

# BOWMAN ANNE

THE KANGAROO  
HUNTERS; OR,  
ADVENTURES IN THE  
BUSH

Anne Bowman

**The Kangaroo Hunters;  
Or, Adventures in the Bush**

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**Bowman A.**

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# The Kangaroo Hunters; Or, Adventures in the Bush

## PREFACE

The rapid spread of education creates a continual demand for new books, of a character to gratify the taste of the young, and at the same time to satisfy the scruples of their instructors. The restless, inquiring spirit of youth craves, from its first development, food for the imagination, and even the simplest nursery rhymes owe their principal charm to their wonderful improbability. To these succeed the ever-interesting tales of Fairies and Enchanters; and the ardent boy only forsakes Ali Baba and Sindbad for the familiar and lifelike fictions of "Robinson Crusoe," and the hundred pleasant tales on the "Robinson Crusoe" model which have succeeded that popular romance.

It is the nature of man to soar above the common prose of every-day life in his recreations; from the weary school-boy, who relieves his mind, after arithmetical calculations and pages of syntax, by fanciful adventures amidst scenes of novelty and peril, and returns to his labors refreshed, to the over-tasked man of study or science, who wades through his days and nights of toil, cheered by the prospect of a holiday of voyaging or travelling over new scenes.

This spirit of inquiry has usually the happiest influence on the character of the young and old, and leads them —

"To know  
The works of God, thereby to glorify  
The great Work-Master."

In this belief, we are encouraged to continue to supply the young with books which do not profess to be true, though they are composed of truths. They are doubtless romantic, but cannot mislead the judgment or corrupt the taste; their aim being to describe the marvellous works of creation, and to lead the devout mind to say with the divine poet, —

"Great are thy works, Jehovah, infinite  
Thy power; what thought can measure thee, or tongue  
Relate thee?"

A. B.

Richmond, *October*, 1858.

## CHAPTER I

### **The Rector and the Soldier. – The Mayburn Family. – A Mission to India. – The Orphans of Wendon. – Ruth the Unlucky. – Jack's Project. – The Addition to the Mayburn Establishment**

"I am a selfish creature, O'Brien," said Mr. Mayburn, the rector of Wendon, to his invalid friend. "I cannot forbear from coming once more to annoy you with my lamentations, and to ask your counsel, for I am most unhappy. Every object I behold, every word I hear, recalls to my mind my bereavement. I cannot remain in this place after the loss of my beloved wife. She was the moving power of my household. It was she, in fact, who was the pastor and director of the parish, the skilful tutor of her children, the guide and the guardian of her weak and erring husband. Alone, I am unfit for my responsible office; I shudder over the conviction that I am faithless to my vows; I know, O'Brien, that I do not fulfil my duty."

"There is an easy remedy for your distress, my good friend," answered Captain O'Brien; "my advice is, do your duty, and be comforted."

"It is physically impossible, O'Brien," said the mourner. "My nerves are shattered; my health is completely destroyed. I shrink from communion with society; and though I exert myself to give my boys their daily lessons, I would afterwards gladly enclose myself in my study, and live amongst my books."

"No doubt you would," replied O'Brien; "but God did not send us into this world to vegetate in solitude, and bring forth no fruit. Act, Mayburn, I beseech you, man; power comes with action, you know well; and whatever man has done, may be done. Work! work! is the counsel of the worn-out dying soldier to him who has yet the labors of life spread before him."

"But you have no idea how feeble my bodily powers are," groaned the rector.

"I can form a very tolerable idea of your strength," said the captain; "for the last time I was out I saw you plunged up to the knees in the green marsh, regardless of a cold north-east March wind."

"I remember the day well," answered Mr. Mayburn, with animation, "for I was fortunate enough to obtain the eggs of the crested grebe in the marsh. You will not have forgotten that the preceding summer I got a fine specimen of the bird."

"Very well," said his friend; "now, if you were able thus to toil and to endure to save the eggs of a bird, you may surely exert yourself still more to save the soul of a Christian. Go more among your poor; talk to them, help them with your knowledge, and teach them to live happily and die happily. I am not without experience in such work, Mayburn; as long as I was able, I had a little flock of my own; and in secular matters at any rate, was a sort of parish priest among my soldiers. I felt an interest in the history and in the daily life of every man in my company, and was never more at home than in the nooks and corners where my poor fellows dwelt. It was this pleasant and profitable work that Mrs. Mayburn ably accomplished for you, and I see Margaret is treading in her steps; go with her, Mayburn, support her in her virtuous course, and you will discover that life has still its pleasures for you."

