narrowly into my proceedings, and looking as much as to say, 'What are *you* about, old fellow? what 's *your* little game?' I kept still, highly amused at their superintendence of my work; and after a thorough investigation of it and me for some minutes, they turned and walked off again. There were two full-grown birds; the rest were young ones."

"And you did not kill any. I am so glad," said Louis.

"What on earth should I kill them for? They did me no harm, nor anybody else, that I know of, except that if pursued they would perhaps break a wire of the fence sometimes. I neither wanted them to eat nor to wear. It was very pleasant and amusing to see them in their free natural life, and watch their antics and attitudes. I wished very much that I had been artist enough to have made a sketch of the family group, it was so quaint and pretty; but it never entered into *my* head to hurt a feather of *theirs*, I can assure you."

"Oh, how like what Papa always says!" cried Lina. "I wish you would go about the world, Uncle Cyril, and convert people to our creed. How much more happiness and beauty there would be!"

"Make me the grand expositor of the principles of the *Anti-wanton-destruction and Cruelty-prevention Association*, eh, Lina? Well, I quite go with you as to the crying need for reforming many of the barbarities of civilisation. Is that a *bull?* No; because *true* civilisation could not be barbarous, and what we call such, most decidedly is; but I am afraid a poor apostle of our faith would not be admited, far less obeyed, by the ringleaders of the very numerous body of offenders. Princes and nobles would turn a deaf ear to St. Paul himself, if he proposed to interfere with their savage pastimes. And your sex would not be a bit more tolerant; for I should advocate and insist on total abstinence in the matter of feather ornaments—birds' wings, and all such Red-Indian-squaw paraphernalia of the present silly and most cruel fashions. From the Arctic seas to tropical forests is now waged woman's war of extermination against the whole bird creation. Millions on millions of lovely, harmless—ay, more than harmless, *useful*—happy lives are sacrificed every year to gratify the depraved fancies of vain, idle women, who, if they cared to realise *our* ideal of the sex, would be too humane and gentle to endure the thought that a single sparrow should be destroyed for their pleasure."

"And what pleasure they can have in sticking a dried-up, crippled mummy of a bird in their hats, *I* can't think," said Guy. "Even if they looked as well as when alive, it would be a very silly notion. But of all things in the shape

of *ornament*, I do think the greatest failure and the most revolting idea is a stuffed bird. It is never put in right shape, to begin with; its poor little bright eyes are vilely caricatured by dim glass beads, stuck in among the displaced feathers; its beak is shrivelled and deformed; its pretty little feet crippled and shrunk out of all shape; and the plumage, that, when it 's alive, looks as sleek and soft as if it was all one feather, is ragged and ruffled and dull; and the whole concern looks no more like a bird than the dried rose leaves in Mamma's china jar are like roses."

"When I am a rich man," said Louis—"that is, if I ever am—I 'll have all the clever books and good pictures I can get, of all sorts of beasts, birds, and fishes; and I 'll try and see all I can alive in their own homes and native lands; but I 'll never have one stuffed to keep in my house, nor shoot them for any one else to stuff."

"But you did shoot ducks, Uncle Cyril?" said Guy.

"I did, my boy, and so would your father, and most other men in my place. I needed them to eat, and never fired a shot wantonly. I did not kill very many either, for the Black Ducks*—which are the best eating—frequent shallow grassy lagoons, that in rainy seasons cover hundreds of acres, and the ducks are wise enough to keep well off shore and out of range. If alarmed, they rise in absolute clouds, and seem to darken the very air with their numbers."

"Were they all black ducks, or other sorts?"

"Some were Wood Ducks,† large and brown-plumaged, but not nearly so good to eat as the black; and there were Guard Drakes,‡ which seemed to me the same as the Tasmanian mountain duck; and the Whistling Teal,§ that, when they rise, make a loud shrill noise, like a brass whistle, or like the wind in fifty keyholes at once, besides various other kinds. The Ibis‖ was one of the handsomest birds on the lagoon."

"Ibis? Like the sacred Egyptian ibis?" said Mrs. Merton.

"I cannot tell you. It was a bird about two feet high, as big as a small goose, and with clear black and white plumage, like a magpie. I often saw a number of them, standing ranked up in a line, on the banks of the lagoons, probably watching for fish.

"A splendid large White Crane¶ came sometimes, but very rarely, and still

---

* *Anas superciliosa.*
† *Chlamydochen jubata.*
‡ *Casarca tadornoides.*
§ *Dendrocygna arcuata.*
‖ *Falcinellus igneus*—"Found in Egypt, but not the white sacred one."—Prof. M'Coy.
¶ *Herodias syrmatophorus.*

more rarely a second with him. I never saw more. They seemed to prey chiefly on frogs. But the oddest little party of all was the Diver.* In the hot summers of Riverina, these wide lagoons dry up entirely, and every description of water-fowl disappears for months at a time, perhaps years, if drought continue."

"Where do they all go?" asked Louis.

"Well, you see, if I had had wings, I might have gone too, and found out; but as I hadn't, I didn't, and so I don't know. I have an idea that they flew away to some blessed region where water was in existence as a tangible fact, instead of a distant and doubtful recollection."

"And the diver?" asked Mrs. Merton.

"Yes; after the lagoons have been, as I said, perfectly dry for several months—not merely boggy-dry, but absolutely dust-dry—and not a diver to be seen for hundreds of miles, there may be a fall of rain for a few hours, and a little water, a couple of feet deep perhaps, again appears in the hollows; one night's rain will suffice; and then in the morning, as if by enchantment, numbers of divers may be seen in the lagoon."

"Smelt the water, and flew back," suggested Guy.

"Flew? Yes, if they could fly, but they cannot; neither can they run. Their wings are small—no better for flying than the little flippers of a penguin. They have long legs, but set so far back that they seem unable to balance themselves. I have carefully lifted them out of the water in the dam, and set them down on the ground, perfectly unhurt, and they never did anything but topple over and tumble down."

"What *can* they do?" asked Lina.

"Swim—as well as any body, or bird either. But, seeing that they cannot swim across hundreds of miles of dry land, and can neither walk nor fly, how do they travel? and by what means or agency do they make their appearance in this mysterious manner? When caught and put down on land, as I said, they are quite helpless, and roll over, squeaking piteously; but once in the water, they are all alert and nimble. They have a strong, rank odour, which is a beneficial safeguard to them, for the greediest pot-hunter does not care to put *them* in his bag."

"I should like to hear some good naturalist's opinion on the subject," said Mr. Merton.

"So should I. I can only tell you what I have myself repeatedly seen, and

---

* *Podiceps Australis.*

all other people who have lived in the same country will tell you the same thing. It is very odd, and very mysterious. The old philosophers explained the autumnal disappearance of swallows by a theory of their hybernating under water, and I do not doubt they would have accounted for that of the divers by asserting that they burrowed into the earth." *

"Do you remember the invasion of frogs here one summer evening after long drought?" said Mrs. Merton. "That was curious, too. Of course, as compared with Riverina, the heat was not remarkable, but the ground was parched and cracked, and no rain had fallen for many weeks, when one Sunday evening we saw quantities of small frogs climbing up the windows, and hopping in all over the house, even on the kitchen hearth. We could scarcely walk a yard without treading on them, and with them came the rain, first in a dense Scotch mist, and then a thorough down-pour. In the morning, save a few in odd corners, our frog-visitors had disappeared again."

"I remember it well," said Lina. "You called us to come and read, and when we sat down at the drawing-room table, there were frogs on that, and some sitting on the Bibles and Prayer-books. Guy said it was like one of the plagues of Egypt; but the only really unpleasant part of it was the danger of killing the poor little things. We tried to collect them and put them outside, but it was——"

"Very like bottling up the Ganges," said Mr. Merton; "for each one carried out, twenty came in. It seemed as though they rose out of the very floors and carpets beneath our feet; I never witnessed a phenomenon of the kind before nor since. But I have seen an almost equally sudden arrival of fish. That piece of land we used to call the middle lagoon had been perfectly dry for a length of time, having not only lost all claim to its old title, but become devoid of even a puddle, when, after a few hours' heavy rain one night, every little hollow where water stood was found to be full of fish; not miscroscopic things that you might

* Mr. Forrester's description of the diver, and its mysterious re-appearances, is, as may be supposed, another instance of popular error, his being the account generally accepted by the unobservant, and given to me, as an indisputable fact, by several residents in Riverina. Professor M'Coy, of the Melbourne University, to whom I referred the question, says of these birds—"They fly, though unwilling to rise, and with short wings." It is not long since the scientific world was startled by the announced discovery in New Guinea of a gigantic bird, whose wings spread over twenty-two feet, and whose voice was as loud as the scream of a railway engine. This astounding portrait, when reduced to life-size, proves to be that of the red-necked hornbill, whose wings, when extended, do not exceed four or five feet! So that "travellers' tales" are still sometimes told, but, save the above semblance of one, have no place in my humble chronicle.—L. A. M.

say come down in the rain, but two and three inches long. Where did *they* come from?"

"I should like to know," said Cyril. "I can only say with Hamlet—

'There are more things in heaven and earth,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.'"

"Did you often see eagles?" inquired Guy, finding that there were not any more facts to elicit concerning the divers, and having small relish for speculation.

"Yes, frequently, and very large hawks, which prey upon the ducks and the pretty painted Quail,* of which there are great numbers on the plains. One day I saw a flock of ducks suddenly rise, and directly after one of them fell to the ground, struck dead by a hawk. I picked up the duck, and as the hawk came swooping down after his victim, I shot him. There are several birds called Night Hawks† too; some sort of owl, I fancy. After a long day's work, I often had to ride late at night, on my way home, through pine-scrubs, and the unearthly screams and screeches of those creatures seemed too horrible for any bird's throat to produce. Sounding just over one's head, or suddenly close beside one's ear, in the pitchy darkness, it is what Scotch folks call 'eerie,' I can tell you. If a London stage manager could get up such effects for the incantation scene in 'Der Freischutz,' it *would* be a sensation! The common owls assist in the chorus too, and their hooting is not exactly cheerful either."

"Oh, Uncle Cyril, I like to hear the owls," said Lina.

"Very likely. And I have no objection either, to go out now, with any of you, and hear owls too. That's one thing; but hearing them as I used to do, away yonder, was a mighty different matter. Tired—body, bone, and soul—with a long day's boundary-riding of from forty to sixty miles, and mending wire-fences under a broiling sun that made the wire hot to touch; fasting since six or seven in the morning, and probably parched with thirst—for after draining my bottle of water, I might have miles and miles of hot and weary plain to traverse—my poor faithful dog scarcely able to get along with me, and with no pleasant belief in any coming good fortune to put life into a dulled brain or energy into limp muscles—in such times and moods, Linny, we neither see nor hear with quite an unbiassed judgment, I suppose; and so I found the 'voices of the night' in the pine scrubs anything but cheerful."

"How terrible it would have been if your water-bottle had broken," said Louis.

---

* *Turnix varius.* † *Podargus Cuvieri.*

"It could not break, being made of fine thick linen or cotton cloth, double, and closely seamed, with a nozzle sewed in. Of course there was some waste in slight oozing and evaporation; but we found this kind of bottle answer better than any other, and the evaporation kept the water cooler. I have many a time gone short myself, to give enough to my poor dogs to keep life in them; and several died miserably, in spite of all I could do. I have often carried one before me on the horse, some miles, to the nearest well, to save it from dying of thirst on the burning plains."

"You had wells, then?"

"Yes; on one station—not a large one, only carrying 25,000 or 30,000 sheep, and about 100 cattle and horses—there were four wells of 200 feet deep, each costing, with all appliances, £1,000 or £1,200. The water is drawn up by a horse working in a 'whim,' and attached to each well is a large tank and a line of iron troughing, raised on blocks of wood, 150 yards in length or more, in three branches, in a sort of T shape. The quantity of sheep watered at each well varied according to the well's supply—sometimes one well would water 30,000, and another not more than 3,000. We had some very knowing old pensioners among the crows too, who knew the value of our wells as well as we did. There were always, in dry times, flocks of visiting crows that came for water to the tanks and troughs; but we had, besides them, some constant residents, who did good service in devouring dead sheep about the place, and took out their pay in water. They were epicures, too, in their liquor, and found that the water exposed in the tanks was inferior in coolness to that which collected in the canvas hose used for filling the troughs, the ends of which, when not in use, were hung up, allowing a little water to collect in the tube, which these clever old crows used to tap, making holes in the canvas hose with their beaks. Again and again I was puzzled to account for leaks in the hose, and at last detected a crow in the act of pecking the hole, to obtain his cool draught."

"I hope you did not kill him?" said Lina.

"Kill him? no, poor wretch. I knew what thirst was myself too well for that—besides, we could not kill *all* the crows, and the gift of cleverness was not limited to one individual. Immense numbers of little birds, too, used to come round, sitting all along the rails, and as soon as the sheep had gone away, they came in myriads to get a drink. I have often turned a little water into the empty trough, that they might have plenty; and the men at work at a well would often do the same. On a hot day in a dry season—which means a condition of things as near purgatory as need be—I have seen our favourite big Tom cat at the

station lying on the table gasping, with his tongue hanging out, and the room full of little birds hopping all about and over him, seeking for water, but he was too much overcome by heat to even look at them. The acute suffering I have known animals subjected to, in such seasons, makes one doubt if man is justified in taking his good dumb servants into a region where they have so much misery to endure, and where so many perish in agony."

"But man does not take the little birds and the crows there, and they suffer all the same."

"So they do. It is another part of the great enigma—which wiser men than I fail to solve—why creatures, innocent of sin, and unable to amend their condition, should be permitted to suffer. But I have rambled away from the wells which we were talking about. They are only needed in dry seasons. In others the extensive dams afford water. The plains, generally speaking, are a dead level; so much so, that I have seen a deep furrow run by a plough for 200 yards with no perceptible variation—water let into it would not run; and one great difficulty, when we washed our sheep at the well, was to get an escape for the dirty water. The dams are natural depressions or hollows, sometimes 'blind creeks,' which receive the rain, and, when banked up, preserve it for some time. These are made wherever practicable. Some are half-a-mile long, some ten or twelve miles, and others of all intermediate sizes. In a few cases a dozen barrow or cart-loads of earth will make a dam; others cost as much as £10,000 or £12,000. It is an odd thing, that whilst these dams are full, nobody sees any fish in them; but as soon as the water shrinks, small fish are so abundant, that the blacks come and camp on the banks to feast on them. We used to catch some too; they made an acceptable change."

"Are there any more birds there?" asked Louis.

"What boys you are to catechise a fellow! Birds! Yes, plenty more, but not many that I can tell you much about. You see, Louis, I was not employed to explore and observe the natural history of Riverïna. I was only a poor boundary-rider, and, like scores more of the same class, who were better educated (University men, some of them), and possibly even better born than myself—for *all* I knew were the sons of gentleman—we had to work hard to perform our duties, and earn our wages and our tucker."

"Tucker?" echoed Lina.

"Well, then, grub—rations—victuals, if I must give dictionary definitions. Two meals a-day, if we were lucky; mutton, and bread or damper, and tea; no vegetables, no fruit, nor any variety, unless we shot a duck or two, or maybe a

pigeon. There are Bronze-wing Pigeons,* larger than yours in Tasmania, and Wood Pigeons† too—very pretty birds, a sort of cinnamon colour, with crests of curly feathers, and unluckily for them, they are very good to eat. And there are Mallee Hens,‡ which are not good. Even the blacks will not eat them. They are like small, beautifully-formed common fowls, with light-brown or darkish-buff plumage. They live in flocks on the borders of rivers or lagoons, and have regular runs through the scrub and grass along shore. They wait in their covert until a man or dog gets pretty close to them, and then away they fly. The chickens are very pretty little things, and they *can* run!"

"But if the chickens are not good eating, the Turkeys§ are. Did you often get them?" asked Guy.

"No; and for this reason only, that all my week-days were full of fatiguing occupation, not allowing me to go after turkeys—which, by-the-bye, are *bustards*, when called by their right name—and I was too thankful to make Sunday really a day of rest, to feel the least disposition to ride after them then."

"Any parrots?" asked Lina.

"Yes, several sorts. One‖—at least I suppose it's a parrot—is the most dazzling thing I ever saw. Most of its body is snowy, silvery white, and its breast the brightest scarlet. You could not find a satin ribbon in a haberdasher's shop that would come near the colour. And in spring, when the young grass is vividly green, and a flock of these radiant birds are walking about in the clear sunshine, it almost makes one's eyes wink to look at them."

"And there must have been little birds there, as well as big ones?" queried Frank.

"Lots, my boy, wherever there was a pine scrub, or a bush of any sort. But though I always looked at them, and enjoyed seeing them hop and fly about, I really do not know their names, if they have any."

"If? Of course they have names, Uncle Cyril."

"Their own country-folk, the blacks, don't think so, at any rate. A visitor who came up to our station, and who rather went in for science, was asking a black fellow who was with us one day a good many questions, and, pointing to a little bird on a tree, repeated the oft-asked query, 'What's that?' The noble savage glanced contemptuously around, and replied, 'Yah! he too *naurangy* (little); he got no name.'"

---

* *Peristera elegans.* † *Leucosarcia picata.* ‡ *Leipoa ocillata.*
§ *Otis Australasiana.* ‖ *Limatis nasico.*

"Did you ever see a bird dance, Uncle?" enquired Freda. "Because there was a big one at Mr. Bexley's, that, he said, could dance a quadrille as well as I can; but it never would, whilst I was looking at it."

"A Native Companion,* I suppose."

"Yes, that was its name. Something like a great crane."

"*You* could not dance a quadrille all alone by yourself, could you? And so one solitary bird could give you but a very faint notion of the performance Mr. Bexley meant. I only wish you could all see it, as I have often done, when a dozen or twenty of those wonderful birds have been going through their evolutions. You would never forget it. They are over three feet high, and stand as erect as soldiers, in a sort of set figure, not unlike a quadrille; and they step and sidle about, perform solos, advance and retire, set to partners, circling round each other as if possetting, and cross over and back again, all in the gravest and neatest way, as if a dozen feathered disciples of Mr. Turveydrop were giving lessons in elegance and deportment. It is, without any exception, the most curious, diverting, and pretty exhibition I ever beheld. The pity is, that so few who can rightly appreciate the wonderful quaintness and eccentricity of the manœuvres are able to enjoy the sight; for, of course, it is only under rare circumstances that an opportunity occurs for watching them in their perfectly free, wild state."

"I have often thought," said Mrs. Merton, "that the attitudes and deportment of birds display more of coquettish airs and consciousness of grace and beauty than are evinced by any other creatures. They seem to know how lovely they are, and to put on a thousand pretty little affectations of posture and movement, as though in the very spirit of painting the lily, or throwing perfume on the violet—or perhaps I should rather say they know how to place the lily in the best light, and to hold the violet so that its perfume shall be most widely diffused. They both feel their own beauty, and how to enhance its power. Look at a peacock in full glory, as he shimmers his starry train up into a canopy, and seems to insist on the admiring homage of the homely cocks and hens around him! Or watch a party of rose-hill parrots in the garden, or a flock of cockatoos, either white or black. They could all pick and eat their food perfectly well, without any of that graceful and elaborate attitudinising in which they evidently delight. How differently the horse, cow, or sheep demean themselves. They do not attempt to go through any

* *Grus Australasianus.*

distractingly complicated acrobatic feats, but graze and ruminate in a plain business-like way. Yes; I think that birds—pretty birds, at all events—have the organ of love of approbation largely developed, and that they keenly enjoy the possession of their beauty. I do not believe that Cyril's pet friends, the native companions, would dance so elegantly if they were not quite aware that they are very handsome birds. Who ever heard of a carrion-convocation of vultures or condors indulging in the like pretty festivities? or of a pair of cormorants treating themselves to a *pas de deux* over a gorge of fish? Depend on it, mine is the correct theory.

