



1889

# The Wood-Cutters of the Perie Bush A South African Story

Mary Ann Carey-Hobson

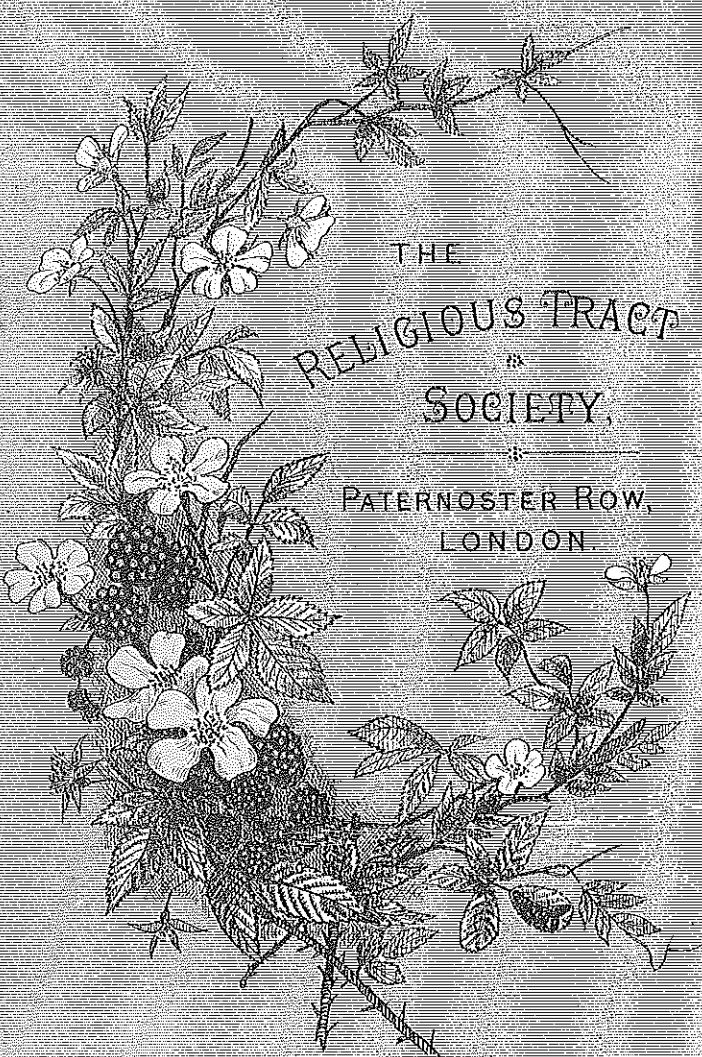
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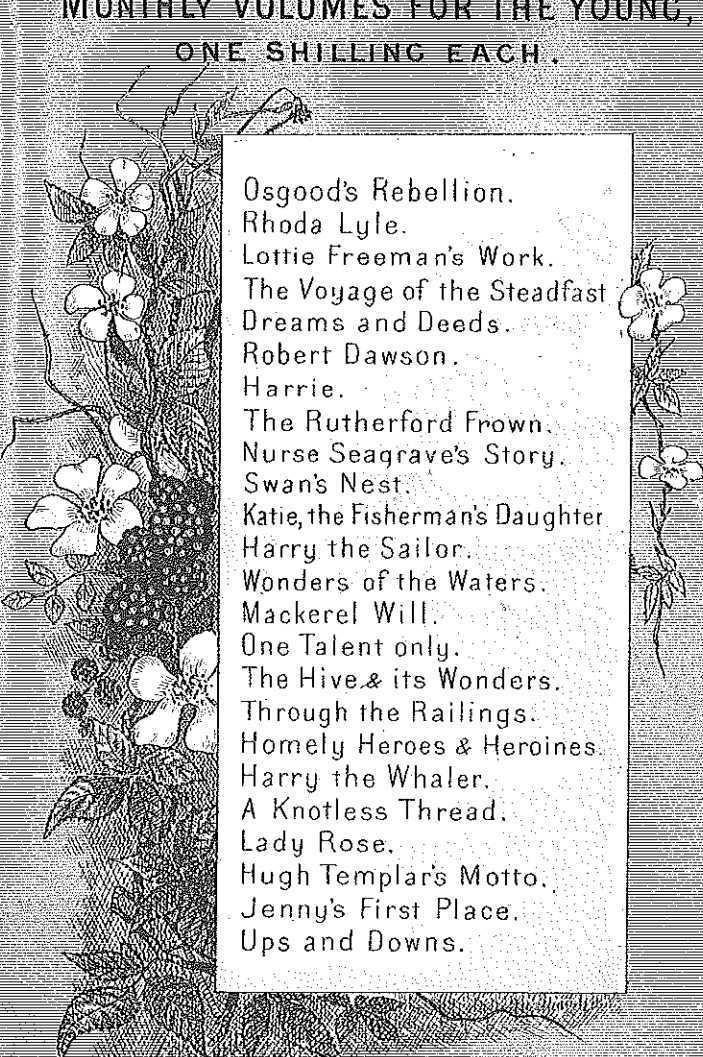
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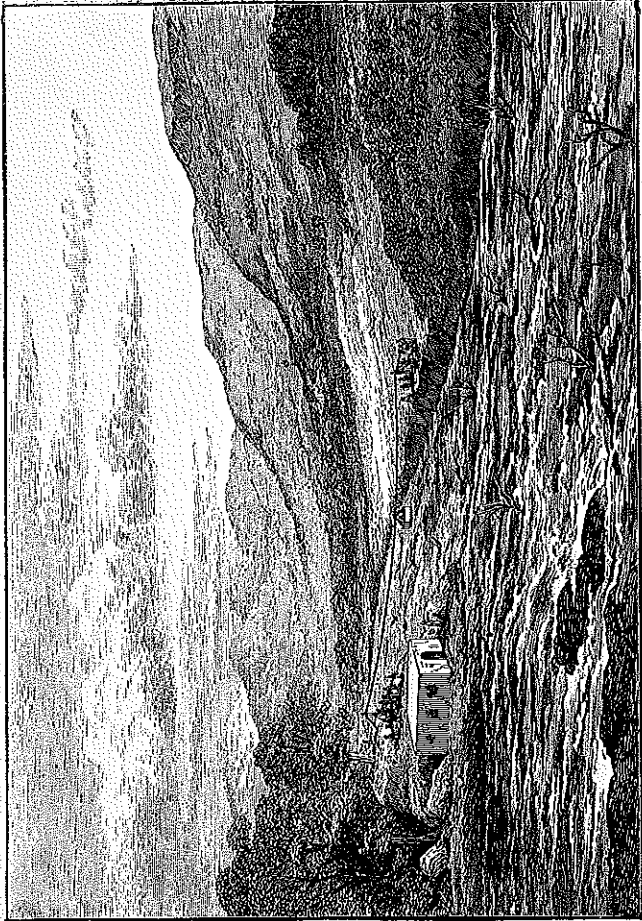
PATERNOSTER ROW,  
LONDON.

MONTHLY VOLUMES FOR THE YOUNG,  
ONE SHILLING EACH.



Osgood's Rebellion.  
Rhoda Lyle.  
Lottie Freeman's Work.  
The Voyage of the Steadfast  
Dreams and Deeds.  
Robert Dawson.  
Harrie.  
The Rutherford Frown.  
Nurse Seagrave's Story.  
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Katie, the Fisherman's Daughter  
Harry the Sailor.  
Wonders of the Waters.  
Mackerel Will.  
One Talent only.  
The Hive & its Wonders.  
Through the Railings.  
Homely Heroes & Heroines.  
Harry the Whaler.  
A Knotless Thread.  
Lady Rose.  
Hugh Templar's Motto.  
Jenny's First Place.  
Ups and Downs.

A present to  
Annie Rockett  
given by the  
Fisherton Sunday School Committee  
1889  
Edgar N. Thwaites  
Rector



See page 64.

# THE WOOD-CUTTERS OF THE PERIE BUSH

*A SOUTH AFRICAN STORY*

BY

MRS. CAREY-HOBSON

AUTHOR OF 'THE FARM IN THE KARGO,' 'AT HOME IN THE TRANSVAAL,'  
'SOUTH AFRICAN STORIES,' 'A CHAT ABOUT THE CAPE,'  
ETC., ETC., ETC.

London

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THE  
WOOD-CUTTERS OF THE PERIE BUSH.

CHAPTER I.

A VISIT TO THE FOREST.

JOHN'S a good lad, Bessie, and, as far as he goes, I do not see that your mother and I can have any objection to your engagement ; but his father, as long as I have known him, has never done anything for himself, except spend every penny of his income, as he gets it, in the most reckless manner. He isn't a bad man,—I don't mean that,—but he hasn't a bit of purpose or character in him ; and the mother is a poor washed-out, down-trodden creature, that has not spirit enough left in her to stand up against the injustice he does them all. If she chooses to give way as far as she herself is concerned, a mother ought to see that her children have their rights.

Where in the world John got his energy and good breeding from passes my comprehension.'

'Poor Mrs. West!' said Bessie. 'I think she's had her share of troubles, father, and, as you say, she looks rather tame under them; but that's one thing she *did* insist upon—that John should have the best education he could get, wherever they happened to be, and he repays her well for it. How hard he has worked in order that his sisters might go to school!'

'That's just it, Bessie. Take my word for it, John will have to work to help his mother and sisters—as long as that idler lives, at any rate—and that's not a prospect I quite like for you. But, as I said before, John's a good lad; and it's a comfort to think that "a dutiful son makes a good husband." Not a word could ever be said against John, and any girl may be proud of having won the love of such a man.'

Bessie's eyes shone with delight at the praise bestowed by her father upon her lover, and, linking her arm affectionately in his, they returned to the verandah, where her mother sat with a

piece of needlework in her hand, looking a perfect picture of happy contentment, framed in masses of grenadilla, jasmine, and cluster-rose, that climbed in promiscuous profusion all over the front of the house.

Mr. Harton was a clerk in the magistrates' office; his appointment was a tolerably good one, and he had more than once declined a small country magistracy—preferring, for his wife and daughter's sake, to remain in their own pretty house in King Williamstown, in what was then called British Kaffraria, than to leave it for a place where his wife, a delicate woman, would miss the comforts of a civilized community, and Bessie, their only daughter, the advantages of a good education.

Mr. West, John's father, was one of those unfortunate beings who, notwithstanding the ability to do well for themselves, never do anything worth speaking of, but prefer, Micawber-like, to wait for 'something to turn up.' His wife, who, fortunately for her, had a small income of her own, had long ceased to remonstrate with her husband

upon his lack of energy, and, with a meek submission to 'the inevitable,' had given herself up entirely to the cares of her household and children. It had been a fancy of Mr. West's lately to reside for a time on a small island in the Buffalo River, just for a change, as he said, instead of going to the seaside. They were picnicing in a shanty of three rooms, with but very little furniture, and only provisions enough to last the family from day to day, Mr. West spending the greater part of his time in going backwards and forwards in a little boat to fetch necessaries from the town, and picking up the news of the moment. It mattered little to him that Mrs. West was in a constant state of anxiety about her young children, who were always at the water's edge. 'She must get over the trouble, as she had done over other troubles.' He had thoughts of applying for a lease of the island, and letting it out by the week to parties requiring the freshness of the river breeze.

It was in the late spring, or early summer time, that Colonel McAllan, who had a large farm in the

neighbourhood, meeting him in the town one day, said:—

'Ah, West, I was thinking of you. You had better clear out of that island home of yours before the summer storms come on.'

'Why should I clear out, colonel? I suppose the island has weathered a good many summer thunder-storms before now?'

'And been pretty well submerged in the weathering,' remarked the colonel.

'I suppose it won't come into the cottage, and "a miss is as good as a mile."'

'Well, it's your own look-out; only don't say you haven't been warned. I spoke for the sake of your family. I know my wife wouldn't like a torrent rushing past within a foot or two of her little ones, and making an unhealthy swamp of the whole place afterwards.'

'Thanks, colonel,' said Mr. West; 'I dare say you are right. I'll see about getting them off; it certainly would not be pleasant to be washed off.'

'Humph!' muttered the old colonel to himself



as he walked away. "He'll see about it;" yes, when it's too late. However, it will only give them a fright.'

How many an evil thing occurs from that foolish procrastinating habit of saying, 'I'll see about it,' by people who, although they may possibly at the moment have the full intention of doing so, seem to consider the intention as good as the doing. Our Saviour, when there was a question of feeding the multitudes or healing the sick, said not, 'I'll see about it,' but He did it.