"Not here! not here! my dear O'Brien," answered Mr. Mayburn. "Sometimes I determine to relinquish this parish, and accept one of smaller population, where the responsibility would be less; at other moments I am prompted to adopt an entirely opposite course, and to make up for my past wasted life by devoting my remaining days to missionary labors in distant lands, where I might be more stimulated to exertion, in the necessity of action. Give me your advice, O'Brien, on which of these two plans to decide. On the one hand, I have the temptation offered me to exchange for a small living on the north-eastern coast, where I should meet with many ornithological novelties; on the

other hand, I know I have still sufficient interest among my old friends to obtain the appointment to some mission in the colonies. I should prefer Northern India or South Australia, both affording rich fields to the naturalist."

"A matter of secondary consideration," said O'Brien, smiling. "But wait a month or two, my good friend; we must not decide hastily on such an important step; and before that time has elapsed, you will have fulfilled the last pious offices for me. Do not be agitated, Mayburn. I know that I am dying; these old wounds have slowly, but successfully, undermined the fortress; it cannot hold out long. But be comforted; I am resigned and calm, nay, I am happy, for I know in whom I trust. Now, Mayburn, to you and to your sweet daughter I must bequeath my wild, half-taught boy. Give him all the book-lore he can be made to imbibe; above all, Mayburn, make him a Christian. To Margaret I intrust his physical education. I should wish him to be fitted to perform such work in this world as it may please God to call him to. I am thankful that I must leave him poor, as he will thus be exempt from the grand temptation, and forced into healthy action. May God direct his labors to the best and wisest end."

The words of his dying friend had for some time a salutary influence over the amiable but vacillating Mayburn. With remorse and shame he looked on his own discontent, and with a brief gleam of energy he turned to the duties of his office; but long habits of self-indulgence in literary pursuits and literary ease were not to be suddenly overcome; and when the grave closed over his faithful friend and wise counsellor, O'Brien, he soon shrunk back into morbid, solitary musings, and gradually sunk into his accustomed indolence. But a waking of remorse induced him to write to his old college friend, the Bishop of — , to pray that he might be allowed to resign his living, and be appointed to some distant mission.

Mr. Mayburn, though upright in principle and amiable in disposition, was yet unfitted, from his deficiency in firmness, for the responsibilities of his office; but his constitutional timidity and indolence had escaped notice during the lifetime of his valuable and energetic wife, who had directed his actions and concealed his feeble nature. But it was the will of God that she should be suddenly called from him; and, stunned with his loss, he abandoned himself to sorrow and inaction. The death of his valuable friend and counsellor, Captain O'Brien, cut away the last prop of the feeble man, who was now alternately sunk in useless grief or haunted with the horrors of neglected duties.

Pious and eloquent, his people declared he was an angel in the church; but in their humble dwellings his visits, like those of angels, "were short and far between." In his family, it was his pleasure to communicate to his children the rich treasures of learning that he possessed; but the lessons of life, the useful preparation for the battle of the world, he had not the skill or the energy to teach.

His daughter, now sixteen years of age, had been ably instructed by her excellent mother, and possessed good sense and prudence beyond her years. Arthur, the eldest son, one year younger, had benefited by his mother's advice and example equally with his sister, whom he resembled in disposition. His brother Hugh, not yet thirteen years old, was too young to have profited much by instruction, and was more volatile than Margaret and Arthur. But the children were all frank, true, and conscientious; and had yet escaped the temptations and perils of the world.

Gerald, the orphan son of the faithful and attached friend of Mr. Mayburn, Captain O'Brien, was the most weighty charge of his timid guardian; though but twelve years old, he was bold, independent, and forever in mischief; and hourly did Mr. Mayburn groan under his responsibility, for he had solemnly promised to fulfil the duties of a father to the boy, and he trembled to contemplate his incapacity for the office.

"Margaret," said he to his daughter, "I request that you or Jenny will never lose sight of that boy after he leaves my study. I am continually distracted by the dread that he should pull down the old church tower when he is climbing to take the nests of the harmless daws, or that he should have his eyes pecked out by the peacocks at Moore Park, when he is pulling the feathers from their tails."

"Do you not think, papa," answered Margaret, "that you are partly responsible for his mischievous follies? You have imbued him with your ornithological tastes."