"But here comes the supper-tray. How late you children have sat up! Now, I suppose we must make it later yet, to let you have a biscuit before you go; and then—good night!"



CHAPTER XXIX.

I understand a fury in your words,
But not the words.

SHAKSPERE.

"I AM satisfied that Old Sailor knew me when I arrived," said Cyril, caressing a noble collie of Mr. Merton's. "And three years is a long time for him to remember; but the very first day, he came and put his nose into my hand, and, as soon as I had sat down, rested his head on my knee, gazing up at me, and talking in a low, intelligent sort of half-whimper, exactly as though he would fain say he was glad to see me again."

"As I have not the least doubt he was," said Mr. Merton. "Dogs have most tenacious memories. I have satisfied myself on that point repeatedly. The firm, faithful attachment of animals to man is their most winning characteristic."

"A very odd circumstance happened here a year or two ago," said Mrs. Merton, "which puzzled me, and has puzzled us all, without a ray of enlightenment. It was a case of mistaken identity, and puts what we understand as instinct in a new phase altogether, as it seems to me. Lina had had a little kid given to her, and Guy had at the same time a motherless pet lamb. The two were reared together, fed from the same bottle, lay in the same bed, and were inseparable friends, at play or asleep, always together. So they continued, until fourteen or fifteen months old, when at shearing-time the lamb, a great fat woolly fellow, was taken to the shed and carefully shorn. As soon as the operation was over, poor Billy trotted straight home again, and hurried up to his old friend Nanny, no doubt expecting to find comfort and consolation in her affection for the indignity and spoliation he had suffered; but Nanny, who had never ceased baa-ing after him during his hour's absence, and had been looking and running disconsolately about, asking us all, in her Nanny-goat fashion, what

had become of her friend, faced round on the poor shorn lamb in a fury of anger, butted him off as an impertinent interloper, and still went on running from place to place, seeking anxiously for her lost sheep, ever and anon turning short round to butt poor Billy, who ran after her in answer to the well-known call, only to meet the cruellest repulse and insult. Nor could all our endeavours serve to effect a reconciliation. The Billy of Nanny's affection was gone—lost to her for ever with his woolly coat; and she evidently believed that the shorn sheep, so patiently trotting after her, with such a pained expression in his innocent face, was a total stranger, assuming unwarrantable privileges. It was altogether so pitiful, that I was glad for Billy to leave the homestead and join a flock, so as to have companions of his own kind. Now will you explain this—Why did Nanny fail to recognise her own beloved friend, after his coat was taken off, when she always knew me, no matter what the change in my dress? The alteration from morning cotton to afternoon silk or muslin never occasioned her the least hesitation, and certainly the change was fully as marked. My hands might be bare or gloved, but Nanny's face was gently rubbed against them all the same. Why did she not know Billy?"

"It is the oddest case I ever heard," said Cyril. "Had the goat sufficient time to think it over?"

"She had a fortnight, at least. For I thought she would certainly remember her old friend after a day or two; but she was quite faithful to his memory, searching and baa-ing perpetually; would suddenly cease grazing or eating any dainty given to her, and with an impatient, distressed voice, call loudly in her old way; but the instant Billy came up to answer, she ran at him with threatening horns, as if to say, 'You tiresome silly thing, don't tease me. I don't know you. I want my *own* lamb again. Baa-a-a!"

"It was," said Mr. Merton, "a most vexatious and touching verification of the poet's line—

'Earth hath no strife like love to hatred turned.'"

"And we have known one other instance of the rupture of an animal friendship; in this case, however, there was no mistake of identity, but a palpable quarrel. Two good-tempered carriage horses, the property of a gentleman here, and evidently fond of each other, were sold to different masters, and for some time separated entirely. Several years had elapsed, when the two owners agreed to be companions in some long journeys, and literally 'putting their horses together,' drove these two tandem. The affection

they had before shown was now renewed unmistakably; and the owner* of 'Duke,' observant for his favourite's comfort, always endeavoured to secure a stall for him next to that of 'Bobby,' when at inns or other strange stables. Subsequently the horses were kept and frequently driven together, and their fondness for each other was often remarked. If one were away, the other neighed and fretted in evident distress, and, the instant he could get loose, trotted up to the street-wall, where he would poke his head over, looking wistfully up and down, and neighing impatiently for his comrade, who, on his return, was received with capers and whinnies of delight. When in the paddock, the horses grazed side by side, and in all ways so demeaned themselves that we were almost tempted to re-name them 'Damon and Pythias.' Happily the suggestion was not carried out; for, unlike the friends whose classic example they had seemed to follow, our loving companions quarrelled—on what grounds 'twere hard to say, and bootless to inquire what the bone of contention; but one day sounds of fierce equine encounter were heard, and the Duke and Bobby seen in deadly combat, kicking and biting in most vicious earnest. The engagement ended as a 'drawn battle;' the belligerents walked off sulky and dignified in different directions, and never after that day were the old amicable relations renewed between them. No two Christian gentlemen of opposite opinions in politics or religion could evince a more inexorable or obstinate oppugnancy than did these whilom loving friends; and, as the horses were not (to our knowledge) members of any public body, the moving influence for their sudden transition from love to hate seems hard to comprehend."

"Very. But the goat's inability to recognise the lamb is infinitely more curious; altogether inexplicable."

The arrival of the mail-bag here changed the current of conversation.

Lina shook out the contents, dealing letters, packets, and papers to their proper owners, and smiling a little to herself as she placed before her father an envelope addressed to him in Mr. Bexley's large, firm handwriting.

"I guessed as much," he remarked, as he read the enclosure. "Bexley says Edgar is now home for a few days, and he claims my promise that I would take Louis over to meet, and return with him to school. He is very good—very generous—but——"

* The Hon. C. Meredith. This, and the preceding incident, were narrated by the writer, and published in the *Australasian* some years ago.—L. A. M.

"Papa! Papa!" cried Lina, impulsively, putting her arm round her father's neck, and looking imploringly into his face. "You are *not* going to refuse? You never *were* cruel before; you are not going to begin now?"

Mr. Merton stroked her hair for a minute in silence, as her other hand crept up and clasped him fast.

"One half of me would like very much to refuse. It irks me to receive such aid from any man; but in this particular instance I suppose I must yield for *your* sake, Linny, as well as your brother's. I know all about your generosity, my child——"

Lina stopped all further revelation with a thankful kiss.

"Will you get his traps ready to-day, then? for we will go to-morrow."

And no packing for school was ever more cheerfully accomplished.



CHAPTER XXX.

"A pleasant cot
In a tranquil spot,
With a constant view of the changing sea."

"PAPA, I've such a grand idea," cried Guy, as he hurried down at the sound of the second dinner-bell, his bright ruddy face aglow with its plunge into cold water, his curly hair brushed smartly up, and his arms just completing the struggle into his jacket.

"Have you? and I've another—that a gentleman's time must be curiously precious, if he cannot get into his coat before appearing in a drawing-room."

Guy laughed. "Ah, but my idea was in a hurry, and couldn't wait. I say, Papa, what a glorious start it would be if we could all go to Aunt Anne's whilst Uncle Cyril's with us! That *would* be fun! He's so fond of boating and fishing, and would be such a mate for you and——"

"What's that young rebel talking about? Hatching treason, of course," said Cyril, entering at the moment, with heightened colour on his brown cheek, as he caught the utterance of his own name, coupled with that of Aunt Anne, which, for reasons best known to himself, sounded oddly in his ears.

"Ah!" cried Mrs. Merton, "speak of angels, and you shall hear the rustle of their wings."

"Eh! say that again, please. It is the neatest version of an old saw I ever heard," laughed Cyril.

"Never mind saws now. Mamma, wouldn't it be famous? Do let us, Papa."

"Well, there's one point in your favour, Guy. I believe we could not devise a scheme more likely to do Cyril's health good," assented Mr. Merton.

Guy cleared the ottoman in the middle of the room at a bound, with a whoop of "Hooray!" that scared away the demure John Puss, who had been

sitting purring in his mistress's lap, and brought in the rest of the family, in the belief that something terrible had happened.

"Wild Indians, who leap and yell like maniacs, are not welcome as guests in any house; but if you can restrain your energies within proper bounds, and come to dinner, we will discuss the matter afterwards," said Mr. Merton, with a good-natured smile.

And the outcome of it was, that Guy's suggestion was adopted, *nem. con.* Aunt Anne was duly advised of the contemplated invasion of her domain, and, in little more than another week, the broad sea beaches in front of her pretty dwelling displayed divers eccentric specimens of sand architecture, erected with immense enthusiasm by Frank and Freda, whilst their elder brother and sister, and the senior quartette, were equally happy in their several ways. Somehow, everybody was always happy at the "Pines," as Mrs. Leslie called her lowly-looking, but most comfortable and elastic cottage. Even as the magic garment in a fairy tale expands to the size of its wearer, whoever he be, so did those neat, snug rooms seem to increase and multiply, according to the demand for accommodation; and the delight with which Aunt Anne received the present invasion, and that of the perpetrators thereof, was very evenly balanced.

Mrs. Leslie, Mrs. Merton's youngest sister, had, on the death of her parents, left England to come and reside with the Mertons. Soon afterwards, she married an amiable, prosperous settler, whose estate lay on the coast, living a calm, placid, happy life for two years, when Mr. Leslie's death (caused by a fall from his horse whilst hunting) left her a young widow; and as, by the liberal dispositions of her husband's will, the chief of his large property was left to her unconditionally, she was well dowered, if not wealthy. The busy Mrs. Grundys of her acquaintance wondered she did not marry again, but their speculations did not trouble her. With her sheep-run and farm to manage—which, aided by Mr. Merton's advice, she accomplished successfully—and her garden, orchard, dairy, and poultry to look after, besides a thousand-and-one other pursuits and interests—a little art, a little authorship, some desultory dippings into science, and a good deal of reading of any and almost every description—Aunt Anne seemed to think she could live very pleasantly alone. Not that she often really did so, for her many friends and acquaintances provided her with a succession of guests three parts of the year, and in winter she usually flitted to town, to "brush off bush cobwebs," as she said. Still very sweet-looking (handsome, many thought her), with quick bright grey eyes, a fair skin that flushed like a girl's with pleasure or excitement, a profusion of soft brown hair, simply banded


SUPERB DRAGON (PHYLLOPTERYX FOLIATUS)
OSTRACIAN (ARACANA AVRITA)
L. A. M.
MARCUS WARD & CO.

and coiled in thick braids round her shapely head, crowned by a film of lace supposed to represent a cap; a pliant trim figure of middle height, always dressed in perfect taste (although, when in the country, in the plainest materials), Aunt Anne was as pleasant to look at as she was good to know.

"How's the boat, Anne?" asked Mr. Merton, the morning after his arrival.

"Quite well, I hope; but Holdsworth has been in a dreadful fuss about her ever since I told him you were coming. 'She warn't no ways fit to go to sea,' he said—wanted hauling up, and heaving down, and scraping and painting, and all sorts of things. I gave him *carte blanche*, and everything he wanted that was in the store, and he has been at work at her these four or five days, so you had better see what he's about. Where do you want to go?"

"Why, I thought we might fish for an hour or two this afternoon, and perhaps run over to Crescent Bay to-morrow, if the wind suits, because I must ride home the day after, and keep all right there."

"And mustn't we go out again in the boat till you come back, Papa?" quoth Guy, with a suddenly lengthened face.

"Yes, I should think you would be quite safe with Holdsworth as sailing master; but he *must* be master—remember that—and Cyril will act under his directions."

"All right, Papa," said Guy. "And I'll be captain, as you often say that the captain knows less than those he commands. You'll come out with us, Aunt?"

"I'll think about it. I'm a staunch advocate for a fair division of labour, Guy; and I think, if you catch the fish, and I superintend the cooking of them, and perhaps paint their portraits, if you bring home anything curious, that will suit me better than boating."

"Oh, you'll like it, if it's fine and calm," said Cyril.

"It must be *very* fine and very calm, if I do," said Aunt Anne, with a little grimace. "I like to live by the sea, and don't own myself second to anybody in love for it."

"So long as you're on shore," put in Mr. Merton.

"Precisely what I was going to say. There's a certain leaven of cat-nature in me which renders me incapable of deriving pleasure from being tossed about in a small boat on a rough sea. I know Letty shares this family peculiarity, and so most probably we shall help Lina to look for shells and sea-weeds instead; and the first day of bad weather, or disinclination to roam

abroad, we will cultivate science in a small way, and go over my cabinet and herbarium."

Peals of childish laughter from the garden interrupted and attracted the talkers outside, where they found Frank and Freda in ecstasies of amusement at a fine tame Sea-gull* eating his breakfast. The old gardener had some fish for him—common Black-heads,† several inches long; but, having been caught the previous day, they were rather dry and out of shape, some being stiffly curved round. A large tazza-shaped stone vase of water stood on the lawn, and as each fish was given to the gull, he trotted across with it to the water, and took great pains to wash and soak and soften it, laying it carefully as straight as possible, then when he had "fixed" it quite to his satisfaction, he gave it an adroit toss up, and, catching it head-foremost in his bill, gulped it down. The children were diverted by the grave business-like air with which the whole was done.

"And he has swallowed such a lot!" cried Frank.

"What a beautiful bird! Can he go where he likes?" asked Lina.

"Oh, yes. He's a gentleman at large," replied her aunt, "and follows his own devices quite freely, but has evidently no present intention of providing his own commissariat. He often wanders about the beach amongst the wild gulls, but always comes home to be fed. If by chance we have not any fish, he eats meat quite affably, and makes a peculiar little plaintive cry at the kitchen-door when he is hungry. I will go now and give the fowls some corn; Gully is sure to follow, and go through his usual performance. Come and see it.

When Mrs. Leslie called the poultry together, and threw down some wheat to them, the gull hurried up with an important air, as though finding himself rather late for some special duty, and standing on the middle of the scattered corn, whilst the other birds stood round, only picking stray grains at a distance, he first poked his head down under his breast, and then, lifting it suddenly up in the air, uttered a few odd, sonorous sounds. After repeating this performance several times, in what one might almost call a pompous style, he turned round and walked straight off, apparently quite satisfied that he had gone through a ceremony of vital moment, in a perfectly dignified and irreproachable manner.

As the group were laughing at his quaint ways, the old gardener came by.

"Rum little fellow that! ain't he, Miss Linny? *I* say he's the parson amongst the birds, for when the Missis feeds 'em, he always comes to say grace.

---

* *Larus Pacificus.* † *Platycephalus Bassensis.*

And he won't let 'em come a-nigh to eat till he *has* done it, neither, if he can help it. *He* don't eat corn, you know; he only says grace for the rest, for fear they shouldn't."

"Does he always say the same for himself, before he swallows his fish?" asked Freda, very gravely.

"Well"—Job took off his hat, and scratched his head thoughtfully—"I don't know as he do; but maybe he says it to hisself, quiet-like."

"Did you teach him to do it, Aunt Anne?" said Freda.

"No, indeed, dear; the ceremony is one of his own devising entirely, and seems to give him great satisfaction. The drollest part is the deference with which the ducks and fowls wait for his speech. They never offer to drive him off, nor interrupt him, though they so eagerly pick up the food as soon as he goes. It pleases Gully, and amuses me; but I don't pretend to explain the phenomenon."

"When we were up the coast with Papa last year," said Guy, "fishing, and 'prospecting' for tin, our tent was pitched down by the sea, and we soon had a flock of gulls about us, quite tame. I think they must be very sensible birds. When we first went, there were two or three on the rocks near, and of course we did not disturb them; and when we were eating our fish we threw some to them. They came cautiously at first, and then nearer and nearer, to pick them up. Next day more came, and a larger party still the day after, till we could count twenty or thirty, as familiar and bold as so many barn-door fowls. I was quite sorry to leave them when we came away, and I daresay they would miss our fish, for they seemed very glad of them."

"Does not that little incident show," said Mrs. Merton, "how much opportunity for enjoyment is wilfully lost by the generality of people? To nineteen men out of twenty—nay, I fear, to a much larger proportion—the first idea that would occur, if similarly placed, would be to shoot the poor birds, for no earthly purpose but in pursuance of a thoughtless, cruel, and atrocious habit. But your dear father would as soon think of taking away a happy, innocent life uselessly, as even I should; and lucky it is for us both that we are of one mind on that point. Of course, had you shot at the gulls, they would have been scared away—those who were not killed—and, with their God-given sagacity, have passed the news amongst their neighbours, that it would be wise to keep aloof from such mischievous intruders. But as it was, you had during some days the great pleasure, as I am sure it was, to see the handsome creatures come fearlessly around you, and admire their graceful manners, and hear the pretty

notes they utter in talking to each other. To me it would have been a very great treat."

"Have Guy's tame Penguins* been up lately?" asked Lina—"I mean those the old fisherman gave him, and that he reared here, and set at liberty?"

"I have not seen anything of them for a good while," said Mrs. Leslie. "I hope they are safe at sea, for I have not heard that any have been killed near here. They came many times after Guy went away, and often stayed a day or night in the outhouse where he used to keep them; and of course they were not molested in any way."

"How *they* used to eat!" said Lina. "I have seen Guy cutting up shark for them, till I 'm sure they must have eaten their own weight of it. Five or six slices, a foot long or more, and a couple of inches wide, used to go down each of their great throats by gulps, one after another, till I could hardly believe my eyes."

"Don't you remember what the Chinaman told you, Linny, when you asked him how he made his gulls so tame?" enquired Guy. "He was more explicit than elegant in his phrases—but what he said was—'You tame gully? Gib belly-full o' fishy.' And I suppose the penguins require similar treatment."

"I'm very glad to think they are alive and happy," said Lina. "Perhaps when we are out in the boat we shall see them."

"And know those two particular penguins from all others?" laughed Guy. "The worst of penguins is that you *can't* see them at sea. You may know by their little squeaks that they are all round the boat; but you must keep a very sharp look-out to catch a glimpse of one head above water."

"Is there not a bird called the King Penguin?"† asked Lina.

"I should think so," replied Guy; "and a fine fellow he is, with his chain of golden-coloured feathers on, like the Lord Mayor of the birds, at least, and a big white waistcoat too, to keep up the character. Papa took me to see a tame one in Hobart, last time we were there. It had come of its own accord to the rocks, down by the slaughter-yards, seeming weak and famished, and very thin, and had been fed and kindly cared for by the manager and his people, and soon learned to follow his master like a dog, evidently knowing quite well the particular door at which he was to go in for his food. He had picked up his crumbs very successfully, for he was broad and fat, and his fine plumage as

* *Spheniscus minor.* † *Eudyptes chrysocome.*

perfect and shining as feathers could be. A plentiful diet of animal food agreed with his constitution, that was quiet clear. I suppose he had been driven up Storm Bay by a southerly gale, because I know king penguins are not often found near the Derwent. They live on islands more to the south."

"Poor fellow! His majesty was very fortunate in falling into loyal and humane hands, whose first impulse was not 'kill him!' It is quite comforting to hear an instance of the kind," said Mrs. Merton. "I shall go and see him myself, when I am again in town."