Col. McAllan's farm was in the beautiful Izeli Valley, one of the loveliest spots in Kaffraria. The spurs of the densely-wooded mountain range of the Izeli Forest, or Perie Bush, formed a noble background to the soft undulating grassy land below, in which the golden patches of corn and the vivid green of the maize, relieved by the deep tone of the orchard-trees, laden with fruits of every kind, made a home pleasant enough for the most artistic lover of scenery. Col. McAllan's duties kept him in town. His sons, both still too young to undertake the responsibility of such a place

had also just entered the Civil Service under their father. Allan and Frank McAllan were two fine, brave young fellows, of the respective ages of twenty and eighteen. They had one sister, sixteen years of age, a beautiful girl, with a clear complexion of the brunette type. She and Bessie Harton were great friends, having always been companions, both in their studies and in their games; indeed, Bessie had almost become one of the household; for, as Mrs. McAllan had a very excellent governess for her daughter, an arrangement was come to, for the benefit of all parties, that Bessie should share the advantages of Jeannie's schoolroom.

A few months before the opening of our story, all the McAllan family were staying out at the Izeli farm, and, as usual, Bessie was with them. The young people enjoyed the free country life, climbing up to the Izeli Post, and thence into the Perie Bush, where there was a large colony of wood-cutters and sawyers, with their poor, untaught families. Some of these people were very badly off, owing principally to the improvidence

of the husbands and fathers, who, though they worked very hard, and generally had good sale for their timber, spent too much of their hard-earned wages in brandy. There were notable exceptions, but they were not many. Jeannie and Bessie had ridden some distance into the forest one day, when they came upon two little children gathering wild raspberries, which were still rather scarce, being early in the season; but 'poor mother was very ill, and she couldn't get anything nice to eat,' and so it had occurred to Polly that as the berries were getting ripe, if she and Tommy could get a tin bucketful, the man at the shop would give them something for mother in exchange. Father had gone away to Fort Beaufort, a very long way off, to sell his wagon-loads of planks, and he would bring back lots of things for mother, but they didn't know when he would come.

'Poor little things!' said Bessie, 'they won't get their bucket filled to-day; they are not tall enough to reach the best.'

'Come, let's help them,' said Jeannie, jumping down from her pony; 'and you too, Petcánie, you

can watch the horses and pick berries at the same time; if you don't get very many—still, every little helps.'

Petcánie, the Fingo lad, who generally rode with the young ladies, grinned all over his face, showing a magnificent set of white teeth. He had soon tethered the three horses, and then, running down to the stream to wash his hands, he came back, bringing with him some fine large leaves, which he formed into hollow dishes to hold the fruit as it was gathered, and spread the rest upon a bed of moss, making a receptacle for the general contributions; and they soon found that Petcánie's leaves were filled twice to their once, if not more, for he was able to climb where they could not, and was not, as they were, afraid of the thorns.

'No wonder Petcánie laughed,' said Bessie, 'when we gave him credit for being able to put the mickle to our muckle. When the can is full, shall we go with the children to see their mother? I was thinking we could spare the poor woman that great piece of sponge cake that was put up with our lunch.'

The tin bucket was soon filled to overflowing with the ripest raspberries they could find, and then they all started for the home of the two little ones.

The 'store,' or shop, was visited *en route*, and the kind-hearted trader willingly gave little Polly some 'nice things for mother,' to which the two girls added, by his advice, a little arrowroot, white sugar, and a few other delicacies that would conduce to the comfort of an invalid. He 'knew the poor things well.' She was a most respectable woman, but unfortunately had been ill since her husband left home. She would soon get well when he came back, for one great cause of her continued illness was her extreme anxiety on his account. A kinder husband and father could not be found in the whole district, when he was away from the drink. Everybody said he was no man's enemy but his own; but for his own part he couldn't see that, for the man who got drunk for days together, as Jackson did, and induced others to drink with him, was an enemy to those he called friends. Jackson was all the more to blame

because he knew what he was about; he always had the sense to remain sober until he had disposed of his loads of timber, and before he went on his drinking bout he laid in a good stock of groceries, bread stuffs, and clothing for his family, packed it on a timber wagon, and paid a sober man to look after it, together with some of the money, which he wasn't to give him again if he wanted it ever so much.

In this manner the shopkeeper talked as he tied up the little parcels. He thought it would do the poor woman a world of good if the young ladies would go and see her; and so they did, Polly running on before with her own treasures, and little Tom riding proudly on Petcánie's horse.

They found Mrs. Jackson with her little baby looking weak and anxious because she couldn't do anything; but her cottage, or shantie, built of the thick slabs of timber, cut from the outsides of the felled trees before they were sawn into planks, was very comfortably furnished, and everything looked as nice as it could be expected to

look with the mistress in ill-health. The cloth was laid for the children's dinner, and a good joint of meat and a large loaf of bread were on the table. The girls almost hesitated about giving their little parcels; but they soon found out that it was just the change from the general routine of meat and bread that was required; and the sponge cake with a cup of tea were really very welcome to the poor delicate invalid, who had no appetite for the mutton and brown bread. She spoke in the most affectionate manner of her absent husband, wishing he were there to tell them about the different polished specimens of wood, of which several pretty things had been made. Mrs. Jackson, though a quiet, gentle creature, was evidently a woman of no education, and yet there were marks of refinement and culture in the place that struck both the girls. The children, too, were not at all like the children of common peasants, such as they imagined the wood-cutters generally to be. Altogether they were much interested in Mrs. Jackson and her children, and puzzled themselves much about

them as they rode towards home through the mighty forest of dark ever-green yellow-wood trees, the sombre hue of which was lighted up here and there by the brilliant scarlet spikes of the Kaffirboom (*Erythrina Caffra*), the sweet-scented wild chestnut and other flowering trees, so often to be met with in the Kaffrarian *kloofs* and on the mountain *krantzses*.

They had got some distance down the forest path, and were just about to descend from a ridge into a *kloof* that led partly under a great mass of rock, when Petcánie called out, 'Here comes a *baas* (master), and racing as if an elephant were after him.'

The individual, whoever it was, was bending down over the saddle, with his hat drawn over his eyes, but hearing a human voice he looked up.

'Back, back! young ladies!' he cried; 'do not come this way. Keep up there, and turn back. I will come to you as soon as I can.'

'What does he mean?' said Jeannie. 'I'm not going to turn back; it will take us an hour

to get home by the other road. I shall go on.'

'Nay, nay! missie,' said Petcánie; 'it's young Sieur West, and we must do what he says.'

'No doubt Petcánie is right,' said Bessie. 'Mr. West would not tell us to keep out of the way if there were not some danger. I think he seems to be buffeting with something. What is the matter, Petcánie? can't you see?'

'*Ach, mij tyd jonge Nooij's*, I believe the *baas* has been attacked by a swarm of mad bees;' and Petcánie, without waiting for permission, turned and fled uphill, and was followed for a short distance by the girls. However, they found that none of the bees were coming their way, and therefore determined to dismount and see if perchance they could be of any use, for it is a serious thing to be attacked by a swarm of enraged bees.

They soon found that it was not the young man, but his unfortunate horse, that was the object of such savage animosity. Bees have a most acute sense of smell, and there are some

things that so offend their olfactory nerves that they are driven, as Petcánie said, quite mad, if so offended. One of the most objectionable of scents in this respect is that of a horse which has been ridden hard, till it is what is called 'sweating.'

John West had been riding round Col. McAllan's farm, of which he was the manager, and in his rounds had given chase to and killed a young wild buck; then, having occasion to visit the forest, he had taken the short, secluded bridle-path through the *kloofs*, and under the great overhanging rock before mentioned. Here he lingered to gather some of the fruit that grew on a wild vine that hung from the summit of the cliff, when all at once he found himself and his horse the objects of most unwelcome attention from the insect inhabitants of a small cavern in the rocks. Hastily pulling up a bunch of long fern fronds, he did his best to keep the bees off, while he got out of their neighbourhood as quickly as he could. This was all they wanted, and although they had punished the poor horse rather severely for his offensiveness, and his

master in a measure for bringing him there, they did not pursue them beyond the small open space on the ridge where Petcánie had first seen them.

'I am sorry you will have to go round,' said John West as he rode up, 'but it certainly would not be safe for you to go that way. How vicious the creatures were, to be sure! I expect the hive is too rich. I will give the wood-cutters a hint about taking out some of the honey; the bees will then be more afield at this time of day.'

The two girls were soon telling him of their visit to Mrs. Jackson.

'Very singular,' said John, 'that you should just have come from her. I fell in with Jackson's wagons this morning, and promised to let his wife know that he would probably be home early to-morrow. I am on my way there now.'

They soon came once more within sound of the saw and the axe, and John West rode on quickly to fulfil his promise; however, he soon overtook them again, for having to go so much farther round than they had intended, and by the road that might

be frequented by drunken stragglers, he thought it better to keep with them, especially as it would be getting late in the afternoon before they could reach home.

John West was a fine, handsome young fellow, tall, broad-shouldered, and well-proportioned. His sunburnt face bore the look not only of splendid health, but of that energy and determination of will that at once made plain the reason of Petcánie's expression, 'We must do what he says.' Gentleness itself where gentleness and kindness were needed, it was this force of character that Col. McAllan saw would make him peculiarly valuable as manager of the farm, and induced him to offer him that position a little time before.

His father had not liked his accepting it, saying, 'It's little better than being a servant. If you take my advice, you'll wait till something better than that turns up.'

But John had as a youth very early come to the conclusion that it was better to take a good berth, if it were offered, than to wait for one that might never come.

'As to being a servant, father, I don't mind that, if I can do my duty. I like farming, and since there is no chance that I can see of having one of my own, I may as well farm for Col. McAllan, and get a good salary for it.'

And John became manager at the Izeli, and did his work most conscientiously, seldom giving himself time to come to the regular meals with the family, but preferring to keep to the cottage that he called his bachelor's quarters. He had not therefore seen very much of the ladies, the only one of the party that he really knew being Bessie Harton ; and John would have done anything for Bessie—she was his ideal of all that was sweet and lovely, and he had endowed her in his imagination with every virtue that ought to belong to a true woman.

When Mr. and Mrs. West came to the colony, John had been left in England to finish his education, so far as his mother could afford the means ; and before he had even left school every letter from his mother and sisters told of something bright and kind done by Bessie, that tended to

lighten and relieve the weary life led by the one, and to make the happiness of the others ; so that it was scarcely to be wondered at that John should be quite ready to fall in love with Bessie Harton at the first opportunity.

## CHAPTER II.

## THE WOOD-CUTTER'S WILL.

IT somehow happened after this that John West spent a great many more of his evenings with the family than he had hitherto been in the habit of doing, often meeting the two girls on their return from the forest, where they had come two afternoons in the week lately to get all the children of the wood-cutters together and give them a little instruction.

Jackson had been so grateful for the attention paid to his poor wife in her illness, and also to Bessie, whom he had one day found trying to teach Polly to read, that it resulted in his building a good log hut, and calling it 'the young ladies' room;' and there, as we have said, they had their little classes, with good effect, for the children eagerly looked forward to these visits, which were continued, though at longer intervals, even after

the return of Col. McAllan and the family to the town.

Little Polly was a particularly apt pupil, and quickly received and retained not only what she was taught from books, but even the manner and accent of her teachers, Bessie being the one whom she especially copied in this respect. It was curious to note the effect of this upon the child's father. He spent most of his spare time now in helping her to prepare her lessons, and teaching Tommy his alphabet, instead of, as heretofore, gossiping with the men, or polishing and carving pieces of the wild olive or other beautifully grained woods. His manner too, which, although it had always been superior to that of the people around him, earning for him the sobriquet of 'Gentleman Jackson,' became more softened still when with his children, and his face often wore a thoughtful look that it had not worn before.

'I can't think what's come to you, Jack,' said his wife one day, when he was in one of his thoughtful moods. 'You seem to be getting so far away from me. I know I'm not clever like



you, Jack; but it would break my heart if you went off again as you did after Polly was born, for a whole year.'

'Never fear, Mary, I shall not leave you and the children now. As long as we live, we will live together. You have been a good wife to me, and I'm not going to give up the woman I'm bound in honour to love and cherish, for all the luxuries that my English home could give me. But what I have been thinking of lately, Mary, is, that the children, when we are gone, will have a right to a very different position to what we are occupying here. There's no need to tell them of it; it can do no good; but I begin to see that, living the rough life I do, I ought to leave some will and written statement that would enable them to come into their own.'

The poor wife knew nothing of the English home alluded to, and hated the name of it. She knew that her husband had been to his home once since their marriage; but she did not know that if he could have been induced to forsake her and her child, he might have been living there now. He

had pleaded in vain that his wife might be received at his father's house, and being refused, had again disappeared from England, leaving no trace of his whereabouts. He had wrecked his whole life, and there was but small chance now of his ever again redeeming the past in his own person. But the children might do it for him. Polly, with her pretty manners and her love of all that was good and beautiful, reminded him constantly, especially within the last few months, of the sweet mother he had lost and mourned so long ago. Oh, if she had not died, and his father not married a woman whose great aim was to put her own children in his place, how different it would all have been! But what was the good of thinking of that? The mistakes of his life were of his own making; still, he was heir to the family estates, and his children must not suffer an injustice for their father's faults.

The morning following these reflections Jackson went into town, and paid a visit first to the office of Mr. Harton, and afterwards, accompanied by him, to that of Col. McAllan, and in their presence

a legal declaration was drawn up, signed, and witnessed.

'And now I understand it to be your intention,' said the colonel, 'that in the event of your death a copy of this document shall at once be forwarded to the lawyers you have mentioned. Is that your wish, Mr. J——?'

'Jackson, if you please, Col. McAllan—nothing more. Yes, that is my desire.'

'Then you will excuse my saying so, but you will surely not keep your children up there in the bush, where they can have no education, and will be as totally unfit to enter society at any future time as you virtually allow that their mother is now.'

'The boy is still too young to be taken from his mother,' said Jackson, 'and my little Polly will learn as she has the opportunity. Your two kind young ladies have already improved the child so wonderfully that it would scarcely be possible for her now ever to become vulgar in her manner. However, I am not entirely without means. For some years past a certain sum has been set aside for the children, and this and more I will thank-

fully expend upon their education; at all events, there is sufficient to place Polly at school now; and as for the boy, when the time comes I can but send him home to be under the care of a guardian. However, there is time enough for that, for we know not what may come to pass in the next three or four years. My wife is a delicate woman; and if anything were to happen to her, I should most likely take the children home myself.'

Soon after this, John West's eldest sister, Lottie, undertook the education of the younger members of the family. Bessie immediately proposed that Polly should be allowed to board with them, and join the class; this was acceded to, and the child was soon perfectly at home in her new surroundings.

The Wests still lived upon the island, notwithstanding the repeated warnings of friends, and, what was still more to the point, of one or two thunder-storms. John also had done his utmost to persuade his father to get back to the house in King Williamstown, which they still held, by keeping their furniture there, and using it occasion-

ally as a sleeping-place when anything kept them in town too late to get off by the boat; and of course Mr. West had promised in his usual way to see about it, but as usual had put off doing so.

'Where's your little Polly?' said Mr. Harton, one night at tea-time to Bessie; 'isn't she coming in to stay with the Wests?'

'She is with them already, father, and closely packed they are too in that little place. I don't like it at all; the child hasn't as much room as she had in her log cottage in the woods—a lot of girls in one room. Mr. West promised to come back to the house before this.'

'I should not wonder if he gets washed out, after all. I would not leave the child there if I were you. Let her sleep here till they are settled. There have been some tremendous storms up country, and I feel sure that it is anything but safe to remain on that swampy little island; but that West is as obstinate as a pig, and will do as he likes, not caring who suffers for his selfishness.'

Bessie was very fond of Polly, for it always seemed to her that John's love for herself dated

from that afternoon when they found the little girl and her brother gathering wild raspberries in the Perie Bush, and this little feeling of romance threw a halo of love around everything connected with her young *protégée*.

'May I bring her here to-morrow, mother?' asked Bessie. 'I will go and fetch her in the afternoon when school is over.'

'Do, dear child,' said Mrs. Harton; 'she is especially under your care, and if your father considers it dangerous for her to remain where she is, you will feel easier if she is with you.'

CHAPTER III.

A FRESHET FROM THE AMATOLAS.

JOHN WEST was very busy at the Izeli farm the following morning. The cattle had been attended to, and the small flocks of sheep and goats had been turned out of their kraals to graze on the hillsides. Some of the men were sent to chop down wild olive and mimosa trees at the farther end of the farm, to add to the stock of firewood that he kept for the supply of both houses. He had sent a wagon-load of it into town the day before, and he was just hesitating as to whether he should let another go in that morning, or use the men and oxen upon some other work; there were butter and eggs to go, and if he sent one man alone, he would be sure to stay away the whole day, and there were so many things to be done. However, the matter was soon

settled for him; for as he hesitated Petcánie and an old Kaffir advanced towards him.

'Why, Petcánie,' exclaimed West, 'how is it that you are out here? When did you come? Is there anything wrong?'

'No, master, I came out with the empty wood-wagon last night; missis said I might, 'cause the boys said you were going to send it in again to-day. But this old Kaffir, Ompāas, he says that the big river is coming down for certain, and that the wagon might never come back for a week.'

'Is that so, Ompāas?'

'Much rain up country, master,' replied the old man. 'Kaffirs coming by just now say very big floods come to-night.'

'Well, Petcánie, you must be off, then. Take the little bucket of butter in your hand, and go as quickly as you can, or you may have to stay this side, and you won't like that; and be sure to tell every one what Ompāas has said—Miss Bessie and my father too.'

Petcánie waited for no more, and soon he was

seen speeding along the road, the little bucket hanging on his knobkerrie over his shoulder.

John had some further talk with Ompāas, from whom he learnt that warnings had been sent from one Kaffir kraal to another, to keep all cattle out of low-lying grounds; that the thunderstorms had been unusually heavy up country; and that it was only on account of there having been such a long drought, and consequently so many large rhinoceros holes to fill up, that the river had not come down already; but he thought the floods could not be later than sundown in coming when the next storm would have passed.

'I wish I had gone in to caution them myself,' thought John, 'but father promised me he would see about getting mother and the children off that stupid place. She'd be awfully frightened if she were shut in there for two or three whole days. Then, again, if I go into town and can't get back, there'll be nothing done here; I have no right to do that.'

And so John had to content himself with the thought that Petcánie would be there in an

hour's time, and they would, at all events, be on their guard.

In those days there was no bridge over the Buffalo River, as there is now, and many a wagon and traveller's cart had been capsized, and many a life had been lost in the waters of the beautiful but treacherous stream, when swollen by those thousand and one 'babbling brooks and plashing fountains' of the poet-loved Amatola Range, after they had been converted into angry mountain freshets by the upland thunderstorms.

Petcánie was soon at home, and after depositing his can of butter in the cook's pantry, he went to ask his mistress if he might go at once and deliver Mr. John's message to Miss Bessie and Mr. West.

'I am here, Petcánie,' said Bessie from the verandah, where she was sitting with Jeannie, just outside the window. 'What is it?'

Upon hearing what he had to say, she determined to go with him and bring little Polly Jackson back at once, instead of waiting till the afternoon.

When they arrived on the island, they found that, as usual, Mr. West was absent, and his poor wife in a great state of mind, her Kaffir woman having just been in to tell her that her husband and brother had come to fetch her, that the river was coming down, and that she must go at once.

'The Kaffirs don't think it safe for her,' said Mrs. West, almost crying; 'and here am I with all the children, and not a soul to help me.'

'Why didn't you get the two men to take you all to the town?' said Bessie. 'I think it would have been better, and then of course they would have left Melanie with you.'

'They offered to do so, but Mr. West promised to be back before this. I thought I'd better wait; the river isn't likely to come down at once. So they went the other way, to Toise's kraal; but now I wish I had got them to take two of the girls, that they could have told their father about it.'

'Petcanie can row them over now,' said Bessie, 'and come back for me. I am going to take

Polly with me, and while we are getting her things together he can do it.'

She ran out to tell him, while the girls quickly put on their hats and followed at once.

'Don't stay, Petcanie; I'll be quite ready for you, and perhaps you may meet Mr. West.'

Petcanie looked as if he did not quite like leaving Bessie behind.

'Why not missie come now, too?'

'I must go and help the poor missis pack a few things together,' said Bessie, 'but I will be down here when you come.'

Charlotte, the eldest daughter, was with her mother, and busying herself in getting everything in readiness for her father's coming.

'I have just found out that even the nurse-girl has gone with Melanie,' said Mrs. West; 'and there's baby crying in her crib, with no one to take her up. I'm sorry now I let the girls go. One never knows what to do for the best.'

'Never mind, mother,' said Charlotte. 'Polly's gone to amuse baby; we must have all the others ready, you know.'

Bessie and Charlotte worked hard, but poor Mrs. West was in a fretful mood, ready to grumble at everything, as indeed she too often had reason to do.

The time was drawing near when Bessie expected Petcánie back. She carried some of the things to the bank of the river, and noticed that the water was higher than it usually was—a circumstance that she had not given heed to on landing. She saw Petcánie putting off from the shore, and another boat ready, she thought, to do the same.

She ran back, calling out cheerfully, 'Mr. West is coming. We can take something more in our boat; what shall it be? One of the children, and that pot with the dinner in it? Petcánie will carry it up to the house.'

'Shall we take baby?' said Polly. 'She's got her bottle of milk, and she's very good.'

'Oh, I wish you would, Bessie,' said Mrs. West; 'that would take a load of worry off my mind. Her father always thinks she is in the way, poor little mite!'

'Certainly I will,' replied the girl. 'You had better bring her down, Lottie, while I carry the big pot; and then you'll hear what Petcánie says.'

'Make haste! make haste, missie!' cried the black boy, as he neared the shore. 'The river's coming down quicker than they thought.'

'Where's my father?' asked Charlotte, as she put the baby on some rugs in the bottom of the boat, under Polly's care, in order that Bessie might be free either to steer or take an oar.

'He's coming directly, miss. He said he must just go back for something, then he'd come; I think he's on the way.'

'Yes, I can see him,' cried the girl, as she reached the top of the bank, 'coming as fast as he can.' And, sure enough, before the others had got half-way, he had reached the island, and was soon up at the house. There was a Kaffir with him, who, in passing, called out something to Petcánie.

'Missie! shall we go back? That man say he not think we get through.'

Bessie bent to the oar. 'No, go on; my mother would be terrified if I did not get home.'

The boy strained every nerve, but the double journey had told upon him. Still, they were making good progress; when, all at once, with a terrific noise like the deep, angry, sullen roar of the surf on the sea-shore in a storm, came a perfect wall of water.

'Down, missie! hold fast!' screamed Petcánie turning the boat as well as he could.

Bessie threw herself upon the two children, clutching the boat below them, silently commending herself and them to God.

Then came the crash! With a noise like thunder they seemed to be borne beneath the rushing mass of water, and then as suddenly thrown to the summit of the great hissing wave. Bessie saw nothing of it; she believed that they were all going to be swamped by that terrible rush, and she kept her eyes only on the little ones in her care, while her thoughts flew to her darling mother, who would soon be mourning for her only child. Oh, how many and how various were the memories

that crowded into her mind in those few moments—memories of a lifetime past, and happy hopes of bright days to come, all gone for ever!

Petcánie touched her. She lay so still, with her arms around the children, that he thought the shock had killed his dear young missie, as he always called her.

She lifted up her white face and looked at him. He was standing with the long boat-hook in his hand, ready at any moment to keep the boat clear, if possible, of the great stumps and baulks of timber that were rushing headlong side by side with them. Had she been insensible? She never knew, but she thought not; and she understood in a moment, as Petcánie pointed onwards and tried to say a word above the roar of waters, that they were being carried out to sea!

It was a fearful thought, only a degree better than being buried by that horrible wave. She sat up on the seat, and, nodding to Petcánie (for it was no use speaking), gave him to understand that she was once more ready to take her part of the work when needed.



It seemed a strange thing to Bessie that there was no water in the boat; there were merely a few splashes on the seats, and yet she had felt so sure that the water had rushed over them! If they had so wonderfully escaped that horror, God would take pity on them, and surely, surely they might by some means be stayed in their course before they reached the sea—thirty miles of river at least from the place of their starting, and two or three villages to pass *en route*, besides East London, and the then small military village of Panmure, at the mouth of the river. If they could but reach either bank! but there seemed small chance of that, for as the boat flew on with lightning speed it was accompanied by large uprooted trees from the forest, great boulders from the ravines, and masses of rock torn from the river-bed. It seemed almost a miracle that they did not come in collision with any of these; had they done so, the boat would have capsized at once, and death to all of them would probably have been the immediate consequence. They were in the middle of the broad current, and as



they passed each bend of the river, where Bessie vainly hoped they might be caught by an eddy, and get from that into still water, they seemed to fly round quicker than ever, but still they held the middle of the stream.

The sun was broiling hot. Polly sat where she had been placed, by the side of the sleeping baby under the awning in the stern of the boat, with her large brown eyes fixed upon Bessie, who, regardless of everything but the great danger they were in from the flood, had not thought of the heat. The boat was one that Mr. West had fitted up for the use of the family, and Polly had often heard him say that the girls were not to sit where Bessie was sitting while the sun was so hot—that if the sun were to strike their heads they might die. Polly had not dared to move, though she tried hard to attract Bessie's attention, so as to get her to come under the awning; but when she saw her friend suddenly raise her hand to her head she darted forward and took hold of her dress to pull her in.