CHAPTER XXXI.

On either side
The white sand sparkling to the sun; in front,
Great Ocean with its everlasting voice,
As in perpetual jubilee, proclaimed
The wonders of the Almighty.

SOUTHEY.

The sands, thick-strewn with many a shell,
Blushed rosy-red with Ocean's flowers—
Weeds often named, methinks not well—
Brighter or daintier, never bowers
Of earth enwreathed.

M. S.

MRS. LESLIE'S faithful factotum, Holdsworth, who had been long in her late husband's employ, served in his youth on board a man-of-war, and subsequently went whaling, so that he was a thorough seaman, and it was a labour of love to him to keep her fishing-boat in the most perfect order, "all a-taunt o'," as he said; so that Mr. Merton had little fear that he should find her unseaworthy. Nor was he disappointed, for just as he, with Cyril and Guy, reached the creek where she was hauled up, Holdsworth had collected three or four of the men about the place to assist him in launching her, and, all lending a hand, she was soon safely afloat, ballasted, and stored with all requisites for a fishing excursion; a couple of "grab-all" nets, cray-fish nets, and lines and hooks of different kinds, including some formidable specimens of the latter, each attached to a foot or two of chain, for the especial behoof of sharks, which have a trick of biting off any hempen line, and getting away.

"Well, Holdsworth, I 'm glad the dear old boat 's all right," said Guy. "From what Aunt said you told her, I thought she must have almost gone to pieces."

"No fear, Master Guy, so long's Jack Holdsworth's got charge of her. Not but what I'd have had her fettled up a deal better, if I'd known in time as you was all a-coming down."

"Why, she's as smart as a new pin now; what else would you have done?" asked Mr. Merton.

"Give her a fresh coat of paint—three of them; for, what with scraping off grass and barnacles, there's not much left on her. I've got a new set of sails finished; shall I bend 'em, sir?"

"Never mind, now. We are only going out for an hour or two after lunch to catch a few fish."

"Ay, ay, sir. We'll pull round to the jetty, and be all ready for ye."

The sisters, with Lina and the two children, passed the afternoon very pleasantly on the beach and among the rocks, which a low tide left uncovered.

Frank and Freda found a charming playmate in Skye, their aunt's pet terrier, who enjoyed a game as much as they did, and chased the sea-birds with as earnest an ardour as though he really expected to catch them. To one or two pairs of sea-gulls he was evidently an old acquaintance, and they palpably joined in the fun with understanding and relish, to the great amusement of the children. The gulls would continue to walk about, with a delightful affectation of unconcern, despite Skye's noisy approach, until he was quite close to them; then they rose, flew a little way out to sea, with Skye bouncing and splashing through the surf in chase. When he went ashore, they turned, came after him again, almost brushing his ears with their wings, and, flying slowly, lit again in front, until he came up; and so the game went on. A flock of Dottrels* sometimes divided with the gulls the dog's attention. Invisible even at a short distance when not moving, he espied them the moment they began to run, and, with a "Yap, yap" of delight, was off in pursuit.

"The darling little birds!" cried Lina. "How pretty they are! And how they do run! You cannot see their legs, they go so fast. Ah! now they fly to sea, and look all dark, with their shaded sides next us; then they turn to the light, and shine like silver. There, they have lit again just before Skye. I am sure they like the fun of playing with him and teasing him, because they could be out of his sight in a moment if they wished to get away."

"As the same sport goes on whenever Skye and the birds are here together, I quite agree with you, Lina," said Mrs. Leslie, "that they really enjoy the fun."

---

* *Hiaticula ruficapilla*—Red-capped Dottrel.

"There are some pied Red-bills* on the rocks," said Mrs. Merton, "very busy pecking at something. Do not disturb them; we have a good view of them here, with their coral bills and legs, and bright handsome shape and plumage. Ah! they think us too near as it is, and run off."

"Oh, Mamma!" cried Freda, "there is one quite lame, poor bird! See how it limps. I'm sure I could catch it. May I?"

"If you could put on a pair of swift wings, perhaps you might overtake it, Freda; but that pretty bird is no more lame than the others. She has a nest—if a hollow in the sand deserves the name—somewhere very near, and she is so clever as to know that if she pretends to be lame, it is most likely that we shall run after her, and so leave her precious eggs or dear little birds far behind us, safe from intrusion."

"What a wise bird! I wonder how she learned to do such a cunning thing. God must have taught her, Mamma; I am quite sure no one else ever could. How good of Him to help her to keep her little ones safe."

"Freda! Freda! do look at those gulls," cried Frank, running up breathless. "You can see them, quite plain, picking up shells and going right up in the air ever so high, and dropping them on the rocks to break the shells, and then down they come themselves to eat the fish. And look on these rocks too—what lots of broken shells. I suppose they had breakfast here, and went on to the next point to dine. I wish they would not break such pretty ones, though. I dare-say the common cockles are just as nice to eat."

"If we approach carefully and silently, we may go nearer to them," said Mrs. Merton. "I know that flat rock quite well on which they are dropping the shells. It is not larger than our oval dining-table, and yet with what accuracy they plumb the centre in their aim. If we could be poised in the air at the same height, I wonder how many times we should 'hit the gold' at such a distance. I suspect we should most of us prove 'spoons.' But *they* never err."

"That *was* a big shell that fell then," cried Frank. "And see! a gull on the ground, that it didn't belong to, has run off with the fish. It was a Soldier Crab;† and now the other poor gull has come down, and looks so puzzled to know what has become of his booty."

"Are the soldier crabs here, Mamma, the same as those I have heard you speak of as being seen on English beaches?" inquired Lina.

---

* Red-bill, or Pied Oyster-catcher—*Hæmatopus longirostris.* † *Pagurus Bernhardus.*

"I think so; and their ways and manners are certainly identical. I never but once found one without an abode here, and he was as evidently looking for lodgings as any *paterfamilias* just arrived at Margate. He tried two shells, which were too small, and then, hurrying to a big common murex, whisked his tail into the aperture, and made himself quite at home."

"What a regiment of Cormorants* are ranged up all along the sand by the bar," said Lina. "Now I do *not* like them; they are ugly, greedy things. I watched one this morning fishing. He caught a flounder too wide for his mouth, and gulped and gulped, and struggled to get it down, till two more cormorants came to take it from him, and he swam off with his head up and the fish sticking out. I had time to come and get the glass, and watch him all across the river, with his friends after him, before he managed to swallow it."

"They are very destructive, and I am always glad to have them shot, said Mrs. Leslie; "but they are very cunning, too, and seem to know quite well when they are out of range. The quantity of eels they devour up the river is almost incredible. I have known fifteen or twenty young eels, many inches long, taken from their gullets at once."

"Do the cormorants breed in the islands about here, like the penguins?" asked Lina.

"No. They frequent the large lakes in the high mountain ranges in the middle of the island, and rear their young ones there, almost, if not entirely unmolested. So that there is an increase of cormorants, and I fear a diminution of fish, perpetually going on."

"Do you ever see Pelicans† here now, Aunt?"

"I grieve to say, no. A solitary one came and stayed a day or two on the bar, and I was very anxious it should not be disturbed, hoping that more would follow; but my wishes and entreaties proved alike vain. The noble bird was shot by an idle boy, and that was the last pelican seen here. I was very sorry and very angry, but the deed of wanton mischief was done, and there was no remedy."

"You do not remember the beautiful flock of pelicans we used so much to enjoy seeing when we lived on the north coast, Lina," said Mrs. Merton. "They frequented the islands in the bay, and we could approach in the boat quite near them, they were so accustomed to us, as we never disturbed them. And, often as I saw them, I never lost the feeling of delight and amusement they gave me.

---

* *Phalacrocorax Novæ Hollandiæ.* † *Pelecanus conspicillatus*—Australian Pelican.

We used to keep still and watch them with unchanged interest. I never could help laughing when they took wing, it was such a gravely-grotesque manœuvre, and the whole party of six or eight moved with one accord, as though they had been drilled into perfect accuracy. Standing in a line on the sands, they began by making a short jump, and slightly lifting their wings; then a rather longer jump, and the wings raised a little more; and so on for five or six jumps, all keeping time together, until at last they rose sufficiently high, and the wings were enough expanded to sail away in flight."

"How droll! I should like to go and see them," said Lina.

"You would not see our quaint friends there now. When we left our home on the north coast, both your father and I begged, as a favour to ourselves, that the person who succeeded us would continue to protect the pelicans; but we soon heard with sorrow that he had, on the contrary, encouraged their destruction; and the poor things would fall the more easy prey because they had become so bold and trusting. We felt as though half-guilty of their deaths."

"I see a great ridge of sea-weed has been washed up in that corner," said Mrs. Leslie. "Let us have a search in it. Ah! I thought we should find something good. Here's enough to start anyone in business as a collector of algæ at once."

"What are those pretty green feathers?"* asked Lina.

"A new species of *Caulerpa;* that great green mop is another kind, less beautiful, and, almost of course, more abundant.† Two others‡ visit this beach sometimes, so we may find them."

Lina pounced on some object with a cry of surprise.

"Oh! what is this queer sausage-shaped thing, all over red dots? Here's another like three glove-fingers, joined together at the ends."

"A very nice specimen of *Gloiosaccion,*"§ said Mrs. Leslie.

"And here are some other bag-shaped plants, not unlike greenish potatoes, as they lie, inflated with water;‖ and oh! what is this great pink, slippery jelly?"¶

"Ah! be careful of that, Lina. I want good specimens of it. The common name is the 'holy coat,' and, when spread out, this will probably be two feet wide, and will be seen to be full of holes, like some large kind of lace-work."

"The sea-nymphs have doubtless been amusing themselves with a rivalry

---

* *Caulerpa longifolia.*
† *C. trifaria.*
‡ *C. scalpelliformis, C. furcifolia.*
§ *Gloiosaccion Brownii.*
‖ *Asperococcus Turneri.*
¶ *Kallymenia cribrosa.*

in the art," said Mrs. Merton. "I think this should be named '*Point de l'onde*, in compliment to them."

"It is very fragile, and, unless quickly disposed of, it melts away to nothing; another fairy-like or nymphish attribute, you will say, Letty. This is a large plant, but we must not open it now, or we shall tear the delicate film. Some new and other rare kinds of *Chrysymenia** and *Trideæ* are found here occasionally; and look! there is a reddish, rough, leathery-looking moss, with raised tubercles all over it, like a knotted bed-quilt, and nearly as big."†

"Quite big enough for a baby's cot," said Mrs. Merton, holding it up—"a 'water-baby,' of course! Most likely some of those careless Naiads have let it drift out of Amphitrite's nursery, whilst they were gossiping with Triton, or doing their back hair in some new submarine fashion. Let us name it the 'coverlet,' at all hazards. Yes, it really is over four feet long and three wide, and quite stout and tough. And see, Lina, this little tiny disc, hardly larger than one of the tubercles, is the root whence all this great, rough, puckered frond has grown! A very small anchor for so large a ship!"

"And, as a natural consequence, the anchor dragged, and the ship came ashore," said Mrs. Leslie. "Now, as a contrast, look at this lovely little *Ceramium*;‡ its celled stems are a tangle of microscopic ruby and pearl necklaces; and this lovely pink *Delisea*§, so delicate you can scarcely see the branchlets, or this bright *Griffithsia*,‖ which my carmine cannot rival in tint, each cobweb filament finer than your hair. I used to call it mermaid tresses, thinking, perhaps, they had been emulous of earthly follies, and had been dyeing their sea-green locks, after the manner of silly mortals."

"And, like poor Tittle-bat Titmouse, had not obtained exactly the required shade," added Lina.

"If we examine yon little rocky basin," said Mrs. Leslie, "I think we shall be rewarded. Yes, here is the new *Bornetia*¶ spreading out in a cloudy little brown tuft from the stone; and long waving olive threads of *Liebmannia*** and *Meso-gloia*,†† like models in miniature of Laocoön's serpents, but with tangles and writhings infinitely more intricate. Lina, you will find these snaky-looking weeds slimy and slippery exceedingly; you need a knife to separate them from the rock, and get them off entire. Here's another exquisitely delicate little thing, that asks the aid of a microscope to realise its minute beauty."‡‡

---

* *Chrysymenia Meredithiæ.*
† *Gigartina radula.*
‡ *Ceramium diaphanum.*
§ *Delisea elegans.*
‖ *Griffithsia Antarctica.*
¶ *Bornetia Meredithiana.*
** *Liebmannia ramulosa.*
†† *Meso-gloia vires-cens.*
‡‡ *Polysiphonia Australis.*

"Do you know this handsome bunch of crisp, glossy red fronds?" asked Lina.

"Quite well. It *is* very handsome, and often very abundant here. It is a *Nitophyllum*,* named, like many things in divers branches of Australian natural history, in compliment to our dear old friend, Tasmania's veteran naturalist, Mr. Ronald Gunn, to whose life-long devotion to science we, and the world at large, owe an incalculable debt of gratitude."

"There is a jointed, transparent jelly-plant, Aunt."

"Ah, that's a *Chondria*,† of the kind I have several times found, and spoiled by washing. We will be more careful with this specimen. When put into fresh water, the little cactus-like joints and globular fruit separate and go all to pieces in the most provoking manner."

"Mamma, we have found such a funny thing," shouted Frank, running up, holding something carefully in his hands.

"And I've another," said Freda, "like a shell made of sand."

"More like putrefactions of tea-saucers," said Frank, bringing out the long word with an air of superior knowledge.

"I suppose you mean *pet*rifactions," said Lina.

"What does it matter?" returned Frank: "it's all the same thing."

"Oh, perfectly!" said Mrs. Leslie, laughing. "Ah, you have really found some sand-saucers; I have picked them up on this beach several times; they are very curious."

"They look as though they were made of one layer of boiled sago-grains, gummed into this shape, and sanded over," said Lina, observing one attentively. "Are they the eggs of anything, Aunt?"

"Well guessed, Lina. Yes, they are the eggs of a *Natica*, or sea snail, of what particular species I cannot tell you, but believe it to be a larger one than that which produces the sand-saucers of English shores. When we go home, I will find for you the clear description given of their formation by Agassiz."‡

---

* *Nitophyllum Gunnianum.* † *Chondria dasyphylla.*

‡ "No one who has often walked across a sand-beach in summer can have failed to remark what the children call 'sand-saucers.' The name is not a bad one, with the exception that the saucer lacks a bottom. Hold one of them against the light, and you will see that it is composed of countless transparent spheres, each of the size of a small pin's head. These are the eggs of the common *Natica*, or sea snail. They are laid in the form of a broad, short ribbon, pressed between the mantle of the animal and its shell, and, passing out, they cover the exterior of the shell, over which they are rolled up, with a kind of glutinous envelope. Thus surrounded, the *Natica*, whose habit it is to burrow

"What a population of little blue crabs," exclaimed Lina, as they traversed a low part of the beach. "One can hardly step without crushing them, although they do get out of the way, and out of sight too, as quickly as possible. How very rapidly they burrow down and bury themselves."

"If you could watch them quietly, as I often do," said her aunt, "you would be highly amused to see them very busily at work with their tiny claws, scratching in the sand, and, as it seems, continually poking something into their waistcoat pockets—in reality, into their mouths—and when you examine the scene of the feast, you find little pellets of sand all over the spot. Probably they obtain some minute creatures from it, and the pellets are as bones that have been picked."

When the sea-weeds they had collected were thrown into a large basin of salt water, several long sea worms, with a multitude of legs, like centipedes, were seen crawling among them, and numbers of active little shrimps came out also.

"Here is quite a new acquaintance," said Mrs. Leslie, pointing to an oddly-shaped creature, whose nimble movements made it difficult to get a steady sight of it. "A queer little crustacean! Very like the head of a cherub, as carved on old-fashioned country tombstones, with eyes, double chin, wings, and nothing else. Now it spreads itself out, and what I took for head-wings are seen to be the long lobes or swimming-feet of the tail, which were stuck out on either side the face, whilst the centre of the tail was tucked close in beneath the mouth. Now it is tucked up again."

"Perhaps nobody ever found it before," said Lina.

"Possible, though unlikely. Although new to us, our queer little friend

---

under the surface of the beach, soon covers itself with sand, the particles of which, in contact with the glutinous substance of the eggs, quickly form a cement that binds the whole together in a sort of paste. When consolidated, it drops off from the shell, having, as it were, taken the mould of its form, and retaining the curve which distinguishes the outline of the *Natica*. Although these saucers look perfectly round, it will be found that the edges are not soldered together, but are simply lapped one over the other. Every one of the thousand little spheres crowded into such a circle of sand contains an egg. If we follow the development of these eggs, we shall find that each one divides into two halves, these again dividing to make four portions, then the four breaking up into eight, and so on, till we may have the yolks divided into no less than sixteen distinct parts."—*Methods of Study in Natural History*. By L. Agassiz.

is, I have small doubt, known and placed, and named by naturalists. But I shall ask a kind scientific friend to pronounce judgment."*

The swimming-feet of *Spinigera*, as given by Dana, have their terminations abruptly truncated, and those of Mrs. Leslie's specimen taper to a point; the difference may denote a new variety. Dana says of the animal he describes :— "It is found in bored wood and in pools of water along the shores of Parna Harbour, Bay of Islands, New Zealand."

---

* Mrs. Leslie's authority, having consulted Dana's *Crustacea*, gave her the following as the family history of her small specimen :—

CLASS—CRUSTACEA.
Sub-class—*Edriopthalmia.*
Order—*Choristopoda or Tetrade-capolis.*
Tribe—*Cymnothoidea.*
Genus—*Spheroma.*
Species (probable)—*Spinigera.*



CHAPTER XXXII.

Fish, that with their fins and shining scales
Glide under the green wave, . . .
. . . . . .
Graze the sea-weed, their pasture, and thro' groves
Of coral stray; or, sporting with quick glance,
Show to the sun their wav'd coats dropp'd with gold.

MILTON.

THE beach-party had not long assembled in the drawing-room, after the needful exchange of draggled dresses, &c., for evening attire, when the sound of a wheelbarrow was heard nearing the yard door, and Guy's clear ringing voice calling loudly—

"Fish O! Here's your fine fresh fish!"

All hurried out, and surrounded Holdsworth's barrow with cries of admiration.

"What a glorious bit of colour!" exclaimed Mrs. Leslie.

"I thought you'd say that," said Cyril, delighted to see her enjoyment.

"We've had fine sport," said Mr. Merton.

"Look—here's a big trumpeter!" cried Guy, laying hold of it.

"Stop, Guy—don't disturb anything. Let us look a little longer," said his mother, drawing him back. "It is really very beautiful."

Nobody in particular claimed credit for the arrangement; but it was a triumph of art, if art at all—probably only accident. Nature's masterpieces can hardly be grouped incongruously, although some dispositions are more effective than others.