Bessie, not thinking at all of herself, immedi-

ately stooped to attend to the children. She smiled at Polly when she saw how well she had been acting the little mother to baby, and giving her a couple of sweet biscuits that she had put in her pocket when she started from home that morning, she turned to the water-tub that was always kept chained to the boat, to give her a draught of water. It was fortunate that she did so; the canteen-shaped tub was nearly empty! And then all at once it struck her that if they were not rescued while in the river, they would soon be out of reach of fresh water. They all drank, and were refreshed, and then Bessie, by means of the pannikin, filled the tub to the brim, straining the water as well as she could through a corner of her gauze veil, for, though deliciously sweet, it was rushing down as such torrents generally do, thick with the soil that it had washed from the mountain sides.

What a blessing it is to be able to do something! Even although the thought that the water would be needed was a terrible one, the idea of being as far as possible prepared for the

worst was a comfort to Bessie. Having filled the tub, which was but a small one, she turned to the large pot that they had brought from the island. The dinner she found consisted of a leg of mutton in a quantity of very thick barley-broth. She hesitated about spoiling the broth, but as the pot was not more than half full when she had taken out the meat, she determined to fill it up with water, and found that even then it was quite thick enough.

On and on they went, when suddenly a swirl—the boat turned and went stern foremost towards the side of the river, which had become very wide. This sudden swerve of the boat was caused by another great freshet, one of the tributaries of the Buffalo rushing in at this point, and for a few moments Bessie wildly hoped that they might be borne right across the river. They were tossed about as on waves of the ocean, the little boat like a shuttle-cock bandied from one rushing torrent to the other. How it lived was a marvel! Rocks and trees rolled over and over and over, the waves swirled wildly round and

round, and yet the boat kept afloat! Another fearful sweep round! and this time, oh, merciful Heaven! a crash! A huge tree-branch twisting and twirling from the side torrent rushed on them. One of its great arms, swinging aloft like that of an infuriated drunkard, came down with tremendous force upon Petcánie. He had seen it coming, and quickly stood up and leant on one side to escape it; but, as if instinct with malice, the bough lurched and struck him on the head, and he was precipitated into the water. In a moment Bessie was leaning over the side. She thought she could reach him, but she could not. He was being carried along, rolling over and over like the stones and the logs. She threw him the rope, but he took no notice; he must have been stunned. She tried the boat-hook, but he was borne along, his way and she hers, side by side, but out of reach. Bessie again and again tried the rope, making a loop at the end of it, as she had heard people describe a lasso, but all without avail. She watched his face every time it came in sight, but there was no sign of life in it. Oh, it was terrible

to see the poor boy who had so often been her faithful and willing attendant, thus being borne along to his death, and not to be able to help him. Not for a moment did she think that he was already dead; but it was so. The heavy branch had killed him on the spot, and it was no wonder that Bessie strained her eyes in vain for a look of recognition from the poor faithful lad. He was gone beyond recall, though neither of those whom he had tried his best to serve knew it. Polly, meanwhile, with eyes dilated with terror, clung to the hem of Bessie's dress, as if fearful that she might be carried away also. 'O dear Lord Jesus,' she cried, 'who walked upon the waves and bade them be still, save us all, and let us get poor Petcánie again; he is so good and kind. Good Lord, hear us and save him!'

But it was not to be. Another freshet caught the boat, another swirling and rocking, then on and on they sped once more in the middle of even a swifter current than before; but no Petcánie! They looked eagerly over the waters for him; the rocks rolled on and the logs rolled on side by

side as ever ; but Petcánie was gone, and Bessie was left alone with these two little ones ! As she turned and looked at them, a feeling of dull despair seemed to seize her, and she fell back in a dead faint.

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE RESCUE.

‘OH, Richard, Richard!’ cried Mrs. West to her husband as he entered the cottage, ‘why did you stay, when you said you would just fetch the big boat and be back directly?’

‘There, there,’ he replied ; ‘there’s no time for useless reproaches and lamentations now. I did stay. I was kept, and that’s enough. If you want to get off before the river comes down, we must all bundle into the boat at once. I see you have the things ready ; take only just what you absolutely require. Run down, children ; the man there will help you.’

But the Kaffir was doing his best to pull the boat up on to the little landing-place, and called to the children to run back to the house, or the water would catch them, and to tell their father to bring another thick rope.

Scarcely had they reached the door when the distant but ever-nearing roar of the terrible rushing torrent was heard. The Kaffir had barely time to reach the higher ground, when the boat, having been partially secured by the one rope he had, was wheeled round by the water. Fortunately it was able to stand the strain until Mr. West ran to the man's assistance, and together they dragged it out of reach of the current. Many things that had been carried down to the edge of the water, ready to be put into the boat, were already miles down the stream. But, owing to the timely warning of the coloured man, the children happily were with their mother; while the domestic animals, a goat and her kid and a number of fowls, had all instinctively taken shelter in the little outhouse in rear of the cottage.

'Master, I not know for sure, but I 'fraid that other boat not got across.'

'Oh, Nománie, Nománie, don't tell the mistress that, for I think I saw Miss Bessie in it and the little girl.'

Little he knew that his own infant was there

also, and that his wife was at that moment congratulating herself that four out of her seven children were in safety.

As for the baby, that would stay with Bessie till she was there to receive it, and perhaps Mrs. Harton might send for the two girls also. She was quite content about them; but very soon there was cause for apprehension as to their own safety.

Hitherto, notwithstanding the repeated warnings that Mr. West had had, he had merely looked upon the contingency of the river's coming down as an inconvenient interference with their personal comfort, not fearing actual danger to life, though he thought they might possibly be kept prisoners for a day or two.

He felt sorry now, that he had gone down to the club that morning, instead of coming back at once; there had been no one there, and what in the world had induced him to challenge the 'marker' to a game of billiards he didn't know. He felt awfully anxious about Bessie Harton, for John's sake, and little Polly too, of whom they had all grown so fond, poor children. He hoped Nománie

was mistaken. It would be dreadful to think that they might both have been swept away.

Meantime Lottie, with Nománie's assistance, had broiled a couple of fowls on the gridiron and boiled a dish of potatoes; and it was not till their hurried dinner was nearly over that Mr. West, happening to say he supposed the noise of the water was soothing to infants and had kept the child sleeping so long, discovered with anguish all the more intense because he was obliged to keep it to himself and knew himself to blame, that the little baby was also in the boat. He rose and went to the door, and walked sharply forward, to watch the numerous things that were being carried down the stream. Trees and stones, and now and again some poor sheep or cow, went rolling over and over on their way to the sea, and he could do nothing but watch them go. No life could he save! There was no staying anything in that swift torrent. Yes! one creature managed by a desperate effort to reach the shore. Gliding up the bank, it was nearly in a place of comparative safety, when Nománie, who had followed his master, rushed

forward and with his stick jerked it back into the rushing freshet.

'Poor wretch!' said Richard West; 'but it was best so.'

'Yes, master, we no want big cobra here; water very bad, we no want snake too!'

As they stood, the water touched their feet.

'Look here, Nománie, what means this?' said Mr. West.

'More waters have come down, and may cover all the place soon,' replied the man, looking fixedly at one particular spot on the opposite shore a good way up the river.

'Do you mean to say that this island has ever been entirely covered with water?'

'My father say that many years ago a Kaffir lived here with all his wives; there was then a path over big stones from that other side. One night the water come down very much, as it comes to-day. When people look in the morning, it was a big river all the way; the Kaffir's kraal, with himself and his cows, his wives, and his children, all gone; so might it be again.'

'And can nothing be done? How dreadful for them all! The missis and the children, I mean.'

'Nothing we, master; perhaps, if people think of it, some help can come from that one place,' indicating the spot he had been so anxiously watching.

At that moment another tremendous wave engulfed nearly all that part of the island that sloped towards the river; another rush like that, and the whole place would be submerged.

'You say that help might reach us from that spot, Nománie? It seems impossible with that terrific rush.'

'Ah! the people have remembered. You see, master, the mountain water comes first to that point, and then straight to this. See these pieces of wood, only little things, will come. Ha! one, two, three, with paper tied on; they know, they send master message.'

The welcome messengers were landed with some little difficulty, as the least touch seemed enough to start them off again down stream. The first paper opened was a disappointment; it contained

nothing but a large washed ink stain, where writing had evidently been. The second and third were both written in pencil and rolled up very tightly, and from the two combined they made out the following:—

'We know your danger. Look out for string and rope. If you get one, fly white flag. If it breaks, let flag fall.'

In vain they watched. They had more logs with notes, and an empty tin with one in it telling them that the string was on the way. But evidently it had become entangled in the various impedimenta that were being washed down the stream. Time after time they saw a white flag held aloft, which they understood meant that another attempt had been made; but it was all to no purpose. Their friends had tried firing a string by means of a rocket to the island and across it; but all failed. Mr. West and Nománie had been gradually driven back to within a few yards of the cottage; the next rush would wash through the rooms, which were on the highest point of land.

'Nománie, you must stay and watch, while I get



the mistress and the children on to the roof,' said Mr. West.

'I will stay, father,' said Lottie, who had been with them some time. 'Nománie can help you carry up the things. I will run quickly to you if there is further change.'

'You might not have time, child. I would rather you should be with your mother.'

But Lottie carried her point. She knew that Nománie would be of more use than her father; while as for herself she was active, and could be on the flat roof in a few moments if need be. Her quick eyes had detected the two McAllans foremost among those doing their best to communicate with and rescue them, and her heart went out to them, for well she knew that Allan McAllan would willingly have been by her side in any danger; and as she stood there she could recall so many, many times, when she had wanted anything done or help of any kind, that it was somehow always Allan who had been at hand to render the assistance needed.

How the water raged! and all those great waves,

bearing now one burden, then another, on towards the far-off sea. She had to watch well anything that might come towards where she stood; but ever and anon her eyes would wander to the cluster of men and women congregated on the other side, and that one tall figure. Ha! what new move was contemplated? All the women were moving away. Surely they were not going to try to swim across. Yes, a larger white flag; a tall white figure rushes forward and plunges into that terrible current.

Lottie's shriek rent the air, and sounded weird above the roar of the waters. It brought her father and Nománie quickly to her side.

'Allan! Allan!' she cried, pointing to the stream, as she clung to her father's arm.

'What do you mean, Lottie? I see nothing, darling—only the water. My child, come to your mother; she will want you.'

'I see the young master,' said Nománie suddenly. 'He's all right, missie. Suppose missie go and fetch pair of the master's trousers and a shirt.'

Lottie was off like a shot; it was something to

do. Of course Allan would require that. And as she knelt before her father's portmanteau, trembling in every limb, for one moment she clasped her hands together, and lifting her white face heavenward exclaimed, 'O God! preserve him through the danger, and bring him safely over!' How naturally does prayer come to the heart of those in sore trouble! For, as the poet says,—

'Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,  
Uttered or unexpressed;  
The motion of a hidden fire  
That trembles in the breast.'

When Lottie got back, she found Nománic with a rope round his waist, ready to rush in as far as practicable to meet Allan, who was now considerably more than half-way across.

'Go now, Lottie, to your mother,' said her father; 'you can watch us through the trees, and I will tell Allan you brought him the clothes.'

She was about to obey, but first looked eagerly towards the approaching face, which was now so distinctly visible. As she looked, an enormous tree came bearing down straight towards him; his

destruction seemed inevitable. Poor Lottie stood as if turned to stone. Petrified with terror, her arms extended, she cried, 'Oh, Allan, Allan!'

Thank God! the danger was past; the great tree, with its roots uppermost, was being borne rapidly down the stream, while Allan seemed to be treading the water and approaching quietly.

'My poor child!' said Mr. West, gently putting his arm round her. 'See, he is all right, the brave lad! I must stay, for he may need assistance in the landing, and Nománic and I must draw in the ropes.'

Lottie went into the house, and sitting down at the table buried her face in her hands. Oh, that she could be sure that he was quite safe!

'Lottie darling, I saw you watching me. Please God, we shall save you all now!'

'Oh! Allan, Allan, why did you risk it?'

An arm was round her waist, and a fair face was hiding itself on his shoulder as he knelt by her side. Only for a moment or two, and then together they rose. No need to say there was much to be done.

By means of a couple of cords which Allan had brought over, a stout rope was soon drawn across, and secured to the highest point of the rock, and upon this the great swinging box which was in those days kept in the town ready for the conveyance of mails and passengers across the Buffalo when it was swollen could soon be brought over and made available for taking off all those now on the island.

It was not a moment too soon! The long, low, flat-roofed cottage was built against the rock, and on this, which was on a level with the roof, stood the three men, pulling over the box with as much haste as they could, when Allan suddenly cried, 'Look out, all of you!' and with Mr. West sprang back, to shelter the women and children, for at that moment came the tremendous rush of water of which those on the mainland had been warned, and which had caused Allan to hazard the crossing. With a boom like that of a cannon it dashed against and over the rock, washing away some of the things they had carried there for safety, and it seemed like a miracle that every one of that

terrified little party was spared. The noise of the waters was terrific; no voice could be heard above the din; but the three men were at once hard at work again, and as soon as they had the swinging box close inland, Mr. West, signing to Nománie that he was to get into it first, in order to steady it, and help his mistress on the way, lifted his wife in, kissing her poor white face as he did so, Allan meanwhile placing one of the two children beside her; and with a prayer from all for their safety, they were launched forth over the surging torrent, and soon pulled across by willing hands on the other side. Allan, Lottie, and the other little one were the next to follow, Mr. West insisting upon remaining to the last.

When they were all gone, he stood watching them, and his reflections were not of an enviable character. He remembered how often he had been warned of the trouble that might overtake them if he persisted in staying on the island. Oh that evil habit of his, of putting off! And now again, through his procrastination, the boat, with its precious load, was gone. By this time perhaps his

poor wife knew of her terrible loss. He could still feel her answering kiss upon his cheek and her arms around his neck as he had placed her in the box. Would she not rather have cursed him as the murderer of their babe, had she known? He could not bear the thought of her reproaches and those of the other mothers, and John too, whose young life would be blighted by the loss of Bessie, his promised wife. He threw himself down on the rock and groaned with anguish. A wave dashed up over him, but he heeded it not; yes, he did heed it. He would welcome the engulfing waters. He dared not face those whom his conduct had robbed of their children. He would not draw the box over again; he would rather go close down to the brink of the roaring, rushing torrent, and be washed out to sea himself, and there would be an end to it all, as far as he was concerned. It was a cowardly thought; he forgot the trouble and heartbreaking such a death would cause his family. He turned to throw himself into the water, but there stood young Frank McAllan, who at once placed his hand upon his arm to lead him to the rescuing box.

At first he would have thrown him off, determined not to be baulked in his design, but a look into those clear blue trustful eyes and he went with him as if he were a child.

When those on shore found that the box was not pulled back, they feared that Mr. West had become exhausted, therefore it was that Frank had volunteered to pull himself over. Well he did so; and no sooner were they on the way than poor West saw the wickedness of his intention in the proper light, and before they had reached the further bank he had uttered a fervent prayer to God for forgiveness, and registered a firm resolve to endeavour to be better in the future.

When Allan had arrived on the island, an hour or so before, he had been inexpressibly shocked to hear that the small boat had really left, as Mr. West had also at the confirmation of Nománie's worst fears as to its not having reached its destination; but they had both wisely determined to say nothing about it to Mrs. West, lest it should unfit her for the effort of crossing. She was therefore totally unprepared for the looks of

blank astonishment that met her inquiry for her baby.

That night 'there was a voice heard; lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning; Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.'

Mrs. Harton and Mrs. West were bowed down with grief, notwithstanding the hopes entertained by many that the boat, with its occupants, might have been caught and stayed in its course by some of the large trees, these of course half submerged, that fringed the banks of the Buffalo River.

Search parties accordingly carefully examined every portion of both banks; among them were poor John West and Jackson, to whom, as soon as possible, the sad intelligence had been communicated.

The body of poor Petcánie was found five or six miles from the mouth of the river, but not until the third day, when the floods had quite abated; then he was discovered held fast by the boughs of a tree that had become entangled in

a bed of palmet reeds, as it was being washed down.

No more of those they were looking for were found, nor any trace of the boat, which, if not embedded in the mud in the bottom of the river, must now be far out at sea.

The small steamer at the port, and all the available fishing boats, had volunteered to search for the missing boat, and they went out seeking in vain in every direction. At last all hope was given up, and the search abandoned.

## CHAPTER V.

## OUT ON THE WIDE OCEAN.

WHEN Bessie opened her eyes the moon was shining brilliantly. For the first few moments she lay quite still, looking at it, and thinking she was in her own little bed at home, for often in the summer she would draw her bedstead close to the open window, that she might feel the cool air of the night upon her cheek.

It was but a few moments, and then she was startled and turned herself to listen. She heard three distinct sounds that could scarcely have come to her in her room: the lapping of the water as the moonlit waves kissed the side of the boat; a curious unaccountable sound of some animal chewing the cud; and a sad sighing sob of a child who had sobbed itself to sleep. This last came from poor little Polly, who, having covered Bessie with rugs, and drawn the baby close to her, was herself

sitting up, with the evident intention of keeping watch; but sleep had overpowered her, and her head had fallen forward, and was pillowed on one arm, which was resting on a seat of the boat.

It did not take Bessie long to realize the situation, but before stopping to think of all the horrors of the day, she gently laid Polly down among the cushions, and kissed the sobbing child as she brushed the hair, still wet with tears, from her face.

'Oh! Bessie, Bessie,' she cried in her sleep.

'All right, darling. God has cared for us. Go to sleep.'

With a sigh of intense relief, the little one lifted her arms as though to embrace her friend, and then with a smile murmuring the words 'goat' and 'baby,' she was fast asleep again.

A goat! Yes, that was what it was chewing the cud; but how such an unwelcome passenger came on board she could not know till Polly was awake to tell her.

How exquisite was the beauty of that night! The 'moon's pathway,' with its shimmering light,

lay glittering from the horizon to the boat. The sea—for she knew they were out at sea—was as still as a quiet lake; such a contrast to the turbulence of that dreadful rushing torrent which had carried them from their home.

Home! when should she see home again?

She pictured to herself again and again the grief of those at home when they found she was not on the island, and she knew that no effort would be spared in the endeavour to find them; besides which she thought, if the sea would only keep as calm as it was then, she would be able to use the oars, and get to shore thus, for of course the boat could not have been carried out very far. Altogether Bessie began to feel very hopeful; she felt, as she had told Polly, that God had certainly cared for them, for had He not brought them safely out of that hateful torrent into this delicious calm?—a calm that infused itself into her whole being. Bessie trusted in her God; she knew that she was not alone, for was not He everywhere? and the texts, 'He careth for you,' and 'Are ye not of more value than many sparrows?' seemed to

repeat themselves to her mind over and over again, giving her comfort unspeakable. How blest are those who believe with a simple faith! Bessie knelt down, and casting her eyes up to the star-bespangled canopy of heaven, once more committed herself and the little ones with her to His care who careth for all.

She felt lighter of heart, and the practical and active part of her nature asserting itself, she thought she would take a turn at the oars at once. The moon was still rising, so though she could not see the land it was not difficult to know in which direction it must lie. A mug full of the watered broth out of the large pot would make her a good supper. How thankful she felt that they had that! She turned to look for the tin mug, and found that Polly had put it where she might have seen it when she first woke up; it was nearly full of milk, and a slice of bread was by its side.

She ate the bread. She remembered that Lottie had brought the bread down with the meat; but she must not drink the milk—that must be kept for baby; but what was she to put it in, for there

was but one mug? Then she remembered the small tin bucket that was always kept in the boat in case of its being required for bailing out water; and when she had found it, to her astonishment, it was full of milk also. So she drunk what Polly had placed for her; and having taken nothing since breakfast, she felt all the better for it.

Then she arranged the oars, and rowed in the direction of the shore. At first the boat went dancing over the waves, for it was but a little thing, and so light that she could manage it well. She worked away with a will, for did not every stroke bring her nearer home?

But by-and-by her arms began to tire; she rested, and turned now and again to see if the bright moonlight yet revealed a line of land. But no! As far as she could see there was the moonlit ocean and nothing more. Ah, well! There was comfort in having done something. She felt tired and sleepy now, so putting away the oars with a satisfied feeling of having done what she could, she lay down by the children, and was soon

as fast asleep as if she were in her own little bed at home.

In the morning she woke suddenly to the sound of baby crying, the goat bleating, and Polly talking to and trying to comfort them both.

The sun was up; the sea still beautifully calm, scarce a ripple on its surface; and in the far distance something like a dim purple line of mountains.

'Well, Polly dear, good morning!'

'Oh, Bessie! how glad I am that you are awake at last! Baby won't be good this morning, and the goat wants me to milk her again, and looks as if she would try to jump out of the boat if I don't.'

'The best thing she could do, I think, Polly, unless we get to land very quickly,' said Bessie, taking the baby in her arms. 'How did it get into the boat?'

'She made such a bound from a rock that we passed, where she had hardly room to stand, that I thought the boat would be upset; and then last night, after we had come out of that dreadful river,



she asked me to milk her, just as our goats in the forest used to do, and I did; and we all had some milk for supper, so I don't see why you should want her to jump into the sea, poor thing.'

'I was thinking that she would only have to starve, as we could get neither grass nor herbs here for her to eat, nor shall I like to spare her much water; so you see, Polly, though I am very glad to have the milk, especially for baby, I am afraid she will be in the way; she can't eat cushions and rugs, or we might spare her one of those.'

'She heard you, Bessie. Just look at her tugging at the corner of that long cushion. Oh, you wise goat! I know why she's doing it,' said Polly. 'The cushions were fresh stuffed with beautiful new grass that some Kaffir women brought down the hill the other day, and Mr. West had them done; he won't mind our using one of them, will he?'

'No, dear; he will be very, very glad,' said Bessie, the tears coming to her eyes as she bent

over baby. Her heart was very full at what she now thought was another evidence of God's providential care, and at her own weakness in having for a moment doubted that all was right and by His ordering.

Baby was very good when she had had her nice fresh goat's milk. The goat was helped to some of the grass, and then Bessie and Polly had their breakfast of meat—a small slice of bread each, and some milk; they could not wish for anything better. Just as they had finished they saw a sail in the distance; then another, and Bessie thought she saw the smoke of a steamer.

'They are looking for us, Polly,' said she, waving her handkerchief; 'they will soon see us.'

Polly stood up on the seat and waved hers too, but the boats did not seem to come nearer.

'We must have a larger flag. Your pinafore, Polly; that's a beauty!' said she, as she struck the boat-hook through a corner of it, and hoisted it aloft; 'they must see *that!*'

But, strange to say, it was evidently not seen, and the boats gradually disappeared from view.

'They are only tacking about; they will be sure to come again,' said Bessie, as she fastened the other corner of her flag to the pole, which she secured to one of the seats that had a hole in it, seemingly made for the purpose.

But the boats did not return, and the two girls looked for the white sails in vain. Once again they felt sure they could distinguish smoke. They waved their handkerchiefs, and Polly got a bright red one out of poor Petcánie's jacket-pocket; she remembered Mrs. West having given it to him the morning before. But it was all in vain. Although they were being anxiously sought for, by some unaccountable mischance they were not seen.

The fact was, the boats had all gone out with the current of the river, and as far and indeed much farther than the torrent was likely to have carried the boat; they knew that it could not be borne back towards the land, and never dreamt of Bessie's rowing for a couple of hours in that direction.

The two girls watched all that day, in the hope

of seeing more boats; and Bessie, not to be idle, continued to row towards the shore as much as she was able; but do all she could, there seemed but little perceptible difference in the distance they were from the purple mountains.

When the sun went down they lowered their flagstaff; and fortunate it was that they did so, for almost without warning a terrific storm came on. Thunder, lightning, wind and rain; the waves rose, and their little boat was tossed about like an empty nautilus shell.

They were both much terrified, and sat huddled together with the baby between them; they had removed the awning, which was only fastened up by means of hooks, and sat in the pelting rain with the rugs and the canvas awning round them. The goat also crept under the canvas close to them.

Every moment Bessie expected might be their last. One flash of lightning showed them that they were at the bottom of a deep valley of sea, with the white angry foaming waves threatening to fall upon and engulf them. Then it seemed as if the

valley itself were rising to the height of those mountain-like waves; and the next flash showed them the boiling, foaming sea as far as the dazzling brightness allowed the sight to penetrate.

But the blackness of darkness between the flashes seemed almost more terrible, with its uncertainty, than the brilliant certainty of danger; and it was in one of these interludes of darkness when they rode high on the top of the waves, that suddenly they saw a bright light like a star bearing straight towards them.

It was the masthead light of an ocean steamer on its way to Natal. As it approached, they could even hear the captain giving his orders through the trumpet. Had they had any means of making a light, they might possibly have attracted notice; they called, they shrieked, but what were their puny voices to the voices of the storm! and the vessel, with all its brilliant lights about it, rode swiftly by on the wings of that frightful storm.

By a miracle, as it seemed to Bessie, they es-

aped being run down. She had distinctly seen the captain on the bridge, and she had heard his voice above the raging tempest, and yet they were left behind and unharmed. For a short distance they were even carried along on the fringe of the wake; then again the boat sunk into a deep trough, and they saw the ship no more.

Poor Bessie! The short-lived hope that the transient sound of a human voice and the momentary sight of human forms had given her left her almost in despair; she sobbed as if her heart would break. Fear, terrible fear, took possession of her; she could look no more, and throwing a rug over their heads, she sat on thus in darkness, riding with the waves until the thunder ceased.

Oh, blessed quiet; the wind too had lulled, and the rain was gone, and in their place the long streaks of rosy dawn were showing themselves above the horizon, streaking a leaden-coloured sky and tinging here and there with pink the long, broad-swelling, grey waves beneath.