The barrow had been lined with a huge fresh wet plant of kelp * with great

---

* *Macrocystis pyrifera.*

olive-brown stems, and rippled broad fronds, many feet long, doubled to and fro, and tumbling in festoons and streamers over the sides; and in amongst this lay the freshly-caught fish of many kinds, gleaming and glittering like burnished silver, washed over with melted jewels. There was a great Blue-head, with large patches of clear vivid azure that no ultramarine could approach, and blending into that the brightest orange, shading off into pure yellow. There were Parrot-fish,* with similar and scarcely less brilliant colouring; Kelp-fish,† heavy-looking and plainly attired; Leather Jackets,‡ blue and purple, with big bright eyes and threatening spines; grand Silver Trumpeters,§ the perfection of fish symmetry, radiant in their exquisite iridescence, and softly graduated shades; there was a large John Dory, or *Jaune dorée*,‖ with pearly and silvery scales tinted with a thin golden hue, with head, fins, and markings of pure vermilion, and great topaz eyes that one would think must light up his submarine way like lamps; there was a Magpie Perch,¶ well named, whose piebald markings of black and white contrasted effectively with the rest. This, and another fish of similar colouring, which was, from its peculiar countenance, named, *nem. con.*, the Pig-faced Lady,** were armed with long sharp spines in their dorsal and pectoral fins, which must render them uncomfortable neighbours in a crowd. A few Flat-heads†† looked very plebeian in so noble a company.

"And at the bottom there *is* an odd fish, Mamma," said Guy. "Holdsworth calls it a Cat-fish. Let me pull him out. There—isn't he an ugly brute? I've seen a picture of a fish very like him, with eyes on the top of its head, in a book of yours, Aunt."

"Yes; the *Uranoscopus vulgaris*," said Mrs. Leslie. "This fish is one of the same family, or of a nearly allied one. The pectoral and ventral fins—look—are unlike those of most fishes, being soft, thick, and fleshy. I cannot say that the countenance is very prepossessing in expression, and do not approve of so bad a compliment being paid to my friend puss as the naming it cat-fish; nor can I divine any reason for it, unless it be the habit of the creature to sneak stealthily along the bottom, and then spring on its prey."

"I think he's more like a bull-dog, with that big under jaw projecting so.

---

* *Lobrichthys Richardsoni.*
† *Chironemus marmoratus.*
‡ *Monacanthus peronii.*
§ *Latris Forsteri.*
‖ *Zeus Australis.*
¶ *Cheilodactylus nigripes.*
** *Histiopterus recurvirostris.*
†† *Platycephalus Bassensis.*

He can shoot all his mouth out, quite two inches, to take the bait.* You won't paint *him*, I suppose, Aunt?" †

"Not now, Guy, because I have made careful drawings of that very fish—one of the species rather—some time ago, and also of nearly all which are here. But when I look at them again, fresh and shining, I feel inclined to go and burn all I have done, my work falls so pitifully short of the originals."

"I think that feeling always torments one, in drawing from nature," said Mrs. Merton. "So long as the flower I am sketching lives before me, I heartily despise my own work; but when I look at what I have done again, alone, it has always improved amazingly, and I can accept the praise which my friends bestow on it as tolerably well deserved. I have sometimes wondered if great artists experience anything of this feeling. I think they must, because their perception of excellence being more perfect, their dissatisfaction with any shortcoming must be the more keen. Freda makes a queer shape on her slate, with four other strokes striking out of it, and very complacently calls it a cow; but you or I might work for a week at a portrait of your 'Daisy' or 'Cowslip,' and though we have a fair knowledge of drawing, we should not produce a result that would satisfy our better educated judgment."

"I 'd like, just for a day," said Cyril, "to know the sensation of being able to draw anything and everything I wish, as well as——"

"Gustave Doré?" suggested Mrs. Leslie.

"Well, yes; he 's wonderful; but I was going to name our old colonial friend Nicholas Chevalier, who, whether in glorious landscape or quizzical grotesque, is ever 'good at need.'"

"How about the feeling of doing without the power after once revelling in it?"

"Ah! that 's another point of view—a less pleasant one. Suppose we unpack the fish."

---

* Mr. Frank Buckland, in *Curiosities of Natural History*, vol. i., p. 259, writing of a species of rock-fish, says—"I found that it had a beautiful contrivance in the conformation of its mouth. It has the power of prolongating both its jaws to nearly the extent of half-an-inch from their natural position. This is done by a most beautiful bit of mechanism, somewhat on the principle of what are called 'lazy tongs.'" The cat-fish [Plate VI.] possesses a like feature, but on a much larger scale, the front part of the mouth being capable of being protruded between two and three inches when seizing prey. The John Dory [Plate V.] has a similar apparatus.

† *Kathethostoma lævc.*

The gorgeous blue-head was again examined and admired.

"Ah, Ma'am," quoth Holdsworth, "you think he's pretty now, and so he is; but, Lord! he's not half as bright as when he came up first. If you're a-going to draw one, you should come out and see him caught."

"Holdsworth's quite right," said Cyril. "Fish begin to lose their brilliancy of colour and surface from the instant they quit the water."

The evening talk was still of the sea.

"We saw a fine school of Grampus,* Letty," said Mr. Merton. "You would have been delighted, had you been with us. I think there must have been two or three hundred in the bay, and if they had been performing expressly for our amusement, a greater success was impossible. They came completely round the boat, flouncing and frolicking in grand style, and if you looked over the gunwale, you saw them right beneath it. I think Guy expected some of them to come aboard, they were so near."

"And they do seem such jolly fellows," said Guy. "Sometimes they pop their heads and half their bodies straight up, and before there's time to see what shape they are, down they go, and up come half-a-dozen tails instead, which are flapped and smacked on the water till you could hear them a mile off, and the spray goes up in fountains. Then they have a race, tearing and splashing along like mad things, forty or fifty together. Next they go in for gymnastics, and take such leaps through the air that you can count four before they come down again; or a party start off turning like a lot of wheels, one after another, as if they were an express train going against time. It is great fun. I never had so good a sight of them before. They seemed like a lot of fellows who hadn't anything particular to do, and were brimful of nonsense, and so were just sky-larking. How big are they, Papa? It's so hard to guess the size of things when there's nothing near to measure by."

"That is the difficulty, Guy; but I think those we saw to-day must be from ten to fifteen feet in length, and would weigh from six or seven hundred pounds to a ton or more."

"Are they of any use?"

"Yes, of course. All these creatures, whether whales, grampus, or porpoise, yield oil; but unless driven ashore from some cause, they are rarely taken, being, as you saw to-day, extremely quick; and even if struck, they sink in dying, and so are lost. Although so diverting to observe, I suspect they are not desirable

* *Orca meridionalis*—often called cow-fish in the colonies.

visitors, for the quantity of fish of all kinds which they devour must be something enormous."*

* Since writing the above, I had an opportunity of seeing one ashore. Mr. Meredith's boat, sailing between Maria Island and the mainland, ran for some distance amidst a great "school" of grampus (just as described), and my son Owen, seizing a favourable moment as one of the creatures rushed close by, flung the harpoon (which formed part of the boat's equipment) so adroitly as to transfix the poor grampus, passing it through the heart. It died almost immediately, and being far too large to be hauled on board the boat, was towed ashore. This, evidently a young one, was nine feet long, and by careful comparison and calculation was estimated at five or six cwt. I went to look at it next morning, and was particularly struck by what, in a boat, would be designated the "clean run" of the form, so beautifully adapted for rapid passage through the water. The skin, too, was sleeker than any satin—exquisitely delicate to the touch—more like perfectly polished marble than anything else.



CHAPTER XXXIII.

The skipper he stood beside the helm,
His pipe was in his mouth,
And he watched how the veering flaw did blow
The smoke now west, now south.
. . . . . .
And ever the fitful gusts between,
A sound came from the land ;
It was the sound of the trampling surf
On the rocks and the hard sea-sand.

LONGFELLOW.

"NOW, Mrs. Leslie," said Cyril, on the following morning, when after breakfast a general move was made into the verandah, "come and see a blue-head caught. We 'll only run a mile or two down the shore, and be home to luncheon. Do come!"

"I thought you intended going over to Crescent Bay," said Mrs. Merton.

"I think not to-day," replied her husband; "I should like to get our new seine mounted first, and I can finish and bring it when I return next week. So we will just do as Cyril says, and both you and Anne had better come. Job and Fanny will take care of the little ones till you are back."

"The boat 's at the jetty now, Mamma," cried Guy, impatiently; "do make haste."

Mrs. Merton ran to find Job, to charge him with the care of the children, whilst Aunt Anne snatched up a basket and hurried to the larder, soon returning, saying—"Well, I hope we *shall* be back to lunch, as you say, for here 's only a small allowance, just in case we might be an hour late, for I know how hungry one becomes on the water."

"Never fear; we won't have time to get hungry," said Mr. Merton, hastening to the boat.

Lina brought some thick plaids, Guy carried an extra bucket for any curious fish they might wish to keep alive, and in little more time than it takes to read this, all were aboard, the boat shoved off, and the sails set.

Nothing could be more delightful. The sky was bright and sunny, the clear green water dashed from the boat's bows in glittering foam, as she rushed along before a brisk whole-sail breeze. The happy faces of Guy, and even Lina—who, usually timid on the sea, felt no shadow of fear—won smiles of enjoyment from Aunt Anne herself, and all was glee and merriment.

For a brief space only!

Indications of a nor'-wester had been observed by Holdsworth some half-hour before the start, but as he was unaware that the ladies would join the fishing party, he had not thought it necessary to seem officious in calling attention to the subject, and so off they sailed, but were caught by the gale even more quickly than the old man expected. To put back against the now furious north-west wind was simply impossible, nor could they reach the proposed fishing-ground.

There was nothing for it but to run across to Crescent Bay, twelve miles distant, which Mr. Merton at once resolved to do, reducing his canvas to the mizen and foresail. The boat, square sterned (21 feet long and 6 feet beam), was rigged with a triangular foresail, the tack of which hauled down to the stem; a sprit-mainsail, and a lug mizen, the tack of which hauled down to the foot of the mizen-mast.

The sea rose rapidly before the still increasing gale, which howled and roared dismally around, and the spray, with occasionally a few buckets of water, came over from time to time. Lina, ashy pale, crouched at her mother's feet, too ill and terrified to move or utter anything but an agonised "Oh, Papa!" when the boat plunged with unusual violence. Guy subsided into silence, with a very blanched face, only rousing from his dejected position when the command came from his father to "bale out!"

Mr. Merton's boating experience in his younger years had been chiefly among whaleboats, which, skilfully steered, will run safely through very heavy seas; and in a whaleboat he would have made "fine weather" even of this, but in a square-sterned boat he found himself, as he afterwards confessed, "in a very awkward fix." He accordingly kept as close into the long beach at the head of the bay as was practicable, hoping that, if danger became imminent, he could put his helm hard-a-starboard, and run in through the heavy surf on to the sandy beach, and so save life. The great peril was lest the fast following seas

should curl over the stern, fill, and sink the boat. However, she ran well through it up to the east end of the beach, when Mr. Merton brought her to the wind (her best point of sailing), set the mainsail, and stretched across to Crescent Bay in safety; he and his terrified companions being equally and devoutly thankful for their escape.

Pale, trembling, soaked, and limp exceedingly, were the feminine trio when set ashore. Delicate summer muslins certainly have the faculty of becoming the forlornest of draggled mops under such circumstances; and boots, sodden into shapelessness, are equally pleasant and comfortable. However, the delight of being once more on land threw all minor miseries into the background. The warm sun soon dried the dresses, a few deft touches put dishevelled hair into comparative order, a fire was lit, at which wet boots were put to dry, and a proposal to look into the lunch-basket carried *nem. con.* The contents just sufficed, enough being left for Holdsworth, after whose repast a nearly empty basket remained.

"I recommend that we try to catch some fish," said Mr. Merton. "There is not a probability of our getting back to-night, and as we have eaten up all we brought, except a few crusts, I've an idea that we shall indeed be hungry before Aunt Anne's larder can renew supplies."

"Not get home, Papa?" cried Lina; but her father was out of hearing.

"Not whilst this wind lasts, that's quite certain," said Cyril; "and we may be very thankful that we are here alive, Linny. I've been in a good many squalls and other ugly predicaments in my time, but I don't think I was ever so near 'kingdom come' as we all were to-day for about an hour and a-half."

"I only looked at Papa's face once or twice," said Guy; "but I saw very plainly that he didn't like it. Holdsworth pulled off his pea-coat and shoes, ready for a swim—I saw *that* too; and Mamma and Aunt were as white as sheets. Well, I'm glad it's over."

"Now for hooks and lines. I've a bit of raw meat in my pocket for the first baits, and after that the cannibals will bite at pieces of one another," said Cyril.

So the four got into the boat, and pulled off to a good fishing-ground.

Lina, with her mother and aunt, were strolling along the beach, the peculiar beauties of which were its crystalline sparkle and snowy whiteness. The whole of the land around being composed of granite, its gradual disintegration left the pure quartz crystals to form the shore. Not finding many shells, the trio rambled inland, beside a bright rivulet that came rippling and tumbling down a

steep gorge between two grand granite peaks, which, high above, seemed to pile their abrupt and broken cliffs against the sky. The dark green depths of the ravine were densely clothed with exquisite ferns—not the grand, palmy oriental growths of *her* fern-valley, but wonderfully lovely in their infinite variety of form and tint.

Lina was loud in lamentation that she had not convenient means to carry home any with which she had been hitherto unacquainted for her garden nook. But many old friends, too, were dwelling and flourishing luxuriantly in that most picturesque glen; a very paradise for their tribe, with, as it seemed, such a collection and variety of suitable abodes as must meet the especial needs of almost every member of the family resident in Tasmania.

Behind the first giant *torso* of a fallen tree which the explorers climbed over, and which was so profusely covered with moss and lichen that it might have been a long round ridge of rock, for all that sight could know to the contrary, some tall, trembling sprays of Maiden-hair* fluttered on their shining stems—stems so light and frail that the delicate green leaves seemed as though just loosing the last earth-woven threads, ere floating away on the breeze.

"What noble fronds of the Ivy-fern!"† exclaimed Mrs. Leslie, who had made her way over logs and rocks to a huge boulder, whose weather-worn front was draped and wreathed by the clinging, rough stems and long, drooping, polished verdure. "I'm not sure yet but that this is my favourite among all our Tasmanian ferns."

"I know why that is, because I share the feeling," said her sister. "It reminds us of the hart's-tongue of home; and on the smooth leaves of this, its Austral type, we read so many pleasant memories, and see so many bright pictures of long, long ago. I have now before me the keep and moat of Ragland Castle, where as a girl I first gathered hart's-tongue. But if we go on conjuring up dioramas of England, we shall not achieve the ascent of this 'Hill Difficulty.' Ah! what a graceful fern is there—down in the very bed of the stream! What a group of exquisite plumes!‡ Could anything be lovelier! I wish we could grow that at home, Lina. What rare exotic could excel it!"

"Here is one I never saw before, Mamma, and so full of fruit! Is it not right to say *fruit?* Seeds, then—*sori?* Oh, very well; so full of *sori* at the back of the frond, it is more brown than green.§ And look—is not this nearly

* *Adiantum Æthiopicum.*
† *Polypodium Billardieri.*
‡ *Lomaria fluviatilis.*
§ *Asplenium odontites.*

as beautiful as the ivy-fern? If not so shiny, the fronds are as exquisitely veined.* Here is another veined like it, only so much smaller."

"Like it certainly," said Mrs. Leslie, "for it is the same, but younger. The plant varies exceedingly."

"And here, in this deep crevice—chasm, almost—is such a slender, bright-green species,† but without *sori*."

"Of course the learned have a proper scientific name for *this* kind," said Mrs. Merton, emerging from a shady cleft with more ferns in her hand; but I shall henceforth know it as the Yew-tree Fern, its sprays are so suggestive of sprays of yew.‡ And see this—how slender each delicate pinnule, and how symmetrically the little oval beads of *sori* are placed in two rows beneath each! § Ah! here's another old friend—the Cat's-head Fern;‖ though why that name was given to it I have not the remotest idea. Perhaps under a powerful microscope some part has been fancied to resemble one. It is full of beauty—the pinnules so exquisitely formed and indented, and gemmed beneath with absolute constellations of *sori*."

"If you are going to re-name the ferns, Aunt, pray dub this one the Centipede. Don't say, 'Fie, Lina!' but look, does it not remind you of one?¶ No? Ah, then your imagination must be under a cloud, and less vivid than usual. I ask its pardon for the ungracious simile, but adhere to it nevertheless."

"What a lovely little bed of Parsley-fern!"** said Mrs. Leslie. "It is quite worth your scrambling over that big log to come and see it so prettily garnishing this cleft in the rock."

"Aunt, is not this an Asplenium?†† with such a profuse display of fruit—*sori*, I mean (only fruit is a better word, I think, for *us* to use, and we do say fruit in speaking of sea-weeds). Do look at the double rows, triple even in places; and the whole plant is so very lovely."

"And here," said Mrs. Leslie, "is another Asplenium, of very different character. We unscientific collectors would not suspect the two to be related. This one‡‡ has little fan-shaped leaves along three-fourths of the slender stem, and then, having become small by degrees and beautifully less, they cease altogether, leaving a forlorn, naked portion at the end. And see what abundant, long *sori* cluster at the back of the little fans."

---

* *Lomaria procera.*
† *Pteris tremula.*
‡ *Gleichinia flabellata.*
§ *Doodea caudata.*
‖ *Polystichum vestitum.*
¶ *Lomaria Alpina.*
** *Cheilanthus tenuifolia.*
†† *Asplenium Brownii.*
‡‡ *Asplenium flabellifolium.*

Mrs. Merton here rejoined the others, after a scramble along a smaller gorge opening out from the main ravine, saying—

"I have gained one more specimen for my pains, and only one, but it is a beauty! See the pointed leaves (I ought not to say *leaves*, of course; but these are so like leaves), just enough curved to have earned its specific name, and with a broad furry band of *sori* along the margin.* And now let us hurry onward."

"Wait until we have packed our ferns," said Mrs. Leslie, laughing. "'*Necessitas non habet legem.*' So I have transgressed the rules of strict economy by tearing off and using the flounce of this dabbled dress to wrap up the roots of our treasures. We can put the bundle into this cool hole in the rock, with a fragment of flounce tied to a stick by way of landmark, and leave it till our return."

Not undelayed by still further loiterings among the many flowering shrubs that abounded in the ravine, the three scrambled on through thickets of Tea-tree,† white with lovely hawthorn-like flowers; Epacris‡ of every shade, from white to full crimson—the rosy pink, perhaps the most exquisite of all, peeping from many a chink and crevice; whilst Corrœa of several kinds, and many varieties of Acacia, added beauty and colour to the scene.

As they reached higher and drier ground, broad smooth slabs of rock were covered by carpets of a delicate white lichen.§ Lina knelt down to examine it.

"What is this, Mamma?—like thousands of narrow lace borders all gathered and puckered up, and neatly laid close together, making a mat over the rocks for yards and yards of space. It is coral? I have seen some coral in Aunt's cabinet very like it."

"So there is, Lina," said Mrs. Leslie—"so like, that we might fancy one had been made in imitation or emulation of the other; though whether the Dryads or Naiads were the plagiarists is hard to say.‖ This is a lichen. Is it not lovely? If carefully stripped from the rock, it retains its beauty for a long time. We will carry some of it home."

Here Cyril overtook the trio, saying, "I've been put ashore and sent after you by authority. Merton does not think you should scramble about there without a stout arm within reach. Hist! look there!"