Bessie put up the awning, and then for the first time she felt really ill. Polly, also, was quite ex-

hausted and fast asleep, her white face looking sadly wan in the dim morning light. Bessie was glad to let her rest, while she folded up the wettest of the rugs to use as a towel for washing herself and the children, dipped what water she could out of the boat, and then, with a feeling of miserable seasickness, sat down and waited for the full light of day.

It came, and revealed to her that they were much nearer the coast than they had been the day before, but the coast line was quite a different one; there were no purple mountains in the distance, but only a long, low, precipitous wall of rock, against which even from where she was she could see the breakers beating with terrible force. For a full hour she watched the huge white pillars of foam as they dashed high against the cliffs. The longing to be on land again was so intense that she almost wished to be among the breakers, although knowing, when she gave it a moment's consideration, that no boat could live if cast on those rocks.

Still the long leaden-coloured waves were bear-

ing them onward, not straight for the shore; she felt certain of that, although they gained upon it slightly as they went northward, and she hoped they might continue to do so until a more hospitable beach came in sight.

Later in the morning they were so near a great headland that they could see the cattle feeding on the heights above them, and Bessie tried rowing again, to get round under the sheltered side of the point; but the sea was heavy, it was very different to rowing on the smooth, lake-like sea of yesterday. She made so little way with all her endeavours that she felt inclined to give it up in despair. However, she persevered, and at last succeeded.

As the boat ceased tossing, and they began to experience a feeling of delightful calm after the terrors of the night, there sprang into Bessie's mind the words of Addison's hymn:—

For though in dreadful whirls we hung,  
High on the broken wave;  
I knew Thou wert not slow to hear,  
Nor impotent to save.

The storm was laid, the winds retired,  
 Obedient to Thy will ;  
 The sea, that roared at Thy command,  
 At Thy command was still.

In midst of dangers, fears and death,  
 Thy goodness I'll adore,  
 And praise Thee for Thy mercies past,  
 And humbly hope for more.'

But their troubles were not yet over. There seemed not the slightest chance of their finding a landing-place. Precipitous rocks towered up eighty or a hundred feet sheer out of the sea on all sides. Sea-birds by thousands found their homes in the face of that steep cliff, and had they not both been so completely worn out they would have found much amusement in watching their curious and graceful movements while swooping down upon the beautiful rose-coloured fish with which the little bay was swarming.

The goat had had a good draught of rain-water in the early morning, and seemed still well content while munching the grass stuffing of the cushion. Polly milked her as before, and the baby throve upon its diet of goat's milk, and kept wonderfully

well and good. Polly, too, was soon herself again, putting out their dinner and trying to induce Bessie to eat ; but although she tried to take the food, her appetite was gone, and she could not. She felt ill, and even after resting some time did not attempt to leave their harbour of refuge, and thus they passed their third night out, waking much refreshed and more fit for exertion on the following morning.

Before starting they ate a good breakfast, and bidding adieu to the 'birds, black, white, and grey, and to the gold and silver fish, Bessie took the oars, and the boat was soon beyond the second point.

The sea was as beautifully calm as on the first day ; the coast continued precipitous, so on they went, hoping for a change.

Poor Bessie's arms ached ; her hands were blistered, and she contemplated drawing in the oars, when Polly cried out,—

'Oh, Bessie, look ! we have come to the mouth of the river again ! There are the trees growing down on the beach, but I don't see the houses.

Yes! yes! I think there's something like a house!'

Bessie was looking with a lightened heart. There certainly was the roof of some kind of a house, though she could not see the whole of it; and although they as yet saw no sign of life anywhere, Bessie reasoned that where there was a house there were probably people to live in it. The thought put new life into her aching limbs, and acted like healing salve to her blistered hands. She rowed with all her might, till Polly said,—

'This river's water is all red, looking like the one we were in, but it doesn't make that horrible noise.'

Bessie turned quickly to look, but before she had time to move back even a few oars' length, the boat was caught by the current of an out-flowing freshet, and again borne out to sea!

The disappointment was terrible, added to which she had lost an oar. The muddy water did not seem to mix with the clear sea for a long way, and Bessie almost fought with the single remaining oar

till she had got the boat on one side of the torrent, but that was not until, as we have said, they were again a good way out at sea.

The heat of the sun was intense. Bessie had been sitting or standing without the shelter of the awning for two hours at least, when suddenly she became conscious of a sensation of dizziness, and an acute pain in her head.

'Some water, Polly! Dip it from the sea. Water on my head!'

Saying which she lay back under the awning, feeling utterly incapable of doing anything more. Brave girl! she had done her utmost, and now, when a haven of safety seemed to be within reach, not only to be borne away, but to be stricken down by a stroke of the sun, was a calamity too great for endurance.

'Please God they will see us, Polly, and send help. We are not very far away from that house. I am sorry I have lost the oar. Oh! mother! mother! I am trying to get to you; but I've lost the oar! The white flag's flying; but I've lost the oar! I've lost the oar!'

Then suddenly, as if gathering herself together, she started up, saying,—

'Polly, dear, don't be frightened; God *will* help us, you know; but I've lost the oar. I'm very sorry, I've lost the oar. Mother! mother! I've lost the oar! I've lost the oar! But God—will—care!'

## CHAPTER VI.

### FUNYÁLI'S VISION.

NEAR the mouth of one of the rivers of Kaf-  
fraria a little knot of colonial settlers had  
taken up their residence in the vicinity of a  
mission station. Originating with a trader's store  
and a native kraal, it had gradually developed into  
a small village by attracting to it a few artizans,  
who found they could make a respectable liveli-  
hood by working for the farmers and traders in  
the neighbourhood, besides being sometimes em-  
ployed by the Rev. John Garren, the missionary,  
to teach their various avocations to the native lads,  
it being a favourite idea of Mr. Garren's that the  
civilization of the native races was best carried out  
by bringing up the young to appreciate the fact  
that labour is honourable, and thus inducing them  
to lead useful as well as Christian lives.

Mr. Garren was one who set his people a good

example in this respect. In the early morning he was generally to be seen at work in his garden, where he had not only sub-tropical plants, such as bananas, date-palms, and pine-apples, bearing in profusion, but very many of the best European fruits as well. After breakfast the school bell was rung and the school-house soon filled with boys, white as well as coloured, all anxious to learn what was taught them.

The walls of the school-house were decorated with pictures, and among them the well-known highly coloured prints of 'Christ Stilling the Tempest,' 'The Miraculous Draught of Fishes,' and 'Christ Walking on the Waters.'

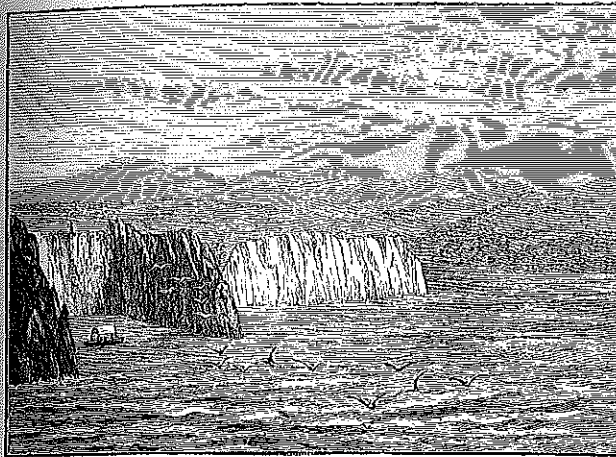
'Father,' said James Garren, 'Funyáli has a strange story to tell you of a very little ship, like these in the pictures, that he says he has seen.'

'Tell us what you saw, Funyáli; we shall be glad to hear,' said Mr. Garren.

'Three days ago, master, I was sent to mind cattle on the other side of the river. The cattle went far off to feed on the top of the *krantz*.<sup>1</sup> I

<sup>1</sup> Precipice.

followed the cattle. There had been a great storm that night. The spirits that live under the big waters made much noise; they were very angry, and I feared much; but I sat behind a rock and looked, and behold out of the storm had come a ship, a very little ship.'



'I am afraid they are wrecked mariners,' said Mr. Garren, starting up. 'How many men were there in the ship, Funyáli?'

'There were no men, master; there were two angels. I was afraid, and I hid myself. One angel



moved long wings, and the little ship flew over the storm like a storm-bird swimming. I lay still, and then I heard voices. I crept to the edge of the *krantz*, and there was the ship without storm! I think Christ had stilled the tempest and walked away on the waves, for He was not there, but there was storm all round! Then I thought it was a vision, and I came away running to tell master, that he might see it for himself; and behold, the river was down, and I could not cross it till this morning.'

'And did you see the little ship again?'

'It stayed there till the next rising of the sun, then the long wings moved once more, and the ship was carried away by the river out to the big waters again; so I determined to tell master, though I thought it was quite gone; but Masulo the Great has this early morning seen a little ship, which he says will run up on the sands with the tide, and he wants master to go down with them and tell them if they must catch it.'

It may easily be surmised that Mr. Garren lost no time in joining the natives on the beach, with

the result that Bessie, Polly, and the baby were soon hospitably housed, and under the careful and tender nursing of Mrs. Garren and her household.

Poor Bessie was still suffering from the sun-stroke, at times unconscious for hours, and then deliriously raving with a sad lament over the loss of the oar, or calling aloud to her mother. Polly had been wonderfully sustained through all that time of trial, especially during the last two long, long days and nights of Bessie's illness; but the strain had told severely upon the child, and now that all need for watching and work had passed, she frequently burst into uncontrollable fits of crying. But the sight of the baby would always bring her round when it was placed in her arms, and in a few days the distressing symptoms passed, and Polly was to be seen merrily running about the mission station with the other children.

The goat, which had played such an important part in their adventures, was introduced to a small flock of its own species kept on the station, and seemed well content to be on land once more.

And now we must return to our friends in King Williamstown.

Three men stood under the verandah close to the Civil Commissioner's office. They all wore a sad expression ; for although they studiously avoided the mention of those so lately lost, it was easy to see that each man looked at his two companions as fellow-mourners with himself.

They were Mr. Harton, Jackson, and John West, the two latter having ridden in from the Izeli that morning. Poor Jackson had had a double blow, for his wife, always delicate, had never recovered the shock the sudden news of the loss of the boat had given her.

The night of the great flood, one of the sawyers had come to the door of their cottage and said,—

'Master, there's news come up of a good deal of mischief done by the rain.'

'Some good too, I hope,' said Jackson.

'Not to you, master ; not to you,' said the man. 'Th' young leddy as come to teach the children here is washed away.'

'Washed away!' exclaimed Jackson, as both he and his wife started up.

'Yes, sir, in a boat ; she went to fetch your little un, and they're both gone. A lot of men be gone off down river to see if they can find 'em, and more's going in the mornin', an' I thowt as you'd like to know.'

'Oh, Jack!' moaned poor Mary, 'my Polly, my darling Polly! why did you send my child away from me? Oh, my child, my best and dearest, why did I let her go?' and the poor mother moaned as though her heart would break.

'Now, Mary, be brave, dear wife. You see, the boat has been carried down the stream ; but, as you know, numbers of things—wagons, carts, and cattle—that have been washed down have been rescued. We shall get her back back again. Don't despair till we know more about it. I must go now. I will call for young West ; and depend upon it, not a stone will be left unturned in our endeavour to find them.'

Three days of miserable anxiety and dread. The poor mother was quite distracted. The

second day she had gone down to the town herself. Mrs. Harton tried to keep her, but she would not stay; and before she could get home the dreadful storm came on of which we have before written. Wearied and still more despondent, she sunk down exhausted, and was carried to bed by the sympathising women about her; and when, the following night, her husband came in from the fruitless search, and sat down by her bedside, with his face buried in his hands, almost expecting her to reproach him again, she turned to him with a pitying look, saying,—

‘It is sad for you to lose us both at once, dear John; but I know now that it would not have been right to bring up a girl among these rough woodmen; and when I am gone you will take Tom to your own home, from which I have kept you so long.’

‘Oh, Mary, my good, patient wife, don’t say that!’

‘Yes, dear, I knew more than you thought I did, perhaps; but I couldn’t let you go. You have always been a kind husband to me. If my Polly

comes back, you will always take care of her; and if she is gone, I shall see her first. Kiss me again, dear John, my good John!’

And the poor wife died. And over her grave, in the pretty cemetery at King Williamstown, are now to be found engraved these words on a white marble cross: ‘Sacred to the Memory of Mary, the beloved wife of John Jackson Elrington son of Sir Thomas Elrington, Bart., of Hampshire, England.’

But we have digressed. We left Mr. Harton, Jackson, and John West standing on the step before the magistrate’s office in King Williamstown. More than a fortnight had passed since the day that the boat, with its precious freight, had been carried out to sea. The beach had in vain been watched for miles. It was strewn with timber and the bodies of drowned animals, which had been washed up by the incoming tides; but not a vestige of the boat, nor of any one pertaining to it; and, as we have said before, all hope of recovering it had at last been abandoned.