He pointed to a huge granite boulder, overgrown by creeping ferns and

---

* *Pteris falcata.*

† *Leptospermum lanigerum.*

‡ *Epacris impressa, E. myrtifolia.*

§ *Cenomyce rangiferina.*

‖ "What a strange, plastic, imitative power there is in nature!"—P. H. Gosse.

orchids.* On a broad fern-frond sat motionless, with its bright eyes shining in the sun, a pretty innocent little tree-frog; and lower down, gliding along amongst the thick growth, was a black snake above three feet long, probably intending to surprise and swallow the poor frog. It was a picture of contrast. Cyril struck at the snake, which instantly disappeared into a crevice, and the frog leaped off unharmed.

Creeping, sometimes under, sometimes between the enormous boulders which had toppled over from the heights above into the deep gorge, our friends scrambled on and upwards, revelling in the wild beauty of the scene, and with hands full of flower-spoils from the luxuriant natural garden through which they passed. A steeper climb for a short distance brought them to the top of the ravine, whence a view, rarely surpassed, broke upon them.

High above, to right and left, rose fantastic towers and pillars of granite, these again being overtopped by the mountain giants from whose flanks they sprung, and all fringed and draped by hanging woods, chiefly consisting of those most picturesque trees, the Oyster Bay Pines,† which, vividly green in foliage, tapering to a height of eighty or one hundred feet, and by turns symmetrical or eccentric in form, harmonise and combine with rugged mountain scenery as no other of our trees here seem to do. They embody the very spirit of the place. Falling steeply, almost perpendicularly away from the crest on which the party stood, the forest-robed mountain side was at its base shattered into massive fragments, over which the sea broke in a long line of silvery surf round a deeply-indented bay; and the opposite shore, rising height above height, and tower o'er-topping tower, culminated in a lofty cone of pure, shining red granite, from which, girdled and clothed with wood, lower eminences stretched to the eastward, and groups of fortress-like rocky islets, rising square and sharp from the blue water, stood as outposts on which was spent the first onslaught of the Pacific Ocean billows.

Snowy sea-gulls, like flakes of animated spray, flecked the deep azure sky, and a few Gannets,‡ intent on a shoal of fish that shot to and fro through the clear water far below the gazer's eyrie, by turns hung poised aloft on widespread wings, or, with feathery sails quick reefed, dropped plumb down upon their prey.

Above the bare crowning peak of the opposite range, a pair of eagles soared in slow, sweeping circles; little more to the eye than specks upon the blue.

---

* *Dendrobium Milligani.* † *Frenela rhomboides.* ‡ *Sula Australis.*

The climbers sat down on the rocks, and gazed in rapt admiration on the glorious scene.

"Thanks be to God for mountains!" exclaimed Mrs. Merton, with solemn fervour. "The words are those of my early friend, William Howitt, but the thought is ever my own amidst such evidences of Almighty power and beneficence as lie around us here!" *

---

* "It was indeed a glorious scene. . . . Unmarred by the presence of any object, mean, or little, or common-place; for where I stood, no trace of the proximity of man, of his buildings, or his cultivation, was visible—nothing but the works of God Himself. It was one of those times and scenes, in which probably most thinking persons have occasionally found themselves, in which we are unfit for study or for action, but in which the whole soul seems alive and awake to enjoyment.—P. H. Gosse —*Devonshire Coast.*



CHAPTER XXXIV.

The sun in heaven was shining gay,
All things were joyful on that day;
The sea-birds screamed as they wheeled around,
And there was joyaunce in their sound.

SOUTHEY.

THE fishers pulled out a short distance, sheltered by a high rocky point from the violence of the gale, and dropped their lines at the outskirts of a sea-forest of the grand, broad-fronded kelp, whose stems many a fathom long, and wide rippled leaves loaded with oval air-cells, surged to and fro in the throbbing tide. Catching up a tangled mass of it, Mr. Merton made the boat fast to it, and thus she lay at anchor. Flocks of the pretty, graceful Mackerel Gulls* sat fearlessly on the floating kelp, just swaying with the motion of the water.

"The nicest of all the sea-birds," was Guy's verdict on their beauty—"they have such a soft, dove-like look. I think we might call them Venus's doves, because she might have brought them with her when she came from the sea, you know."

"There 's a long string of them sitting out yonder," said Cyril, "just like a necklace of pearls. And look at that row of Shags† on the rock, with their broad white waistcoats on, dozing after dinner, like a party of aldermen."

"That one nearest to us seems disposed to exemplify a new maxim," said Cyril—"'Every gentleman his own clothes-horse.' See how gravely he sits with wide-spread wings, drying his feathers in the sun."

Guy bent over the gunwale, gazing down into the clear depths with intense interest. "How plainly one can see the bottom, and those star-fishes on it! I know the sort—they 're a foot across, at least, those ten or twelve-armed fellows

---

* *Xema Jamesonii.* † *Phalacrocorax leucogaster.*

we find thrown on the beach, but they don't look very big down there. What an odd, topsy-turvey sort of feeling it gives one, to be looking *down* tall trees from above, like a bird, instead of *up* them from below! And the water is so clear, that you can see everything, just as if it was only air between us and the weeds, and shells, and fishes. How pleasant it must be to go swimming in and out amongst those waving leaves! The fish seem exactly as if they were playing at bo-peep with one another, and their fins twinkle in the light, and their eyes shine——Hallo! I've a bite!"

"So have I, Master Guy," said Holdsworth, and both hauled in fine flat-heads.

"And Papa has fish on each of his three hooks."

"We shall soon catch enough for supper," said Cyril.

"We had better make sure of breakfast too, whilst we have the chance," said Mr. Merton; "for we shall want some before we start, even should the wind serve early, and, if not, we shall need a larger supply."

"Again the lines went down, and presently Guy began pulling his in, with a large flat-head on the hook. Just as it reached the surface, a Barracouta* dashed up and snapped at it. Guy gave a quick, clever hoist, and both were safely captured, to his great delight and amusement.

"We talk of killing 'two birds with one stone,' but I've caught two fish on one hook. How handsome the barracouta is, alive! Such grand eyes! And he shines like burnished silver. He'll make a meal for us alone. He weighs seven or eight pounds, I know."

"I never thought sea-fishing so entertaining before," said Cyril; "but it is amusing to see so plainly deep, deep down, and watch the fish in such numbers, swimming and playing about. Now there's a big Rock Cod† going straight to my lowest hook, and away scud the flat-heads that were sniffing round it. He's got it!" and Cyril began hauling away as fast as he could. Just as the fish reached the boat, the line broke, and down it dropped.

"What a sell! and my good hook gone too!"

"The line must be rotten. Turn it end for end, and put on another hook," said Mr. Merton.

To unwind and re-wind the long line, and put on the lead sinker and hooks anew, occupied some little time. Meanwhile, Mr. Merton pulled up a large

* *Thyrsites atun.* † *Pseudophycis barbatus.*

rock cod, and took his hook from its mouth; then, seeing another piece of bait there, put his finger in again, and brought out another hook.

"Why, you've caught my fish!" cried Cyril.

"No doubt of that; and here's your lost hook. Guy, we must tell this to your mother, as positive evidence that fish cannot have the acute sense of suffering which she thinks they possess. And I, too, take comfort from the fact, for it is very certain that no land animal would care to eat, with an instrument of proportionate size in its throat."

"I think if I had even such a trifle as a crooked hair-pin stuck in mine, I should not send my plate for a second piece of beef," said Guy. "I am very glad to have such a proof that the poor fish are so much less sensitive than I feared."

"The poisonous little Toad-fish* is yet more callous to what we should suppose mortal injury," said Mr. Merton. "When living near Sydney, on the Parramatta river, I used to be exceedingly annoyed when angling for Bream† by the toad-fish, which swarmed in the sluices and inlets, and continually took my baits. Sometimes I used to spear them, and, when impaled, they inflated their short bodies into absolute balloons. Taking up one which I believed to be quite dead, I eviscerated him, in searching for the inflating apparatus, which, not understanding fish physiology, I, of course, did not discover, and I flung his remains into the water. In a second or two he gave a wriggle, righted himself, swam round, and took my bait again, apparently quite unconscious that he no longer possessed the requisite organs for the reception or use of food, and moved as briskly in the water as if he were still a perfect fish."

"And yet," said Guy, thoughtfully, "how the least touch frightens fish! Aunt's gold-fish run off like lightning if you touch them with a bit of grass."

"So that we cannot suppose it is the absence or dulness of sensation," said Cyril. "I don't understand it; and unless I could be transmigrated into a fish —for which I have no desire—I don't suppose I ever shall. Sea anemones, and others of the lower creatures, exhibit the same paradox. Maimed or divided, they reproduce themselves without apparent suffering; and yet, when their delicate tentacles are expanded, and you touch them gently with a finger, how rapidly they contract! showing keen animal sensibility on the one hand, and almost vegetable indifference on the other—a marvellous and merciful arrangement. They possess in a high degree the sense which warns them of peril, and

---

* *Tetrodon Hamiltoni.* † *Chrysophrys Australis.*

bids them exercise all their ingenious devices to avoid it; but seem exempt, or nearly so, from pain, when injury or destruction come to pass."

"Cyril!" said Mr. Merton, "did you ever see fish fight? No? Well, last summer, when we were camped opposite Hazard's Island, at the Schoutens, I was witness to a singular scene. I had scrambled out along a reef of rocks that runs out into the sea midway between the headlands of a little bay, and whilst examining the geological formation, I noticed a disturbance in the water at my feet. The vivid whiteness of the quartz sand and perfect transparence of the sea enabled me to see clearly to the bottom, and showed a circle or wheel, of twenty feet or more in diameter, formed of a dense shoal of little fish, whirling and splashing round and round with great rapidity, and evidently in great terror. I distinctly saw that they were young King-fish,* from three to five inches in length, their greenish silvery lustre gleaming brightly through the clear water. Looking carefully for the cause of their panic, I saw, outside this wheel-shoal, a number of Salmon,† from twelve to sixteen inches long, swimming actively to and fro, and forming a barrier guard, reaching from the end of the reef to the east horn of the bay, and through which the little king-fish could not pass. Presently, as if by concerted signal, a few salmon from different parts of the cordon dashed suddenly in amongst the mass of king-fish, like a pack of wolves into a flock of sheep, snapping them up in all directions, and covering the water with fragments as the victims darted about wildly in vain efforts to escape. The main body of salmon meanwhile kept up their patrol outside, effectually preventing the scattered shoal from evading their vigilance. Then the salmon which had been in action, and were, we may suppose, gorged with prey, returned to the main body, and all continued to swim to and fro as before, until the dispersed shoal of the poor king-fish gathered together again and resumed its wheel-shape, the circle being smaller than at first. This occupied perhaps ten minutes, and then another sortie of skirmishers took place (probably members of the force who had not dined), and another devouring slaughter ensued, which left a still smaller circle for the wolfish sentinels to round up and keep compact for the attack. No well-trained, sagacious sheep-dogs could have performed their work with more orderly, systematic method. The same routine went steadily on without cessation; only the circle of the king-fish grew less and less and the environing salmon came closer in shore, until, from a diameter of twenty feet, the living wheel was reduced to three feet or less. Having watched

* *Thyrsites solanderi.* † *Centropristis salar* (the indigenous fish so-called).

the unequal warfare for more than two hours, I left the reef for a while, and on my return to look again on the scene of conflict all was still. Both hunters and game had disappeared, and whether the poor little fish were all eaten up, or whether, when their numbers were too small to be worth the trouble of pursuit, the persecuted remnant escaped alive, remains unknown. One fish, longer and thinner than the salmon, more the form of a gigantic gar-fish, shared the spoil to the extent of picking up stragglers when the circle was broken by the onslaught, but did not join actively in the fray. On the day following this slaughter, as our boat was running from the Schoutens towards the White Rock (*L'île des phoques*), we sailed through a large shoal of adult king-fish, who were as actively engaged in snapping up and swallowing other fish—salmon probably—as though bent on making the most terrible reprisals. A grand ghostly albatross hovered above, not disdaining to pick up the quivering morsels that floated about as the fight and the feed went on.

"I have several times noticed the pretty mackerel gulls very adroitly shepherding shoals of small fry on the river shallows for a few minutes at a time, and picking up a quantity very rapidly; but the evident system pursued by the salmon in driving the little fish into a dense mass in order that they might be captured wholesale, and the patient waiting after each dash till the mass had re-formed before making the next attack, argues more careful and concerted arrangement than is shown by the birds."

"A very singular occurrence," said Cyril. "I never saw, nor indeed heard of, a case of the kind before. But we do know so lamentably little about fish! The question suggests itself to me—Does Neptune take in the fashionable European journals, and have some of his fast young subjects, emulous of the favourite and humane diversions of the most moral Courts floridly set forth therein, desired to witness a 'battue.' If the result of their ambition was the scene you describe, the imitation must have been very successful." *

* Related almost verbatim as told me by my husband, who was the observer of the encounter, and who published it in the *Australasian* at the time.—L. A. M.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Land of forest, flower, and fern !
Let me loiter where the headlands in the blaze of summer burn,
Where the shifting shafts of sunshine bar with gold the sounding shore,
And the sea-fowl's scream is mated with the bursting billow's roar,
Where the crags are grey and splinter'd—worn of wind and reft of rain—
Let me all the past remember—let me be a boy again !

Illawarra.—F. S. Wilson.

LATE in the afternoon the mountain-climbers and the fishing-party met on the beach, and whilst Guy and Holdsworth were busy on the rocks cleaning the fish, Mr. Merton and Cyril, after replenishing the fire, looked about for the most sheltered spots to sleep in. These they found in a near thicket of tea-tree, and, setting to work at once, cut a quantity of ferns to lay on the ground by way of beds. A snug little bowery nook was selected for Mr. and Mrs. Merton, Mrs. Leslie, and Lina, but the others preferred to make their couch nearer to the fire. The boat sails were carried up and laid over the ferns, and then Mrs. Merton was requested to inspect the arrangements. As she knew it would be too late after dark to improve the accommodation, she lay down on the fern-bed to try the effect, and discovered the chief deficiency in the lack of pillows or bolster. So, with Lina helping, she gathered and tied up large bunches of leafy tea-tree into good thick brooms—one for each sleeper—and, this task finished, Lina gravely announced that the beds were made.

A shout from Guy, a great splashing, and peals of laughter drew all to the water's edge, where a shark, five feet long, was floundering and flapping on the shore, its tail fast in Guy's grip, who, when his laughter allowed him speech, explained the event.

"I was kneeling on that flat rock cleaning fish, and dropping the offal into the sea, when this fellow came cruising round and snapped it up. He came and

got some several times, and at last made a grab at my hands, with his head fairly out of water. I hit at him with the knife, when he sheered round, and his tail came up close against the rock, so I caught hold of it, steered him into shallow water, jumped in, pulled him ashore, and there he is; and I call that fishing upon an entirely new principle."

In which most of the party concurred, and Holdsworth killed the shark.

Mr. Merton looked quietly on, and then observed, "We all know how oddly coincidences occur, and your mother has her theory of 'duplicates' in events. Now that shark-catching of yours, Guy, is both a coincidence and a duplicate."

"How, Papa?"

"Because, many years ago, I caught a number of sharks in this same place, and almost in the self-same manner. Our head whaling station was for several seasons fixed here, and I often visited the place. One day in summer, seeing sharks about, I tied a lot of offal to a stout line, which I flung out from the rocks, and as the sharks neared, attracted by it, I drew it in. One after another the voracious brutes followed it close up to the rock on which I was. When I drew up the bait, and they lost it, they, in turning to swim, naturally brought their tails up against the rock, and I caught hold of them and drew them past me safe ashore. They varied from four to six feet in length. I well remember once mentioning the circumstance at my uncle's house in England. I told the tale as a matter of fact, without exaggeration, or an idea of saying anything extraordinary; but no exploit of Baron Munchausen's ever excited heartier laughs of incredulity than my true tale——"

"Of shark-tails, Papa."

"And when, in all earnestness, I assured my hearers that what I had related was simple truth, they shouted aloud, and evidently set me down as a *story*-teller in the strongest signification of the word."

"I remember your relation of the incident perfectly," said Mrs. Merton, and very likely it did seem to them as bordering on the marvellous; it did to me too, then; but to us here, knowing how bold these creatures are, and how close they come in shore, it is of course nothing remarkable."

"At a picnic I gave on the coast lately," said Mrs. Leslie, "several of the party were with me looking into a beautiful little cove at our feet, just deep enough for a good plunge, and the water bright and clear as a gem. 'What a charming place to bathe in!' was the general exclamation, when the very next instant, the great back-fin of a large shark rose—I believe within reach, had any of us chosen to touch it—and the monster's cold, hungry-looking eyes seemed to

ask if any of the company would still be so good as to make the plunge alluded to."

"As you fish on peculiar principles, Guy," said Mrs. Merton, "perhaps you can originate something in the cooking line, for I don't think we can command any kitchen utensils beyond a cleft stick to act as toasting-fork."

"What reward shall he deserve who shall improvise an efficient gridiron?" asked Cyril. "I think I can achieve a capital one;" and off he ran along the beach, quickly returning with a long piece of hoop-iron, which he bent to and fro in a zig-zag, with a long end for a handle. It was a complete success, and Holdsworth straightway began to grill the fish upon it over a clear wood fire, saying, "Ah! keep a thing seven year, and you'll find use for it—and this here iron's lain here more nor four times seven, since the last cask was coopered."

Guy, who had gone with Cyril, was seen busy in the distance, and soon came, laden with six or eight large, nearly circular plates, of a clean white material, from six to ten inches across, which he laid out in a row on the ground, saying—

"I'm crockery merchant. Here's a fine new dinner service of convenient shape and everlasting durability. Only I don't see any arrangements for holding gravy; but that doesn't matter, as we've not got any. The contingent advantages of this splendid service are remarkable. You may dine off the plates first, and play quoits with them afterwards, without fear of breaking your china."

"How famous! What are they?" said Lina.

"The flat bony plates from a whale's vertebræ," replied her father. "See, they are smooth on one side, though rugged enough on the other. They will serve capitally for our grilled fish; and we can fetch some of the large joints of the back to make seats for us old folks, who are so luxurious in our habits as to prefer sitting upon chairs."

And from the abundant remains of long-defunct whales, seats were soon brought for the whole party.

"We shall want salt," said Mrs. Merton, "and I saw some just round the point, where little rocky pools have evaporated, and left fair white salt. Lina, you remember, for you asked me what the sparkling stuff was; you can find clean scallop-shells to scrape it into."

"You would like some pepper too, Mamma," said Guy, bounding off to the rivulet ravine, and coming back with a bough of the handsome red-stemmed

shrub known as native pepper.* "Here are some of last year's berries, so they're quite ripe; and by hammering them with a stone on a smooth rock, we can grind them, after a fashion."

"If you'll let me dry 'em a bit by the fire, Master Guy," said Holdsworth, busy with the gridiron, "they'll smash up a deal better. It's capital pepper too."

"Something like cayenne and allspice mixed," said Mrs. Merton; "the aromatic flavour is very pleasant. I have known people who, having first adopted its use for want of other condiments, continue it from preference. It will be very acceptable with our fish."†

Dinner was announced by a noisy rattling of iron hoops, Guy's best imitation of a gong. The company being seated on their bone chairs, placed on the turf, with a wall of tea-tree scrub behind, each was supplied with a plate from the new service on his or her lap, and a stick-fork to eat with, and Holdsworth, who entered thoroughly into the spirit of the thing, gravely carried round the gridiron, for all to help themselves.

"Lina!" said Mrs. Leslie, "it strikes me we are dining in a very royal and distinguished manner, strictly after the custom of our illustrious forefathers. You remember the droll, quaint old pictures, representing our noble Saxon ancestors as sitting or reclining at a table, whilst the attendants carry round the viands on spits, and the guests helps themselves in turn? There is one such group in the Bayeux tapestry, and others in the Cotton MS. It gives one a notion of being linked with remote royalty to be feasting in like style with our far-away forbears."

"Say feeding, not feasting, Anne," said Mrs. Merton. "I suspect the *menu* of those royalties and nobilities was not limited to fish, grilled *au naturel*, without butter, or even bread."

"No doubt they had venison and game of all sorts—

'Fish, flesh, and fowl, and all of the best'—

like the demon dinner-party in the *Ingoldsby Legends*. But I opine that the modes of dressing were some of the oddest, and to most of us the primitive purity of our grill would be preferable."

---

* *Tasmannia aromatica*—see Blackberries in Plate II.

† Lest this adventure and the dinner *al fresco* may seem to savour somewhat of "Family Robinson Crusoe"-ism, I beg to repeat that I only deal with *facts*, and that this is one literally rendered, the *personnel* of the actors alone being altered.—L. A. M.

"Especially with that best sauce, a good appetite, and I confess to having been very hungry," said Cyril.

Holdsworth's gridiron was re-filled and emptied several times ere all had finished dinner. The general beverage was water from the bright rivulet, and part of a bottle of wine left at lunch afforded the seniors a small glass each.

When twilight began to fall, the fire was well replenished with dry pine logs, which gave out a brilliant blaze, and the group drew round it on the land-side.

"I wish we had a good artist amongst us," said Mrs. Leslie, "to paint the scene just as it is. I can see the elements of a fine picture, though I cannot paint it. Those trees, standing clearly out in the vivid light, every branch and twig sharply defined, and their crests of foliage, by turns green, olive, or black, as they catch the blaze or recede in shadow. And far over their noble heads see those shattered granite masses, that were so roseate-tinted in the setting sun, now looming grand and gaunt through the gloom—

'Above the forest, on his throne,
In giant pomp outspread,
Our mountain guardian keeps his watch,
With the stars around his head!'

Even those lower, nearer crags only leap into sight when some brighter flash blazes up, and then they die out again into space. How grand it all is!"

"Your picture must include the fire and all of us, by way of figures, Aunt," said Lina.

"And the line of white surf round the bay, with its ever-sounding swell and break, and now and then a sea-bird's cry, are our 'voices of the night,'" added her mother. "It is very wild and beautiful. I am glad we had to stay—the whole scene and the feeling of it are so new."

"Hark! that's a mope hawk!" exclaimed Lina.

"And two more on the other side answered him," said Guy. "Three—four—five! They've all struck up at once. Oh! what's that?"

All looked up. A large Chestnut Owl* passed noiselessly by, full in the firelight, its wide, soft wings not making the faintest sound as they wafted along, though the wind from them was distinctly felt.

"What a beautiful fellow! Did you see his great shining eyes, Mamma?" said Lina. "I wish he'd come by again."

* *Strix castanops.*

"It is not likely he will; but I am glad you had a sight of him so near."

Mr. Merton and Cyril, sitting by the fire, lit pipes and began to smoke, and the former called to Holdsworth, who, having also lighted his, was going off along to the beach, to come and sit with them, to which he rather demurred.

"Nonsense, Holdsworth; come along here. I want you to tell my boy about that time when you were so nearly lost out whaling."

"Do, Holdsworth," said his mistress. "I want to hear the story too; now is the very time for telling it with proper effect. Are we all ready? Then, please, begin."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters;
These see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep.

. . . . . .

He sent His word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.

PSALM cvii.

"WELL, Ma'am, it was bay-whaling we were, for black whales, you understand——"

"I 'm not sure that I do."

"Why, you see, Ma'am, there was no ship, only boats employed. The station ashore was made in the neighbourhood of good whaling-ground, and the boats started out of a morning mostly before daylight (for winter 's the season for it), and pulled away towards different high headlands, where the headsman and the boat-steerer landed, and went up to look out for whales. If they saw any, they were soon aboard again, and pulling away to reach and kill them. If they couldn't see any, perhaps not with looking about all day, they pulled or sailed home to the station, praying for better luck to-morrow. The boats were hauled up on the ways, and the crews got their suppers and turned in.

"One morning our boats at Trumpeter Bay shoved off at daylight, each bound for their own 'look-out.' I was headsman in our captain's boat, and as we were pulling for our headland we saw a whale. We fastened to her and killed her just as the sun was rising; but the whale going into a 'flurry,' as we say, in her death-agony she struck our boat and capsized her. As I said before, winter 's the time for whaling, and the water was very cold. The captain and all of us held on to the boat—she was bottom-up, you understand; but after an hour or two the cold began to tell which was the weakest amongst us, and first one dropped off and sunk—then another was missing, and another, and another

—and only the captain and me was left. The captain he stuck a finger into the boat's plug-hole, so he held on that way, and I held on to him and the boat too. We were only about two miles off the land, and we knew very well when it was twelve o'clock, for we heard the dinner-bell at our station ashore ringing as plain as could be, and we cheered one another up a bit, and says I, 'I hope the cook 'll keep something hot for us agin we get back,' though I don't think either of us thought we should eat victuals any more. But we held on, hour after hour—and they were long hours too; and when it began to get dark, we knew our chance for life was close up gone. But just as we were drove to think the worst, one of our boats, on her way back, by the mercy of God, came within hail. We shouted our best, you may believe, and they heard us, and came up. They took us off, cramped and nigh frozen, and towed our boat home."

"How long had you been in the water?" asked Guy.

"Close on nine hours, sir."

"Why didn't you all get on to the dead whale, at first?" said Mr. Merton.

"Because, sir, she sank as soon as she was dead."

"I 've known the same thing. I remember a whale that was being towed by three of our boats sank, and took the one nearest her down with her, but the crew were picked up by the other two boats. Fatal accidents seldom happened if boats went in company."

"I 've oftener known boats capsized by cow-whales, when the calf 's been killed first, than any other way," said Holdsworth. "They 're very fond of their young ones, and when the mother is harpooned, and ever so badly wounded, if she has a calf with her, she don't seem to care a bit what 's done to *her;* all she thinks about is her calf, and she goes round it and about it, like a woman defending her child. But when some fool kills the calf first, she soon finds out it 's dead, and seems to know at once that there 's no more she can do for it. Then—look out! She 'll either rush away like a whirlwind, or turn to and smash boats or anything within reach. I don't blame her. It 's a mother's nature."

"How big is a calf?" asked Guy.

"Perhaps twenty, thirty feet long, or more, sir."

"I was out in one of our boats," said Mr. Merton, "when a cow-whale was harpooned, and immediately 'peaked her flukes,' that is, raised her huge tail (which spreads out into two lobes or flukes) perpendicularly out of the water, and she was so close that they were overhanging the boat. The black enormous mass, some twenty feet across, hovered just above my head, and, with slight but


RUBY FISH (SCORPŒNA CRUENTA)
TORTOISESHELL FISH (CHEIRONECTES POLITUS)
L. A. M.
MARCUS WARD & CO

most significant movements, as of a blind man's hands feeling for an object, was investigating its surroundings, so as to discover and demolish anything that it could touch. I stood in the bows, and crouched as low as I could, ordering the men to 'pull astern,' and half expecting that even the sound of my voice would bring down destruction on our heads; but the rapid execution of the order carried us from under the impending doom. The flukes felt round and about yet lower, and touched a thin line, which you would not suppose would be detected by so huge and ponderous a body; but, like lightning, down splashed the great flukes, beating and churning up the water in wildest fury. One blow of the many that now fell fast and furious would have crushed our boat to atoms, and in all probability drowned us all. When a youth, my great sporting ambition was to kill a whale, as being the grandest exploit to be achieved in that line, which it certainly is; but I do not envy the mental condition of the man who, after the exciting novelty has worn off, cares for pastime of so gigantic and perilous a sort."

"Yours was a wonderful escape, Holdsworth," said Mrs. Leslie.

"Well, Ma'am, I suppose it was. But I reckon our time wasn't come, or we should have gone down like our poor mates."

"The suddenness of such deaths is so awful," said Mrs. Merton.

"Another of my captains had a wonderfuller escape than mine, though," said Holdsworth. "But that was in the sperm-whaling."

"Tell us about it," cried Guy, eagerly, flinging more sticks on the fire, and illuminating even the waves with the brilliant glare.

"Yes," said Cyril. "To lie here listening to such really true yarns, and with that dash and rumble of the sea, and the wind in the tree-tops for music, is a chapter of life that one don't often get the reading of."

"You go in ships after sperm whales, don't you?" asked Guy.

"Yes, sir; ships of three, four, or five hundred tons they are, that's mostly fitted out of Hobart Town for an eighteen months' voyage. And as the sperm whale don't like the water warm, nor yet very cold, the usual ground lies between the two."

"From about thirty to forty-five degrees of latitude," said Mr. Merton.

"Just so, sir. Well, our ship was the *Magna Charta*, 400 tons; and one morning, just as the crew were going to breakfast, the look-out man at the mast-head sung out, '*There she spouts!*' Nobody thought any more about breakfast then. The boats were lowered, and away we went in chase, the captain in his boat, and two boats besides. We were not long coming up with the 'school,'

and fastening to a whale, but she ran a long way to windward, and though we'd harpooned her early in the day, it was dark when she died, and the ship was far away to leeward, almost out of sight. So we lay all night under the lee of the dead whale. Towards morning it came on to blow hard, and at daylight we saw the ship, still some miles to leeward, trying to beat up under single-reefed topsails and courses."

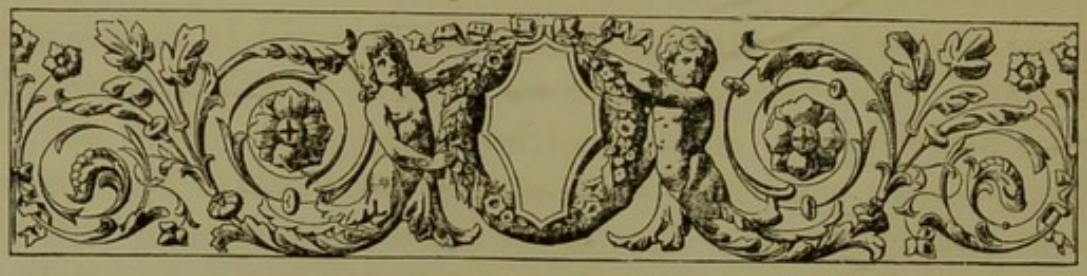
"Did you bring anything to eat with you?" asked Guy.

The old man looked amused at the idea. "Not a mossel, sir. We'd none of us had a mouthful for six-and-thirty hours then. You see there was so few left aboard the ship they couldn't properly handle her; and as they weren't able to haul the yards smartly in stays, she made but slow way, beating up to the dead whale, and the three boats that lay under her lee. So the captain he made up his mind to run down to the ship in his boat, and so take six more hands to help to work the ship. And off he went. There was a heavy sea running, and in rounding to, under the ship's counter, a big wave capsized the boat. The men clung on to her as long as they could; but the ship was so poorly manned, by reason of eighteen men being away in the boats, that those who were on board could not get to pick up the poor fellows, and one by one they dropped off and drowned, till the captain was left by himself. In such a sea, the upset boat soon got lost sight of. The ship went and made fast to the dead whale, took in the other two boats and my messmates and me, and drifted bodily to leeward, all hands giving up the last hope of ever seeing the captain again. We might have drifted for an hour, or maybe more, for we were all cold and hungry, and glad to make up for lost time, when there was a cry alongside, and there was our captain, clinging fast to his upset boat! We'd drifted right down upon him, and he was saved after all."

"I wish the poor sailors had been saved too," said Lina. "Were any of your men ever lost, Papa?"

"I am sorry to say, yes. I suppose no large whaling establishment ever escaped calamities of the kind. I saw one boat go down in a heavy sou'-west gale in this very bay, when crossing to fetch the week's supply of rations. She was too distant, and the gale too violent, for the chance of rescue. Another time I feared we had lost one of our boats. Three had gone out in the morning, but only two returned at night to the station. Supper was over, and still no sign of the missing one, so the two crews launched their boats again (I went in one of them), and we pulled out to sea. We had guns, and fired them off, and shouted with all our might; but no answer came. Still we pulled out, and to and

fro. It was a bitter frosty night, so that any sound would be audible at a great distance. After a long time, and when we began to despair, I thought I could hear a faint note of music. All listened breathlessly, and all was still. Again I heard it. Yes, we could just detect, at intervals, a note or two of a familiar chorus often sung by the men. And as we pulled with redoubled spirit, in the direction of the sound, it gradually grew more distinct, and led us right to our missing boat. Her crew had killed a whale at sea, some seven or eight miles outside of Maria Island, but, by some mischance or inadvertence, had no anchor with them for securing the prize, so were slowly and laboriously towing it home. We were provided with anchors, and soon made the whale fast, and left it; and all came back together, going down afterwards in the schooner to cut it in. I seriously remonstrated with the headsman—who had caused the alarm by going so far alone—on the imprudence of his habit, for he always liked and tried to have the merit of a capture unassisted. All my good counsel was, unhappily, in vain. The next year he went off one day alone as usual, and neither he, nor his brave crew, nor any vestige of their boat were ever heard of more."



CHAPTER XXXVII.

The ghastly grinning shark.

FERGUSSON.

"Off! off!" said the stranger—
Off, off, and away,
And away flew the light bark
Over the silvery bay.

Song.

THE last-spoken words were followed by a sad, thoughtful silence, which was suddenly broken by Guy's asking—

"Where was the biggest shark you ever saw, Papa?"

The question came abruptly enough, but Guy, boy-like, enjoyed the novelty of the occasion and the sensationalism of hearing what he called "good yarns," and desired to postpone the break-up of the bush-fire circle to as late a time as possible. His father unconsciously fell into the snare laid for him, and replied—

"Very near here, at our whaling station in the bay your mother was looking down into to-day from the ravine above. We had a whale, seventy feet long or more, lying at the shears, being cut in."

"With sharp shears?" asked Lina.

Her father laughed. "No, goosey; the shears in question were the two tall, mast-like timbers to which the windlass and tackle are attached for bearing weights, and by which the huge slice of blubber was lifted, as gradually cut off, corkscrew-wise, round and round the great carcass, by a man standing on the whale, armed with a sharp spade of peculiar form. As the slice was raised, it was cut off in what were called 'blanket-pieces,' eight or ten feet long, four feet wide, and about a foot thick. These were either taken ashore at once to the try-works (that is, to be melted), or a number of them were formed into a raft, and anchored out until required."

"And then cut up smaller, I suppose," said Guy.

"Yes. First into slices nine inches wide, called horse-pieces, and these again, with what was termed a 'mincing-knife,' into small pieces like rashers of fat bacon (this is now done by a machine like a turnip-cutter), before being transferred to the cauldrons or 'try-pots.' It is a very singular fact that, in the early days of whaling, people thought of the oil only as a profitable matter (though the price of that was only £14 a-ton, and now is £80), and totally neglected to utilise or preserve the whalebone—I do not mean the bones such as we are sitting on, but the mouth-bones, used for umbrella ribs and so many other purposes. On Slopen Island alone, whalebone worth many thousands of pounds was left as refuse. Well, I was on the rocks, directing operations, when an immense shark seized the whale's head, and, to the astonishment of us all, shook the whole enormous body from end to end for about half-a-minute. We always suffered great losses from the number of sharks which used to come like so many hungry dogs and bite off pieces of blubber, and they always swarmed about the works; but this was so evidently one of extraordinary size, that I ordered out a boat and crew to go and kill it. Whilst the men were getting the boat, the stupid fellow on the whale flung his spade at the shark. The keen weapon sunk into his side, and he sheered off, going slowly away; but as he passed by, outside of an old boat twenty-seven feet long, which was lying alongside, I noticed that his head projected beyond one end of the boat, whilst I could see his tail beyond the other end, plainly showing me that he must be nearly, if not quite, thirty feet in length. The old boat, close to which the shark deliberately passed, gave me too accurate a measure for any possible mistake on that head. I wish I had known enough then of the interest which might attach to our acquaintance with like monsters in after years, to have noted such peculiarities of form as would now assist naturalists in identifying their species; but a shark was a shark in those days of rough adventure and hard work, and we neither knew nor thought of scientific distinctions. This enormous individual might have been a deep-water monster out of his usual abiding-place, or some exceptionally gigantic specimen of a common breed. I never saw another that approached it in size."

"How big are they usually?" asked Guy.

"Ten, twelve, or fourteen feet. I had an odd little adventure with one in this bay, one summer when I had come over with a gang of men to assist our cooper in rolling out and re-coopering a quantity of casks of whale oil, which, having been left unshipped, were leaking in the hot sun. We

had been busy all day, and in the evening, thinking I would have a swim, I got into the dingy, and sculled myself round the next point, away from our people, for my bath. But, as so often happens in this climate, a southerly wind came suddenly up, as cold as ice, which soon made me feel more inclined to relish a warm pea-jacket than a peel-off and a swim, so I began to scull back again. Hearing a rushing noise, as of another boat coming up with me, I turned to see what it was. There was a large shark, whose great back-fin, cutting through the water, and rising between two and three feet above it, made the noise I had heard. He came, quite boldly, close alongside, being as near as I could guess about the size of the dingy, twelve feet long, and four each in breadth and depth. I looked at him, and he looked at me, and then I made a blow at him with the paddle, right between his eyes. He made no fuss, neither started nor splashed, but quietly began to dive, and disappeared under the boat. I sculled on, and almost immediately saw my friend again, first at the stern of the dingy, and then, as before, close alongside me. I looked at him for a while, and not liking his company any better than before, I struck at him with the gaff, which hooked into his back fin. Still his composure was unruffled. He neither splashed nor made the smallest demonstration of surprise or annoyance, but again went slowly down, down. My foot was on the gunwale, and I held on to the gaff till I found I must either let go or go down too, which latter, in such company, was not a tempting alternative. So, thinking how stupidly I had lost my gaff, I sculled on again. Presently something popped up out of the water near me, and I recognised the handle of the gaff, the iron at the other end keeping it upright. I recovered it, and went on, when for the third time the shark rose, with a plainly visible rent in his fin, and followed me for some distance, probably until the water shoaled more than he thought good for his safety. I then went on board our schooner, unrove a stout rope, fixed a harpoon on it, went out again in the dingy, and sculled about till it grew nearly dark, hoping to meet my persevering acquaintance yet once more."

"And didn't you, Papa?" said Guy, eagerly.

"Very luckily for me I did not, for if I had I should have struck him, and in all probability he would in return have attacked me, boat and all, and bitten us both in pieces, as even his maw could not have gobbled us whole."

"It isn't a trifle as they can't manage, though," said Holdsworth. "I mind one, killed off Wedge Island, as we hauled up and cut open, and there, in his inside, was as big a wether-sheep as ever you see, with a long fleece of wool on him, clean swallowed whole, not bitten; the sheep had likely been thrown

overboard from some of those cattle-ships. And there was a shark catched close inshore down south of here, with a pair of boots and a large tin of preserved meat, whole, in him, besides a lot more odds and ends."

"What a selection!" exclaimed Cyril. "The presence of the tin of meat showed his penetrating sagacity in predicating something good within, and he had perhaps faith in the power of his gastric juices to dissolve the solder; but the boots are mysterious, unless he had digested the owner, and they were the remaining fragments of the feast."