As they stood there, they saw one of the ministers of the place coming towards them with

an open letter in his hand. He was looking at Mr. Harton with a smile on his face.

'I have just received a most singular and pleasing communication,' said he, 'and one, if I mistake not,' turning to the others (who, thinking it might be upon business matters connected with the office, were about to move away), 'that will give joy and comfort to the hearts of you all. This is a letter just arrived from Mr. Garren, a missionary in Kaffraria. He says :—

"Will you kindly insert in the local papers, or otherwise make known, in order that it may meet the eye of those concerned, that a small boat, with four living occupants, has been cast ashore here : two young ladies, Bessie and Polly, a baby, and a goat. The elder girl is ill, and still unable to give me any definite information ; but from Polly, an intelligent child, I gather that they must have been carried down the Buffalo River when full, as she says they came from 'King,' which I suppose to be your King Williamstown. The baby is very well, and quite the pet of the mission station.

"Parents whose hearts will be gladdened by the

knowledge of the safety of their dear ones, may rest assured that they are being well cared for."

'There, dear friends,' said the good man, tendering his hand to his excited listeners, 'that has indeed put gladness into your hearts ; and well I know that gratitude to God for His great mercy will find a place there too.'

'Thank God !' exclaimed all simultaneously.

'And now I must go and tell my wife,' said Mr. Harton, taking John's arm. 'She has suffered so much that it seems to me the reaction will almost be more than she can bear.'

'And my mother too—we must go to her,' said John ; 'we must tell them by degrees.'

'Come, let us all go together,' said the minister ; 'they will think that there is something extraordinary to tell, by seeing so many of us together, and remember that "joy never kills." I will go with the letter in my hand, as I came to you. Jackson, you will come with us ?'

'I cannot, sir ; I cannot bear it ! God knows I shall be thankful to clasp my darling once more in my arms, but the poor child comes too late to save

her mother. The joy was not for her mother. I will go and tell Col. McAllan, and then make inquiries about some easy conveyance and the horses, so that we may lose no time in starting to bring them home.'

Joy did not kill. And the whole town sympathised in the joy of the mothers. Mrs. Harton and Mrs. West were both anxious to be of the party going, but the latter was persuaded to allow Lottie to take her place. And very soon they were on their way; Mr. and Mrs. Harton in one carriage, and Lottie and her brother in Jackson's roomy and comfortable horse-wagon, in which the ladies could sleep when they bivouacked for the night.

## CHAPTER VII.

### TO THE MISSION STATION.

**T**HE party set out on their long overland journey, amid the congratulations and best wishes of their friends, and a large escort on horseback of the young people of the place always ready to get up a good riding-party Jeannie McAllan, now the gayest of the gay, rode at the head of the group with her father. She had been very much depressed at the loss of her dear friend and companion, Bessie; and the joy of thinking that she should soon see her again shone all over her face, while her horse seemed to feel the elasticity with which she sat in her saddle, dancing and sidling as they went along, and tossing his head with a friendly little snort in answer to her merry laugh.

'Oh, father! I wish I could have gone all the way with them. How jolly it would have been!

Allan would have driven me in the covered cart ; he said he would have liked it very much if you would have let us go.'

'No doubt he would,' said the colonel, glancing back to where Allan was riding at the back of the horse-wagon, in which sat Lottie West and her brother ; 'but, you see, I could not spare either of you just now.'

'Oh, no !' said Jeannie, 'and mamma could not spare me either, for I do a lot of little things for her now that somehow or other I used to leave for Bessie to do whenever she came in ; but I won't do that again, dear old Betz. I shall only be too glad to wait on her now.'

The party of equestrians accompanied the travellers about six or eight miles on their way, and then, with a good old English hurrah, bid them God-speed and returned home.

Thankfulness and joy filled the hearts of those who journeyed on to meet their lost ones ; nevertheless, there was a certain amount of anxiety in the heart of each member of the little party—principally upon Bessie's account, who seemed to

have been still so very ill when Mr. Garren's letter was despatched.

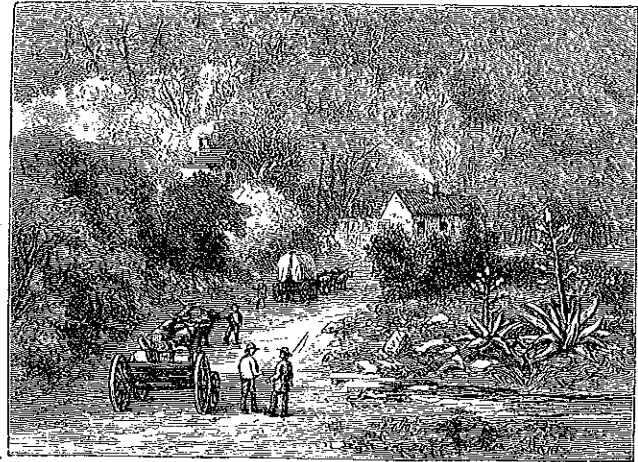
Their route lay through one of the most beautiful and fertile parts of South-eastern Africa : undulating plains, with constantly recurring rich valleys, in which they often found a pretty farmhouse, generally painted white, so that it might attract from a distance the approaching traveller, inviting him, as it were, by its home-like look to stay and not only be refreshed by its hospitable inmates, but in return to afford that mental refreshment which converse with those new from the outer world generally does afford to dwellers in the solitary places of the earth.

They were astonished to see so many of those pleasant farm-dwellings dotted about the country. There were a few native huts generally found on each homestead, which was surrounded by fruit trees of every description, with lands of ripening maize and other crops ; while on the mountain slopes the Kaffir kraals, with their circles of beehive shaped huts, lay tranquilly basking in the sun, though patches of cultivated land on the

plateaux and ridges of the mountain sides showed that the Amakosa women were not behind their white neighbours in providing food for their families. The cattle needed no cultivation on their account; everywhere they were sleek and fat, for the country was looking very beautiful after the late copious rains, and the pasturage was in splendid condition.

That part of Kaffraria through which our party travelled is noted for its verdure at all seasons; due, it is said, to the quantity of moisture carried from the Indian Ocean by the trade winds; the rain-laden clouds being stayed in their westward course by the range of high mountains, and after beautifying and fertilizing their summits and sides, descend in flowing rivulets down the *kloofs*. Here and there, as the road led not far distant from this wooded range, they caught sight of a magnificent waterfall dashing sheer over some lofty *krantz* or precipice, and looking like a broad streak of silver, embowered in the rich dark foliage of the yellow-wood trees, brightened by the beautiful Kaffir-broom, with its

spikes of scarlet blossom, and the lilac clusters of the calodendron. The foreground of mimosa, with its delicate leaves and white thorns, among which nestled a thousand tiny golden balls, filled the air with a fragrance that was just



enough to delight the senses without being too powerful.

No one felt the effect of this exquisite scenery so much as poor Jackson. It was not that the

opportunity of enjoying such before had been lacking,—there are few scenes more lovely than are to be found in the Izeli Valley, and on the spurs of the Perie Forest,—but his heart and mind were more attuned to the appreciation of it. It had a revivifying or a recreative influence upon him. It seemed to him, as he sat behind John West, who held the reins, and the coloured servant, who wielded the whip, that the past ten or twelve years of his hard, hard life were sliding by into oblivion, and he was again taking up the feelings of the highly educated youth he had been when he left his home; but, oh, how different in some respects! Then he was young and full of energy, though wilful to a degree; now, though not more than thirty-five years of age, hard, coarse work—but much more than that, hard drinking, with low, coarse companions—had already made an old man of him. These last few weeks, since the death of his poor wife and the supposed loss of his child, he had been utterly bowed down, though, strange to say, he had not once even felt the temptation to revert to his habit of drinking; and

now, under the influence of the constant companionship of his fellow-travellers, he was, as we have said, gradually gathering up the threads of his lost life.

He knew that Mary had judged rightly when she had said, 'You will take Tom to your home, from which I have kept you so long.'

Yes, he was conscious that the impediment that prevented his returning to his native land was now removed, but he felt in no hurry to take advantage of it; there was time enough when the children were a little older. For he who, notwithstanding his faults, had ever been a faithful husband, felt too loyal to the memory of his wife to run away from the country the moment he was free.

They had outspanned one day at the foot of a wild, rocky bit of mountain, having toiled all the morning from sunrise up a romantic pass, which brought them to a plateau on the north-western side of the range, the south-eastern slopes of which had afforded them such delight.

From beautiful rich valleys, covered with grass



and clumps of trees, which gave the country a park-like appearance, and mountain sides clothed with trees, they came suddenly upon a prospect of barren vales and naked hills, with here and there great shelving rocks and precipices, which gave the idea of a vast wilderness. Such a contrast of scenery, only divided by a ridge scarcely a quarter of a mile in width, was more astonishing than anything they could have imagined, and they were not sorry to find that they had not very much of this desolate region to pass through.

'This is very like a part of the Drakensberg country in which I was once hunting,' said Jackson. 'It was many years ago, when I first came out, and before so many gold discoveries had been made in that part.'

Great boulders of rock lay about in strange confusion, as though they had been detached from the overhanging summit of the mountain, and hurled down in every direction by some giant force of Nature.

'It would be amusing if we were to discover gold here,' said John West. 'I am half inclined

to do a little prospecting while the horses are feeding.'

'I should not wonder at all at your finding gold, or any other metal; indeed, I have often thought it might be discovered in the Amatola range, only somehow or other one never thinks of looking for anything very valuable close to one's home. I suppose it is a natural idea that one must go far and undergo many hardships before being richly rewarded; but I must say this looks a very likely place.'

They all prospected about in every direction, breaking off pieces of rock here and there, but found no trace of the precious metal.

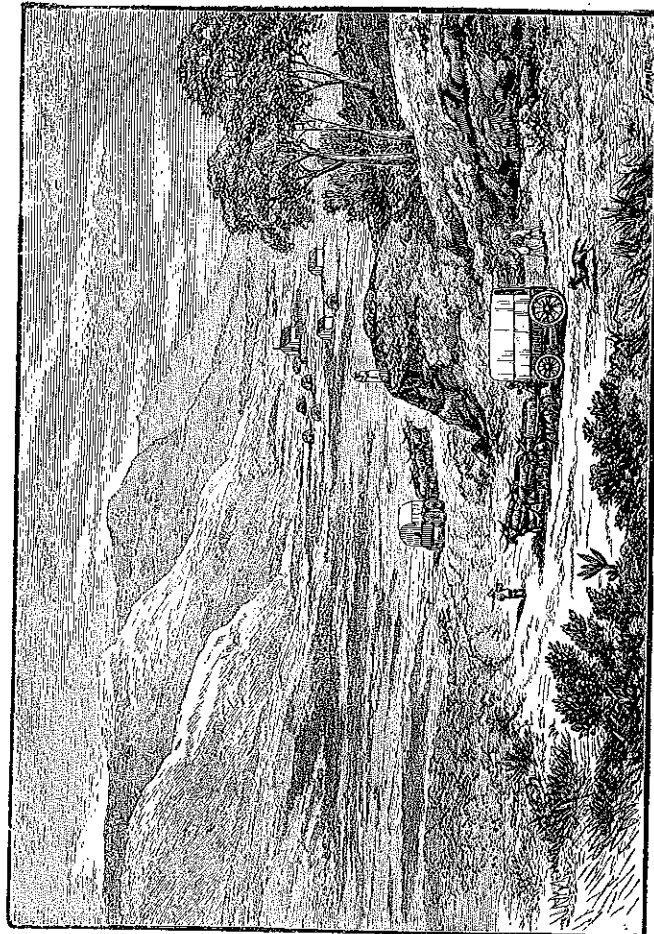
'It only proves that it's not quite such easy work as some people imagine,' said Jackson; 'but I still think gold will be found in these hills. Look at that curious formation yonder. We shall pass that way presently, and will notice it more closely.'

Just then John picked up a piece of white quartz, and there decidedly were several specks of a yellow metal that looked like gold.

'It may be only pyrites,' said Jackson, 'but we will have it tested. Mark the place. And now I see they are beckoning us to come to dinner, for which I for one am quite ready.'

They were soon on the road again, John having stowed his specimens away in the wagon-box; and as they were ascending the next ridge they stopped to examine the quartz formation that Jackson had noticed shining in the sun. It consisted of beautiful prismatic quartz crystals, some of which were in a state of disintegration—quartz as it were changing into clay. Iron-stone was to be seen everywhere, and ochre of different kinds. The next mountain they crossed brought them again in sight of a lovely country, with a view of the Indian Ocean in the far distance. They crossed many small rivulets and one or two large rivers, and at last came to the one on which Mr. Garren's mission village was situated.

For many miles their descent had been very gradual, and for the greater part of the time they were in constant view of the pretty little place, nestling among some fine trees, with the shimmer-



ing water of the river in front ; but, on account of deep chasms formed by torrents of water after the summer thunder-storms, rushing as they do from the mountain heights, through kloofs and ridges to the plains below, they frequently found themselves obliged to take very circuitous paths—tantalizing in the extreme to those so anxious to be assured of the welfare of their beloved ones.

When they were, as they thought, within about half an hour's run of the station, they came suddenly upon a young Kaffir lad, standing under a large mimosa that grew at the extreme point of one of the long ridges of rock by which the country was intersected.

It was no other than Funyáli, who, while herding his cattle, had seen the two white-tented vehicles approaching from afar, and had placed himself there, out of curiosity to know who could be coming to the mission station. He was a picturesque object as he stood there, with his sheepskin *kaross* hastily caught up and held round him, like the toga of an ancient Roman.

'Come here, my lad,' said Mr. Harton as well

as he could in Kaffir ; 'tell me the name of your teacher at that church.'

'Garrené, sir. Funyáli' (pointing to himself) 'talking Englees.'

'Oh! that's right ; then tell me about the three



who were found in a boat ; are they all well ?'

'Master mean Bessee, Polee, Beebee, come in little ship ?'

'Yes, yes !'

'Bessee do so' (putting his head into his hand); 'want mama,' pointing to Mrs. Harton ; 'be quite well now.'

'Oh! my child, my child; let us hasten on! exclaimed the mother.

'Would you like to come with us, Funyáli ?' said Mr. Jackson as they were moving on.

'No, *baas* ; me go tell first in the house who comes.'

And Funyáli was off like a wild buck, springing across the sluits<sup>1</sup> and chasms with the lightness of a chamois.

Mr. Garren was in his afternoon schoolroom. The whole village had watched the approach of the cart and wagon, and he had some idea of who might possibly be coming, but had taken care to raise no false hopes, so that he was quite prepared for Funyáli's news, that 'Bessee's mama' was close by.

And so it was that when the visitors drove up to the mission house, they found all the household out to meet them, Bessie leaning tremblingly

<sup>1</sup> Deep gullies cut by the mountain torrents.

on Mrs. Garren's arm, still pale and delicate, but herself again in other respects.

We will not attempt to describe the tearful joy of the several greetings, nor the heartfelt gratitude expressed, not only to their very kind host and hostess, but to the whole community, not forgetting Funyáli.

For a full week they remained the guests of Mr. and Mrs. Garren, during which time the improvement in the condition of Bessie was most wonderful. She was quite happy in having her dear parents with her, and John being added seemed almost too much happiness.

Poor Polly was the only one who had a great unhappiness to bear, in learning now for the first time of the death of her mother; but it seemed as if the child grew very near to her father in those few days. She hung about him continually. Lottie having taken possession of baby, Polly had lost her occupation in that quarter, for a time at least, and soon discovered, with a womanly instinct, that she made her father more happy and cheerful by her presence; and, with the elasticity

of girlhood, soon made her own happiness in adding to his.

Mr. Jackson and John West brought the little boat up from the beach to the river, and putting it into thorough repair, even to renewing the cushions, of which the goat had eaten the stuffing, and making a new set of oars; they then presented it to John Garren, teaching him and Funyáli how to row and otherwise manage the boat.

They told Mr. Garren of the supposed discovery of gold on the mountain; but he begged them to say nothing of it, even if it turned out to be true, as he did not want his people to be demoralized by the advent of a lot of rough gold-diggers—an injunction, so far as the mission station and the traders doing business there were concerned, they strictly obeyed. Indeed, the spot where they had found indications of the ore was too far removed from the station to influence the residents there, only that Jackson had made the remark that if discovered in payable quantities in one part of the mountain range, there was no reason why it should not extend to another.

With affectionate and grateful farewells to all, they at last set out on their homeward journey, travelling by short stages, and in some of the most beautiful spots bivouacking for a couple of days at a time.

The change, and the living out of doors in that lovely climate, did them all good, and it was a happy party in the best of spirits and health that reached King Williamstown, after an absence of five or six weeks.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### HOME.

**B**ESSIE and Polly, and even the baby, who knew nothing about the perils through which they had passed, were heroines for many a day. Public thanks for their miraculous deliverance and safe return had been rendered in the different churches; and the story of their voyage in the little boat, from the time of their losing poor Petcánic and the advent of the goat till they were washed ashore on the Kaffrarian coast, had been published in the local papers, and recounted in every home.

But at last things had reverted to their normal condition. The great flood was a thing of the past, and a poor German family had settled themselves on the island which had been the cause of so much trouble.

Jackson, leaving his two children at the Wests,

was looking after his wood-cutting business in the forest. He had a large stock of sawn timber on hand, which he at once advertised for sale where it lay, having determined so to arrange his affairs that he might be ready to go home when he felt inclined to do so. As a number of men with their families were more or less dependent upon him, and the business was capable of being made more lucrative than he had made it, he did not wish the concern to be entirely broken up, as it probably would be if he relinquished all interest in it. Therefore, after consultation with Col. McAllan, he proposed to John West that he should become his partner, having an overseer of works under him, feeling sure that, residing as he did in the immediate neighbourhood of the forest, it would be an easy matter for him to manage the wood-cutting works without neglecting the farm.

John was pleased at anything that gave him a prospect of ultimate independence, for Mr. and Mrs. Harton had consented to his marriage with Bessie at an early date.

He and Mr. Jackson had concluded all arrangements preparatory to entering into partnership, and were riding into the town together in order to put the matter into legal form.

'I suppose,' said John, 'you have really determined upon going home now? Have you let them know when to expect you?'

'Not I, indeed!' replied Jackson. 'Correspondence has ceased between us so long that I feel now loth to resume it, and those at home will not.'

But Mr. Jackson was wrong; for on entering Col. McAllan's office that morning he was greeted with the exclamation,—

'I'm very glad you have come, for what seems to be an important document has arrived for you by this morning's mail, and I was just thinking how I could send it to you.'

Mr. Jackson took it in his hand. It was from the old family lawyer, the only one who really knew where he was to be found. He carefully read the address, above which was written: 'To be forwarded without delay.' He seemed as if he

dared not open it. Was this, then, to tell him he was too late? His father! God grant that he was not dead, too! Then he knew how much he had lately dwelt upon the thought of going back to see his father—how constantly the image of the old man had been before his mind's eye. And now, what did he fear?

At last, with trembling fingers, he broke the seal. Thank God! Mr. Crawford's first words were: 'Your father is very anxious for your return. Let me urge you to comply with the request of your stepmother, whose letter I enclose. Poor woman! her children have both died of scarlet fever.'

The letter ran thus:—

'To JOHN JACKSON ELRINGTON,—

'Come home; bring your wife and children with you. My own two darling boys, your brothers, are both dead. Your father is very ill, and is continually calling for you; he cannot live long; then you will have the place to yourself. I hate it with a bitter hatred, and should live abroad.

Crawford tells me you have sufficient means at your disposal for expenses, or your father would have sent you a draft. I know I have done you an injustice, and now I have been punished, and my punishment is greater than I can bear.

'Come home at once; your father begs you to do so, if you would see him alive.

'Your heart-broken stepmother,

'FRANCES ELRINGTON.'

In less than a week the mail which left for England carried among her passengers Jackson and his two children. Upon reaching his old home he found his father still very weak and ill, but it seemed as if the sight of his son gave him new life; and in a short time, greatly to the delight of the villagers, with whom Jackson had always been a great favourite, the two were to be seen on the terrace, the old man leaning proudly on the arm of his fine, tall, bronzed and bearded son.

'The place has been sadly neglected the last two years,' said the father one day. 'I tried



to keep it up for you, and succeeded, till somehow I lost all interest in the work; but now you are here it will be all right again, God willing.'

'The dear old place,' said Jackson, pressing his father's arm, 'is looking very home-like and very beautiful. As soon as you are strong enough we will drive round together, and you shall tell me all you want done.'

But Jackson, with the energy of his nature, had not waited for that. Every one on the estate was glad to have his masterly influence among them, and it soon became his pride, as it had formerly been his father's, that the place was worked under his own direction, and that the tenantry, as well as the labourers, were among the most contented in England.

Sir Thomas lived to a good old age, and Lady Frances, strange to say, as if to make amends for her past selfish injustice, took the place of mother to the motherless children, and brought them up with the most tender solicitude and affection—an affection which was fully returned. Mary (no

longer called Polly, except now and then by her father) was growing a tall beautiful girl, the light and joy of the house, always ready with the kind word and deed for all—from 'dear old grandfather,' who was never so happy as when Mary was by, to the humblest cottar's child in the village school.

She keeps up a constant correspondence with Bessie, still taking great interest in all the South African news. Bessie and John West had been married some time, and John had done so well with the wood-cutting that he had been able to purchase the farm from Col. McAllan when it was offered for sale. Allan McAllan had joined him in the timber trade when Jackson gave it up, and was doing well; he and Lottie were also married, and very happy.

Bessie thought Mr. West had greatly improved since the time of the great flood. He and Mr. Harton had gone up with John to try and negotiate for the purchase of that portion of the mountain farm on which John had discovered the gold-bearing quartz, as the specimens, upon

being submitted to analysis, had yielded most satisfactory results.

Jackson was subsequently able to assist greatly in the development of the little gold mine, both with money and machinery, and the West-Elrington Mine, worked privately and known only to a few, has proved such a success that John and his wife were about to pay a long-promised visit to their friends in England; and by the soft murmuring brooks that flow through the Elrington grounds, in one of the prettiest valleys of Hampshire, Bessie and Mary will live over again those eventful days when they were washed out to sea by that terrible freshet from the Amatoles.

A terrible experience indeed it had been; and the remembrance of those days will remain with both of them as long as life shall last; but memory delights rather to dwell with the deepest gratitude on the infinite goodness of the Almighty in having brought them so wonderfully through the great perils of sea and flood, than to linger on the actual terrors of that fearful time; and

one most blessed legacy has that memory left behind—a firm and happy trust in Him ‘who hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand,’ and through all danger careth for the smallest and most helpless of His creatures.

THE END.



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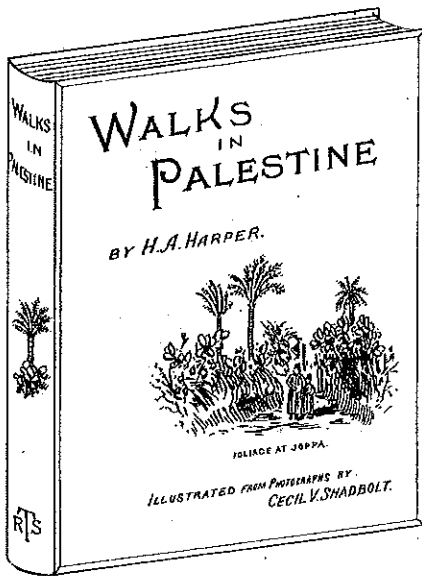
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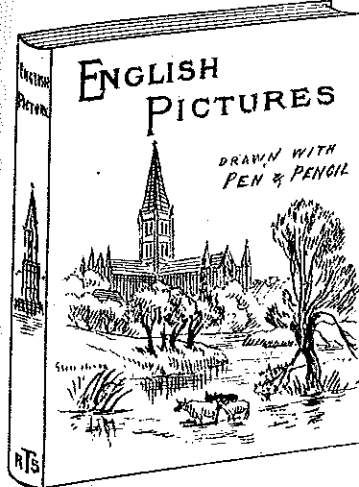
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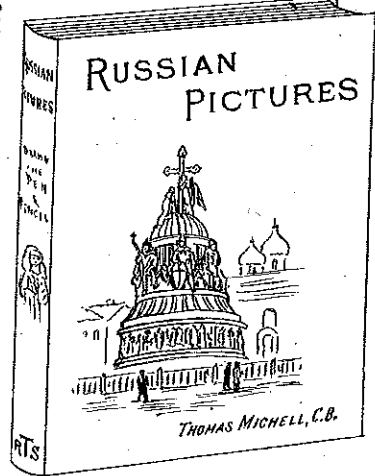
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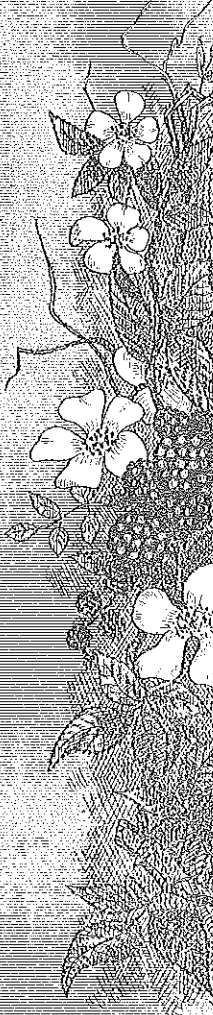
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