"They 're savage brutes, sir," said Holdsworth; "and the more ye see of 'em the less ye like 'em. The small young uns are mostly timorsome, but the hungry, big old fellows are 'feared o' nothing, and if ye come across any o' *them* in the water, the Lord have mercy on ye!"

"We used to run risks very thoughtlessly," said Mr. Merton. "I once shot a teal here, and being only wounded, it swam out, so I stripped and went after it. When I had swam perhaps half-a-mile, and got the teal, which I held in my mouth, I just remembered that I was in the place of all others on this coast the most notorious as abounding in sharks. I thought what a fool I was! But had I gone home and owned that I had shot a duck, and lost it for want of a swim, I should never have heard the last of it; and as it happened, luckily for me, the usual voracious frequenters of these waters were engaged elsewhere that afternoon. My wonder now is, that fatal accidents did not happen frequently in those old days; for the swarms of sharks round the whole of this coast were something prodigious, and as comparatively few were destroyed, the reduction of their numbers must be mainly owing to the removal of whaling stations, and also to the fact, unfortunately too well known, of the diminution in the quantity of all kinds of fish on the coast. I believe, though, that sharks prefer animal food; for a bait of garbage always attracted them. In crossing one day in our schooner to Maria Island, with stock for the penal settlement there, which we then supplied, we were becalmed. We let go the kedge to prevent drifting back, and as a sheep had been killed on board, I hung the liver, &c., from a rope over the main boom, just to the water's edge. Soon a large shark came up, and raised himself part out of water to reach the bait. As he opened his great jaws to seize it, I struck at him with a harpoon, which went down his throat."

"Like St. George spearing the dragon. You had him then, Papa," cried Guy.

"He thought otherwise. Rapidly plunging round and round, he twisted up the iron shaft of the harpoon like a bit of rope, snapped it short off, and swam away."

"And didn't come back to be caught again, like my rock cod," said Cyril.

"I saw no more of him, at all events; and now, as I do not mean to sit up here till quite daylight, I vote that we all go to bed."

"I wish we could," said Mrs. Merton; "I'm very tired. However, we will console ourselves with the romance of sleeping under the canopy of heaven, as the phrase is."

"And we have a boat-sail for counterpane," said Lina. "Uncle Cyril and Guy have only their pea-coats."

"Ah! but our bed's close to the fire, so we're best off. I'll just make a good blaze, to light you up stairs to your room," laughed Guy.

The ladies and Lina wrapped round them the plaids they had brought, Mr. Merton coiled himself in his boat-cloak, and all lay down, looking up at the stars, and listening to the mope hawks and the surf until they fell asleep.

Once Lina sprang up, hearing the *thud, thud* of a kangaroo just behind her head, and the other party said they heard it too, and also another sound, as of a large animal slowly treading through the bush near; but all was soon still again, and they slept till sunrise.

Had the wind changed? was the first question. Yes, and the heavy sea of the preceding day had very considerably subsided, so that the sail home might be easily accomplished.

"Come for a swim, Papa—do," said Guy.

"Well, it's not a bad idea. What say you, Cyril? Just whilst Holdsworth gets the fish cooked?"

And the trio went off round the rocky point.

"Breakfast, consisting of grilled fish and cold water, was barely ready when the bathing party came back, laughing merrily as they approached.

"Your swim seems to have done you all good," said Mrs. Leslie.

"To a remarkable degree—seeing that we didn't get it," laughed Cyril.

"No?"

Mr. Merton smiled queerly, but said nothing.

"Why, Mamma, I'll tell you how it was," said Guy. "Papa, as usual, was ready first, and walked in only a little way, for the water deepened fast, and he had his hands up, just going to plunge in head first, when——"

"A pair of great, cold, hungry shark's eyes met mine, as the brute came up with a wave in the very spot I aimed at; and—I retired."

"And which of the two was the most astonished, Merton or the shark, would be hard to say," added Cyril. "We saw it all in a quarter the time it

takes to tell. The dear old *Pater* ran ashore, and the other gentleman put out to sea with all despatch."

"Another hair-breadth escape!" exclaimed Mrs. Merton. "I do wish you would, once for all, resolve never to venture into these seas."

"Pooh! nonsense. However, in case our visitor might recover his presence of mind and come back, we decided to postpone our dip to a more convenient season."

The not too luxurious repast having been partaken, Guy carefully washed up and packed the dinner service, and our friends were soon on board the boat, dashing along before a whole-sail breeze, all gay and cheerful, and presenting a very different aspect from that of the sick and terrified group driven before the furious gale of yesterday.

"Did you see, sir, in the papers," said Holdsworth, "as they'd had a launch up in town, without a proper christening of the vessel? She'll come to no good —you mind my words, sir. It's flying in the face of——"

"Not Providence, exactly," interrupted Mrs. Leslie.

"Perhaps not, Ma'am. But it's clean contrary to all seafaring ways, and looks mean, too."

"Supposed righteousness, not meanness, was the moving influence, I have no doubt," said Mr. Merton. "The breaking of a bottle of wine at a launch is a relic of an ancient heathen rite, and so thought by these good people to be better omitted. But seeing that, by long usage in Christian lands, it has, like many another popular custom of like origin, become a naturalised and respected ceremony, I think the observance would have been more honourable than the breach. Only a very few peculiarly-minded individuals could entertain the most remote imaginary scruple about the fulfilment of the time-honoured custom, and the very large majority feel that the occasion was defrauded of its legitimate celebration."

"The launch of the Oxford life-boat was very differently managed," said Cyril. "I read the two accounts the same day; and Oxford it strikes me, is quite as likely to know what's proper, and what's pious too, as any little town in Australia. But can't we fish as we sail across?"

"There was lots of barracouta in the bay when we ran over, sir," said Holdsworth. "Very likely we'd catch some now, if we put some hooks out."

Mr. Merton was steering, but Cyril and Guy soon had hooks astern. The apparatus for catching barracouta is particularly simple. A rather large hook is firmly lashed on to the end of a piece of wood about nine inches long and one

and a-half broad. Cedar is often used, or, if deal, it is painted red, or a red rag is fastened on it, for a touch of red is indispensable. A stout line is attached to the other end of the wood, which floats astern, and as in a brisk wind the boat makes good way, the hook goes swiftly along the water, and if barracouta are around, some are pretty certain to fall victims to the undisguised snare.

Four noble fish were quickly secured, each about three feet long, and from six to ten pounds weight, when Mr. Merton desired that no more might be taken, not being required, and the lines were accordingly coiled away.

"I should not like one of those fellows to give me a bite," said Guy, examining their strong-pointed jaws, well armed with sharp teeth.

"How very bright their silvery shine is!" said Lina.

"And how easily we can understand their wonderful swiftness," added her mother, "when we note their long taper form and large fins. They must shoot like arrows through the water."

"And gobble up a frightful quantity of fish," said Guy. "They look like most voracious customers."

By ten o'clock the boat reached the jetty at the "Pines," to the great joy and relief of Mrs. Leslie's household and neighbours, many of whom had watched her running before the gale of the preceding day, with fear, and well-nigh despair, as to the safety of all on board. Job had been the only hopeful observer.

"An' I see the smoke of a fire begin to rise just about the time I reckoned you'd have landed, so I told 'em all I'd bet my head you was all safe, as, thank God, ye be!"

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

There I gazed upon wonders! The fishes with wings,
And the glimmer of magnified eyes that look'd up
From the gloom of the bottom, like pearls in a cup.

THOMAS HOOD—*Lycus, the Centaur.*

If he be not in love with some woman, there is no believing old signs. He brushes his hat o' mornings; what should that bode?

SHAKSPERE.

"SEE what presents of marine jewels our mighty neighbour Poseidon has sent us, by way of compensation for our yesterday's sufferings on his dominion!" said Mrs. Leslie, as she entered the drawing-room, where her sister and niece were already seated, after a refreshing bath and change of dress. "Wait till I have set down my load, and then—look with all your eyes!"

The large wide glass fish-globe she carried being placed on a table by the window, it at first seemed as though a few small rainbows were performing gymnastics within; but on a calmer investigation the radiance resolved itself into three forms of fishy character, careering round and round with flashing speed.

"What wonderful creatures!" cried Lina, dropping on her knees to look closely. How splendid is that Scarlet Dragon shape,* with blue, yellow, and purple markings!—and dark red fins all down its tail, exactly like leaves of seaweed! Its head is something like a hippocampus, but so vivid in colour. And what a bright eye!"

"My own idea," said Mrs. Leslie, "is that we have here a model in miniature of one of his majesty's own royal sea-horses. Who but he should have ocean-coursers so gorgeously caparisoned, and bestrewn with pearls and living jewels from stem to stern? I must make haste and get a sketch of the

---

* *Phillopteryx foliatus.*

glorious creature ere it fades; for fade it will, and die, I fear, all too soon for our delight."

"I think the alternate stripes of green and blue in this little Ostracian* quite as beautiful a bit of colour," said Mrs. Merton. "How closely the full tint of one approaches that of the other! Yet there is neither hard line nor perceptible shading off. Painted by the finger whose every touch is glorious and perfect! You can hardly detect the existence of the pretty little fins, they are so translucent—like a dragon-fly's wing—and they quiver so rapidly as the creature swims about."

"And what a droll little pursed-up mouth," said Lina—"just as if it were going to whistle; and the eyes are so clear and bright!"

"You would scarcely recognise that dry little mummy in my cabinet as one of the same fish, Lina?" said her aunt.

"What—the little cow-fish? No—and yet now I see every now and then, as these move about, just the position in which they resemble a cow's head, with one pair of spines for her horns. The second fish is quite quietly coloured, only buff and brown, in a sort of zebra pattern. As the little things are covered with bone-armour, the rich colouring must be in the thin skin that coats it. These and the splendid dragon must both live on very small creatures, for their mouths are so very tiny."

"My fisherman brought me some other specimens too. See, here is one of those curious crustaceans that I have heard called 'Butterfly Lobsters.'† Look, Lina, how singularly the shell of the head and body (properly known as the *carapace*) expands into something like wing-forms, entirely hiding the legs beneath them. What an odd expression of face the queer creature has!"

Lina, meanwhile, had unfolded many wrappings of wet kelp, and disclosed the two strange fish depicted in Plate VIII.

"Oh, Aunt Anne! what a splendid monster!" she exclaimed, raising the bright red and yellow one, and displaying its brilliant carmine fins.‡

"Ah! that must be the jewel-fish that old Donald said I should find. He said it glittered and shone 'all manner o' colours,' as he pulled it up, 'like the Queen's crown in the Tower o' London.'"§

---

* *Aracana avrita.* † *Ibacus Peronii.* ‡ *Scorpæna cruenta.*

§ Whilst I was making the drawing of this ruby-fish (as I named it), and using the brightest tints that my palette afforded, my son George, who had caught it, and was watching my progress, repeatedly criticised my work, saying, "Not half bright enough, Mother—nothing like the brilliancy of the creature when first drawn up."—L. A. M.

"But this is by far the most curious," said Mrs. Merton, examining the other.* "It has fins like feet; one small pair where pectoral fins usually are, and a larger pair, with absolute elbows to them, and apparently shoulder-blades too, only those do not belong to the fore pair of feet! A very antipodean arrangement truly! The markings on the body and on the delicate pellucid fins are like tortoiseshell. It seems a link between fish and reptiles."

Mrs. Leslie used all diligence in making accurate portraits of the fish, often complaining that no tints her palette could furnish were able to realise half their beauty. Her drawing is copied in the illustration, reduced to one-third the size of the original. The "Superb Dragon" is very rare.

Mrs. Merton was busy arranging the ferns she had collected for her herbarium, and Lina read aloud, until her father came in tired, and threw himself into an easy-chair, saying—

"I really ought to have gone home to-day, Anne, but your factotum, Morris, begged me to 'go round a bit,' as he said, and a fine dance he has led me, looking at fences and stock and one thing or other. I think I shall arrange to have your shearing done first this year. I can either get mine over afterwards, or Cyril will attend to it for me before he goes."

"*Goes?*—goes where?" asked Mrs. Leslie, hastily.

"Back to that broiling country that has half-killed him already. I have said all I can say to dissuade him; but he seems quite determined."

Mrs. Leslie's drawing engrossed her whole attention for some time. Then she rose and left the room, asking Lina to come and assist in arranging flowers.

"What has decided Cyril on such a sudden return?" Mrs. Merton asked her husband.

"Were I to say I *know*, it were more than the truth; but I believe that he is just as fond of Anne as when he left us before, and——"

"Then why not marry her? I'm sure she likes him."

"Because his pride rebels at the idea of proposing to a woman so much richer than himself."

"And are two good, kind, loving creatures to have their lives spoiled for such a silly scruple? Cyril ought to know better, and *shall*, too. Rich women *ought* to marry poor men, and rich men poor women; there would be sense and justice in that. But, instead, the matrimonial market is too often like a concourse of magnetic money-bags, where the largest attracts the largest."

* *Cheironectes politus.*

"My dear, you are a woman—and argue very like one. But say no more. Anne 's here."

As they all sat in the verandah in the evening, Guy was urging his father to go out and catch cray-fish.

"Boating again!" cried his mother. "Surely, Guy, you have had enough for one day!"

"Nothing like enough, Mother dear; and if Papa and I go to-morrow, this is the last chance for a while, and we could take some fish home with us, you know. It 's quite calm, and Holdsworth 's all ready. Do come, Papa! Come, Uncle Cyril!"

"I 'll not pull a stroke if I do," said Mr. Merton. "I am tired; but if you like to take me to sit still, very well."

Guy beguiled Lina also into venturing, and the three soon reached the jetty, where Holdsworth and the boat waited; Cyril did not follow, so they pushed off without him.

Half-an-hour's rowing brought them near a high rocky promontory, on a favourable ground for cray-fish, and a couple of nets (cup-shaped, lashed on iron hoops, and baited with meat) were quickly lowered, whilst Mr. Merton dropped a hook astern for whatever booty might approach. The phosphorescence of the sea delighted Lina. Each dip of the oars awoke flashes of soft bluish-white light, and the water dripping from them was as molten silver. When a net was raised with cray-fish in, they too were blazing with the same effulgence, and so were the hands of the fishers, and Lina's too, when she plunged them in the sea.

"How weird and wonderful this phosphoric light is, Papa!" she exclaimed. "I have read descriptions of the minute creatures which cause it; I should like to see them. The light gleams and flashes in such a peculiar way, that no one spot holds it for an instant."

"Do you remember the star-fish we once found here," said Guy, "with long, thin, many-jointed arms, almost like centipedes, that kept on shining all the evening, and, if touched, went into a general illumination, like strings of blue lamps? The large fungus that sometimes grows on dead wood or trees lights up with much the same effect. Is it phosphorus or electricity that makes the light, Papa?"

"I believe," said Mr. Merton, "the cause is not known with absolute certainty. Some flowers emit flashes of light, and this is supposed to be electric; whilst the luminous appearance often observed on stale fish, decaying vegetable

matter, and other substances, is probably phosphoric. The light around us now—so beautiful and so wonderful—owes its existence, as we know, to active life, not decomposition; for it soon ceases to be visible in water taken from the sea."

A few fine cray-fish were soon caught, all the hen-fish with spawn being conscientiously put back again in the water.

"A greater fallacy never gained credence," said Mr. Merton, "than the popular idea of a lobster or cray-fish being in perfection for the table when carrying spawn externally. In that stage they are impoverished in condition and poor in flavour."

"I know that the shells of such as have spawn are scarcely half full of meat," said Lina; "because at home it is my task to pick them for cooking, and it is an invariable fact. The little eggs themselves too are absolutely tasteless. Potted fish *looks* redder and prettier for having them in, and that is all the advantage——"

"Of a most destructive practice," said her father, "and which I hope ere long to see prevented as far as possible. We laugh at the fable of the man who killed the goose with the golden eggs, but many current customs evince like ignorance and greed, and none more palpably than the destruction of these fish, when, with a single one, in a state almost unfit for eating, myriads of ova perish."

"And it's no wonder, sir," said Holdsworth, "that the cray-fish are got scarce here, when you think how they've been taken wholesale for years now by those John Chinamen. *They've* made fortunes, lots of 'em, by drying fish on this coast."

"How do they dry them?" asked Guy.

"They boil the fish, sir, and then pick all the meat out. They first dry it in an oven, and then in the sun, till it will break like biscuit, and then it's packed and sent off to China. They dry the Mutton-fish* the same way. They pay the boatmen about here six shillings a hundred for those, or else so much a basketful—but it comes to about the same. There are not a great many fishermen who are clever at that business; there's a good deal of 'knack' in it."

"They spear them, don't they," asked Guy, "off the rocks under water?"

"Yes, sir, with a sort of barb or button on the end of the iron, which is rigged on a pole some eighteen or twenty feet long. The outside of the shells are so grown over with one thing or other, that a new hand most likely wouldn't see them at all, let alone striking them many feet below water; but I know one

* *Haliolis rubra.*

man who bets that he'll strike a half-crown, or a shell that size, twice out of three times at twenty-five feet—and he does it too. I've known poles used thirty feet long, but that's not common."

"What are they made of?" asked Guy.

"A young blue-gum* sapling makes the best, sir, because the wood is tougher than any other, and heavier too. The man stands on the boat's bow or thwart to spear, and if the pole snaps as it strikes, he's pretty sure to go overboard. The Chinamen first showed our people how to get the fish, but John soon got beaten hollow here at that business, so he buys them instead of catching them. But there's a deal of difference amongst men. Some go over a ground, and think they've cleared it, when another fellow comes along and prods up fish right and left that the first never saw. They don't bring 'em up singly, but wait till they have six or eight on the iron."

"What a pity to break such beautiful shells!" said Lina.

"Are lobsters, such as they get in England, better eating than our cray-fish?" asked Guy.

"It is so many years, Guy, since I ate fresh lobsters, that I am not a reliable authority, and the cray-fish is so good a substitute, I will not hazard ungrateful comparisons; but the absence in our fish of the large claws of the lobster, which contain such delicate meat, is one certain point of inferiority that must be confessed. A true lobster inhabits the fresh-water streams on our north coast, and a little cray-fish lives in our rivers too, but I never knew them abundant."

"I wonder when the Silver-fish† will pay us another visit," said Guy;

---

* *Eucalyptus globulus.*

† *Caranx Georgianus.* In April and May, 1869, immense shoals of these fish suddenly appeared on the east coast of Tasmania. Ten and fifteen hundredweight were sometimes taken in our own seine in an evening, without any perceptible diminution of the masses which filled the bay; they remained for about a month, then entirely disappeared, and not a single individual of the species has been seen here since to this time, August, 1876. We were told that the same fish, in like enormous shoals, had, some years previously, visited the southern coasts of New Zealand, and had in the same way entirely departed. To convey anything like a correct idea of this extremely beautiful fish, it should be "laid in" with a ground of burnished silver, and the delicate tints added. The skin is scaleless, and like satin, embossed all over in little raised freckles, and with symmetrical dark lines, resembling the veining of a leaf. In quality, they are a good deal like mullet. (The fish above mentioned have not re-appeared on our east coast yet, September 25th, 1879. The name *Caranx Georgianus*, written by Mr. M. Allport on my careful life-size drawing of this elegant fish, is, I see, used in a recently published list as that of the common trevally, which is totally different in form and colour, and has scales.)—L. A. M.

"or where they are now! I think comet-fish would be a good name for them. Their orbit in the sea seems as eccentric and mysterious as that of a comet in the universe."

Mr. Merton's whole attention had been for some minutes devoted to his line, and the "playing" of the fish which he felt had taken the hook. Suddenly he exclaimed, "Look out!" and, with Holdsworth's assistance, hauled into the boat a great Conger Eel,* whose violent contortions rather astonished Lina, as it shone like a fiery serpent, gleaming all over with pale blue phosphorescent light.

The broad pleasant verandah at the Pines was usually the scene of morning greetings. The sitting-rooms all opened into it by French windows, which during calm summer weather were rarely closed; and when Mr. Merton stepped from the breakfast parlour early on the following morning, he found Mrs. Leslie and Cyril already out, enjoying both the fresh delicious air, laden with flower odours, and the wide, glorious ocean view.

"Harold," said the former, with a flush somewhat rosier than usual on her pleasant face; "last evening you were very kindly arranging about my shearing, but I—I hope—I do not think that I shall need to trouble you this year."

Her brother-in-law looked puzzled; whilst Cyril, smiling very happily, and drawing her hand upon his own arm, said, touching his hat with mock humility—"Please, your honour, I 'm the new manager!—just engaged——"

"To manage not only my shearing, but myself into the bargain," added Aunt Anne, looking almost girlish, in the flush of her new happiness.

Further explanation was needless. Mrs. Merton, who just then joined the group, saw the state of affairs at a glance, and conveyed her glad congratulations in a sisterly kiss. Then after a moment's pause she remarked—

"This is a delightful solution of the shearing difficulty which you and Cyril have arrived at, and one which I most heartily approve, only I do not very clearly see how the immediate business arrangements are to be carried out, so that your new manager can supersede your old one."

"By having a quiet wedding, as befits rational people, before shearing begins," said Cyril, with deliberate earnestness. "I have already served three years for you—for I never should have gone to Riverina had I been a rich man, and so, in the world's estimate, an eligible suitor, with the right to propose long ago—and three years there is quite equal to seven anywhere else, I assure you, my Rachel."

* *Conger vulgaris.*

"If you call me Rachel, you must serve fourteen."

"If I were to act as your 'help,' before being legally constituted your helpmate, Mrs. Grundy and her legion of proprietors would be agonised beyond recovery. That idea therefore, my dear Anne, cannot be entertained for a moment. I shall put it to the vote—*now*, or six months hence, and I go back to the Lachlan, or Darling Downs, or Queensland, or some other money-earning furnace in the meantime."

Even Aunt Anne's solitary demur was but faintly uttered, and the amendment of *now* was carried by a majority of three.

Could a more orthodox conclusion be devised for a simple chronicle of country home-life? With the merry music of wedding bells floating around, I bid my gentle readers, young and old, a kind Farewell!

ALGÆ,

COLLECTED AT ORFORD, EAST COAST OF TASMANIA, BY THE AUTHOR, AND NAMED BY PROFESSOR C. S. AGARDH.

Apjohnia læte virens.
Areschougia Australis.
„ *Lawrencia.*
Asparagopsis armata.
Asperococcus sinuosus.
Ballia callitricha.
„ *scoparia.*
Bornetia Meredithiana.
Bryopsis plumosa.
Callithamnion—new species.
Callophyllis carnea.
„ *coccinea.*
„ *Harveyana.*
„ *Lamberti.*
Carpoglossum confluens.
Carpomitra cabreræ.
Caulerpa longifolia.
Centroceras clavulatum.
Ceramium diaphanum.
„ *rubrum.*
Champia obsoleta.
Chondria clavata.
„ *dasyphylla.*
„ *opuntioides.*
Chondriopsis.
„ *Harveyana.*
Chrysymenia Meredithiæ.
Cladophora Bainesii.
„ *gracilis.*
Codium tomentosum.
Corynecladia umbellata.
Curdiea—new species.
Curdiea laciniata.
Cystophora paniculata.
„ *retorta.*
Dasya ceramioides.
„ *elongata.*
„ *Gunniana.*
„ *napalathrix.*
Delisia elegans.
„ *pulchra.*
Dictymenia Harveyana.
Dictyota dichotoma.
„ *Nigricans.*
„ *paniculata.*
Dumontia prolifera.
Ectocarpus siliculosa.
Enteromorpha clathrata.
Epymenia Hallymenioides.
Erythroclonium Muelleri.
Fucodium gladiatum.
Gigartina brachiata.
„ *pinnata.*
„ *radula.*
Gloioderma Australis.
Gloiosaccion Brownii.
Gracilaria compressa.
„ *confervoides.*
„ *secundata.*
Griffithsia Sonderiana.
Haloplegma Preissii.
Halymenia Kallymenioides.
Halyseris Muelleri.
Hemineura froudosa.

Jeannerettia lobata.
Kallymenia cribrosa.
„ *Tasmanica.*
Laurencia botryoides.
„ *elata.*
„ *thyrsoidea.*
Lenormandia marginata.
Leibmannia Australis.
„ *ramulosa.*
Mesogloia virescens.
Mychodea carnosa.
„ *membranacea.*
„ *terminalis.*
Nereia Australis.
Nitophyllum crispum.
„ *Gunnianum.*
Phacelocarpus Labillardieri.
Phyllospora comosa.
Plocamium costatum.
„ *flexuosum.*
„ *procerum.*
Pollexfenia pedicellata.
Polycaëlia fastigiata.
Polysiphonia—new species (?).
„ *abscissa.*
„ *Australis.*
„ *cancellata.*
„ *frutex.*
„ *Hookeri.*
„ *Hystrix.*
Polyzonia incisa.
Porphyra laciniata.
Ptilonia Australasica.
Ptilota articulata.
„ *Rhodocallis.*
Rhabdonia nigrescens.
„ *verticillata.*
Rhodoglossum lalissimum.
Rhodophyllis Gunnii.
„ *membranacea.*
„ *ramentacea.*
Rhodymenia corallina.
„ *foliifera.*
Rytiphlæa Australasica.
Sargassum paradoxum.
„ *Sonderi.*
„ *varruculosum.*
Seirococcus axillaris.
Solieria chordalis.
Sphacelaria affinis.
„ *paniculata.*
„ *Tasmanica.*
Sporochnos candatus.
„ *radiciformis.*
„ *scoparius.*
Spyridia furcifolia.
„ near to *C. Muelleri.*
„ *opposita.*
„ *prolifera.*
„ *scalpelliformis.*
„ *trifaria.*
Thallymenia Polycœlioides.
Thamnocarpus Harveyana.
Thamnoclonium echinatum.
„ *proliferum.*
Tridæa—new species.
„ *polycarpa.*
Ulva rigida.
Valonia gigas.
Wrangelia ballioides.
„ *nobilis.*
„ *protenta.*
„ *setigera.*
Zonaria Turneriana.

(Many of these are marked by Professor Agardh as "new species.")

INDEX.

Aborigines, 79.
Abutilon, 126.
Acacia diffusa, 148.
Acacia sophoræ, 82.
Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris, 125.
Accipiter torquatus, 108.
Adiantum Æthiopicum, 219.
Alcyone Diemensis, 112.
Anas superciliosa, 160, 182.
Anemones, 226.
Anthochæra inauris, 119.
Aquila audax, 104.
,, *fucosa*, 104.
Aracana avrita, 248.
Arbutus, native, 11.
Ardea Novæ Hollandiæ, 112.
Aristotelia peduncularis, 41.
Asperococcus Turneri, 206.
Asplenium Brownii, 220.
,, *flabellifolium*, 220.
,, *laxum*, 139.
,, *odontites*, 219.
Athene maculata, 111.
Atherosperma moschata, 136, 148.

Bald Coots, 160.
Bandicoot, 59.
Banksia Australis, 88.
Barracouta, 225, 245.
Bedfordia salicina, 148.
Bettongia cuniculus, 32.
Billardiera longiflora, 11.
Bittern, 112.
Biziura lobata, 159.
Black-heads, 198.
Blue-cap, 124.
Blue-gum tree, 252.
Blue-heads, 212, 214.
Blue wren, 124.
Boobyalla, 82.
Boomer, 16.
Bornetia Meredithiana, 207.
Botaurus Australis, 112.
Bream, 226.
Bronze-wing pigeon, 118, 188.
Brush kangaroo, 16.
Bustard, 188.
Butterfly lobsters, 248.

Cacatua galerita, 113.
Caladenia Patersonia, 137.
,, *barbata*, 137.
Calyptorhynchus Xanthonotus, 115.
Cape Barren geese, 157.
Caranx Georgianus, 252.
Carpet snakes, 175, 177.
Casarca tadornoides, 159, 182.
Casuarina torulosa, 78.
Cat-fish, 212.
Cat, native, 66.
Cat's-head fern, 220.
Caulerpa furcifolia, 206.
,, *longifolia*, 206.
,, *scalpelliformis*, 206.
,, *trifaria*, 206.
Cenomyce rangiferina, 221.
Centropristis salar, 227.
Ceramium diaphanum, 207.
Cereopsis Novæ Hollandiæ, 157.
Cheilanthus tenuifolia, 220.
Cheilodactylus nigripes, 212.
Cheironectes politus, 249.
Cherries, native, 41.
Chestnut owl, 233.
Chironemus marmoratus, 212.
Chlamydochen jubata, 182.
Chondria dasyphylla, 208.
Chrysophrys Australis, 226.
Chrysymenia Meredithiæ, 207.
Cockatoo, black, 115.
,, white, 113.
Conger eel, 253.
Conger vulgaris, 253.
Convicts, 97.
Coprosma nitida, 148.
,, *hirtella*, 137.
Cormorants, 205.
Corræa, 221.
,, *speciosa*, 23.
Corvus Australis, 109.
Cow-fish, 214, 248.
Crab, blue, 209.
Crane, 112.
,, white, 182.
Cray-fish, 250.
Crow, 109, 186.
,, sooty, 110.
Cygnus atratus, 134, 157.
,, *olor*, 134, 157.

Dasyurus, 66.
Delisea elegans, 207.
Dendrobium Milligani, 222.
Dendrocygna arcuata, 182.
Devil, Tasmanian, 63.
Diamond-birds, 125.
Dicksonia Antarctica, 136.
Diemensia superciliosa, 177.
Diuris sulphurea, 137.
Diver, 183.
Dog-memory, 191.
Dogwood, 148.
Doodea caudata, 220.
Dottrels, 203.
Dove, ground, 119.
Dromaius Novæ Hollandiæ, 154.
Drymophila cyanocarpa, 41, 137.
Duck-billed platypus, 57.
Duck, black, 182, 160.
,, mountain, 159.
,, musk, 159.
,, wood, 182.

Eagle, Sea, 108.

Eagle, wedge-tailed, 104.
Eagle's nest, 107.
Echidna setosa, 55.
Emerald king butterfly, 12.
Emu, 154, 180.
Epacris impressa, 221.
,, *myrtifolia*, 221.
Epacris, red, 28.
Estrelda bella, 124.
Eucalypti, 132, 137.
Eucalyptus globulus, 252.
Eudyptes chrysocome, 200.
Exocarpus cupressiformis, 41.

Falcinellus igneus, 182.
Firetail, 124.
Fish-fight, a, 227.
Flat-heads, 212, 225.
Forester kangaroo, 15.
Forest kangaroo rat, 32.
Frenela rhomboides, 222.
Frogs, invasion of, 184.

Gannets, 222.
Geese, Cape Barren, 157.
Get-over bird, 127.
Gigartina radula, 207.
Gleichenia dicarpa, 140.
,, *flabellata*, 220.
Gloiosaccion Brownii, 206.
Goat, memory in a, 191.
Grammatophora barbata, 178.
,, *cristata*, 178.
,, *muricata*, 178.
,, *ornata*, 178.
Grampus, 214.
Griffithsia Antarctica, 207.
Ground dove, 119.
Grus Australasianus, 189.
Gualtheria hispida, 11.
Guard drakes, 182.
Gymnorhina organicum, 109.

Haliolis rubra, 251.
Halmaturus Billardieri, 30.
Hawk, brown, 108.
,, mope, 111.
,, night, 185.
,, sparrow, 168.
,, swamp, 108.
He-oak, 78.
Herodias syrmatophorus, 182.
Hiaticula ruficapilla, 203.
Histiopterus recurvirostris, 212.
Hæmatopus longirostris, 204.
Honeysuckle, 88.
Hoplocephalus curtus, 176, 177.
Horses, quarrel between, 193.
Hydrosaurus varius, 178.
Hymenophyllum crispatum, 139.
,, *flabellatum*, 139.
,, *rarum*, 139.
,, *tunbridgense*, 139.
,, *unilaterale*, 139.

Ibacus Peronii, 248.
Ibis, 182.
Ichthyiaëtus leucogaster, 107.
Icracidea berigora, 108.
Iguana, 177, 178.
Imesipteris tasmensis, 140.
Ivy-fern, 219.

Jackass, 110.
Jewel-fish, 248.
John Dory, 212.

Kallymenia cribrosa, 206.
Kangaroo, brush, 16.
,, forester, 15.
,, mouse, 37.
,, rat, 31.
,, rat, forest, 32.
Kathethostoma læve, 213.
Kelp, 211.
Kelp-fish, 212.
King-fish, 227.
Kingfisher, 112, 227.

Larus Pacificus, 198.
Lathamus discolor, 117.
Latris Forsteri, 212.
Leather-jackets, 212.
Leipoa ocillata, 188.
Leptospermum lanigerum, 148, 221.
Leucosarcia picata, 188.
Lichen, 221.
Liebmannia ramulosa, 207.
Lignum bushes, 180.
Lilac, native, 23.
Limatis nasico, 188.
Liusis fuscus, 175.
Lobrichthys Richardsoni, 212.
Lomaria Alpina, 220.
,, *discolor*, 140.
,, *fluviatilis*, 219.
,, *procera*, 220.

Mackerel Gulls, 224, 228.
Macrocystis pyrifera, 211.
Macropus Bennettii, 16.
,, *giganteus*, 15.
Magpie, 109.
,, black, 110.
Magpie perch, 212.
Maiden-hair, 219.
Mallee hens, 188.
,, snakes, 177.
Malurus longicaudus, 124.
Mantis, green, 23.
Mantis religiosa, 23.
Marsupials, 34.
Mesembryanthemum æquilaterale, 100.
Meso-gloia vires-cens, 207.
Mimosa, 148.
Miners, 120.
Monacanthus Peronii, 212.
Mope hawk, 111.
Morelia variegata, 175, 177.
"More pork," 111.
Mountain ducks, 159.
Musk duck, 159.
Mutton-fish, 251.
Myzantha garrula, 120.

Natica, 208.
Native cat, 66.
,, cherries, 41.
,, companion, 189.
,, pepper, 231.
Native women, 86.
Night hawks, 185.
Nitophyllum Gunnianum, 208.

Opossums, 32.
Opossum mice, 37.
Opossum, ring-tailed, 36.
Orca meridionalis, 214.

Orchids, 137, 222.
Ornithorhynchus anatinus, 57.
Otis Australasiana, 188.
Owl, chestnut-faced, 110, 233.
,, spotted, 111.
Oyster-catchers, 204.
Oyster Bay pines, 222.

Pagurus Bernhardus, 204.
Pardalotus punctatus, 125.
Parrakeet, swift, 117.
Parrot, blue mountain, 116.
,, common, 117.
,, ground, 116.
,, rose-hill, 117.
Parrot-fish, 212.
Parsley-fern, 220.
Peacocks, 20.
Pelecanus conspicillatus, 205.
Pelicans, 205.
Penguins, 200.
,, king, 200.
Pepper, native, 231.
Perameles Gunnii, 59.
Peristera elegans, 188.
Petroica multicolor, 123.
Phalacrocorax Novæ Hollandiæ, 205.
,, *leucogaster*, 224.
Phalangista fuliginosa, 32.
,, *viverrina*, 36.
,, *vulpina*, 32.
Phaps calcoptera, 118.
,, *elegans*, 119.
Phasma, 29.
Phascolomys wombat, 53.
Phyllopteryx foliatus, 247.
Pigeon, bronze-wing, 118, 188.
,, wood, 188.
Pig-faced lady, 212.
Pines, Oyster Bay, 222.
Piping crow, 109.
Platycephalus Bassensis, 198, 212.
Platycercus eximius, 117.
,, *flaviventris*, 116.
Platypus, 57.
Podargus Cuvieri, 111, 185.
Podiceps Australis, 183.
Polypodium Billardieri, 219.
,, *grammitidis*, 139.
Polypodium rugolosum, 140.
Polysiphonia Australis, 207.
Polystichum coriaceum, 140.
,, *vestitum*, 220.
Porcupine ant-eater, 55.
Porphyrio melanotus, 160.
Praying mantis, 25.
Pseudophycis barbatus, 225.
Pseulechis porphyriana, 175.
Pteris falcata, 221.
,, *incisa*, 140.
,, *tremula*, 220.
Pterostylis cucullata, 137.
,, *squamata*, 137.

Quail, 119, 185.

Red-bill, 204.
Rock cod, 225.
Robin, native, 123.
Ruby-fish, 248.

Salmon, 227.
Salmo Thymallus, 112.
Sand-saucers, 208.
Sarcophilus ursinus, 63.
Sassafras trees, 136, 148.
Scorpæna cruenta, 248.
Sea eagle, 107.
Sea-gull, 198.
Shags, 224.
Shark, 229, 240.
Sheep-driving, 95.
,, watering, 186.
She-oak, 78.
Shrike, 110.
Silver-fish, 252.
Snake, black, 175.
,, brown, 177.
,, carpet, 175, 177.
,, mallee, 177.
Snow-berry, 11.
Soldier-crab, 204.
Sooty crow, 110.
Spectre insect, 29.
Spine-bill, 125.
Spinigera, 210.
Spheniscus minor, 200.
Star-fish, 224, 250.
Strepera fuliginosa, 110.
Strix castanops, 110, 233.
Sula Australis, 222.
Summer-bird, 119.
Superb warbler, 124.
Swallows, 128.
Swans, black, 134, 157.
,, white, 134, 157.

Tasmanian Devil, 63.
,, tiger, 65.
Tasmannia aromatica, 232.
Tea-tree, 47, 148, 221, 229.
Tetratheca glandulosa, 23.
Tetrodon Hamiltoni, 226.
Thylacinus cynocephalus, 65.
Thyrsites atun, 225.
,, *solanderi*, 227.
Tiger-cat, 66.
Tiger, Tasmanian, 65.
Toad-fish, 226.
Tree-fern forest, 138.
Tree-ferns, 136.
Tree-frog, 222.
Trichoglossus Swainsonii, 116.
Tricomanes venosum, 139.
Trout, native, 112.
Trumpeters, 212.
Turkeys, 188.
Turnix varius, 185.

Uranoscopus vulgaris, 212.

Wallaby, 30.
Water-mole, 57.
Wattle-bird, 119.
Wax cluster, 11.
Whales, 235.
Whistling teal, 182.
White-eye, 127.
Wombat, 21, 53.
Wood ducks, 182.
,, pigeons, 188.

Xema Jamesonii, 224.

Yew Lizard, 178.
Yew-tree fern, 220.

[illegible]us Australis, 212.
Zosterops dorsalis, 127.

WELLCOME LIBRARY INSTITUTE

MARCUS WARD & CO.,
Printers,
ROYAL ULSTER WORKS,
BELFAST.