"He has no taste, Margaret," replied her father hastily. "He has no judgment in the science. He has never learned to distinguish the *Corvidæ* from the *Columbidæ*; nor could he at this moment tell you to which family the jackdaw he makes war with belongs. He is negligent himself, and, moreover, he allures my son Hugh from his serious studies, to join him in rash and dangerous enterprises. He is totally deficient in the qualities of application and perseverance. I have a dim recollection, Margaret, of a childish hymn, written by the pious Dr. Watts, who was no great poet, but was really an observer of the habits of the animal creation. This hymn alludes prettily to the industry of the bee, and if you could prevail on Gerald to commit it to memory, it might suggest reflections on his own deficiencies."

"Papa," said Margaret laughing, "Gerald could repeat 'How doth the little busy bee,' when he was four years old, and I do not think that a repetition of it now would make any serious impression on him."

"He has no taste for the higher range of poetry," said his distressed guardian; "and has too much levity to seek knowledge in the direct paths. What would you think of giving him to learn an unpretending poem by Mrs. Barbauld, which describes the feathered tribes with tolerable accuracy. It commences,

'Say, who the various nations can declare,  
That plough, with busy wing, the peopled air!'"

"Gerald is not lazy, papa, he is only thoughtless," said Margaret. "Let us hope that a few years will bring him more wisdom; then he will learn to admire Homer, and to distinguish birds like his good guardian."

Mr. Mayburn sighed. "But what shall I do with the boy," he said, "when my duties summon me to distant lands? I am bewildered with doubts of the future. Will it be right, Margaret, to remove you and my promising boys from country, society, and home, perhaps even from civilization?"

"No, no, papa, you are not fitted for a missionary to savages," answered Margaret, "you must choose some more suitable employment. And if you are bent on quitting England, surely you cannot suppose, whatever may be your destination, that we should consent to be separated from you."

"God forbid that it should be so!" exclaimed the father. "But I cannot but feel, my child, that I have been selfish and negligent. Give me some consolation – tell me that you think I may yet do some good in a strange land. I am persuaded that I shall be better able to exert myself among complete heathens than I am among these cold, dull, professed Christians."

"If you feel this conviction, papa," said Margaret, "it is sufficient. When we earnestly desire to do right, God always provides us with work. We must all try to aid you. And Gerald is now our brother, papa; he must accompany us in our wanderings. The boys anticipate with great delight the pleasures of a sea-voyage, and I myself, though I regret to leave my poor people, enjoy the idea of looking on the wonders of the world."

"Then, Margaret," added Mr. Mayburn, "I must trust you and Jenny to watch that giddy boy, Gerald. Warn him of the dangers that surround him. I should never survive if he were to fall overboard. I promised O'Brien much; but, alas! I have done little."

Margaret engaged to use all needful watchfulness, though, she assured her father, Arthur would care for the young boys; and being now convinced that her father's resolution to leave England was earnest and unchangeable, the young girl, assisted by Jenny Wilson, the old nurse, set about the serious preparations for this important change; and when a mission to a remote part of India was proposed to Mr. Mayburn, he found the whole of his family as ready as he was himself to enter into this new and hazardous undertaking.

"I looked for nothing better, Miss Marget, my darling," said nurse Jenny; "and my poor mistress, lying on her death-bed, saw it all plainly. Says she to me, 'Nurse,' says she, 'your good master will

never settle after I'm gone. He'll be for shifting from this place; but mind this, nurse, you'll stick to my childer.' And then and there I said I would never leave ye; 'specially you, Miss Marget; where you go, I must go, and I hope God will spare me to nurse childer of yours. Though where you are to meet with a suiting match I cannot see, if master will choose to go and live among black savages."

"Not so bad as that, nurse," said Margaret, smiling. "I trust that our lot may be cast on a more civilized spot, where we may find many of our own countrymen living among the benighted people we are sent to teach; and even they, though ignorant and degraded, are not absolutely savage, neither are they blacks, my dear nurse."

"Well, my child, you know best," answered Jenny. "But there's a sore task laid out for you, that will have all the work to do. Not but what master is a grand hand at preaching, and can talk wonderful, nows and thens, to poor folks; but he cannot get round them as you can. He never seems to be talking to them as it were face to face, but all like preaching to them out of his pulpit; and somehow he never gets nigh hand to them. But it's God will, and, please Him, we must all do our best; we shall be missed here; and oh, Miss Marget, what will come of poor Ruth Martin? and we promising to take the lass next month, and make a good servant of her. Here's Jack, too; just out of his time, a fair good workman, and a steady lad, and none but you and master to look up to, poor orphans."

"Do not be distressed, nurse," replied Margaret, "I have thought of all my scholars; I have prepared a list of those I wish papa especially to recommend to his successor; and perhaps Mrs. Newton will take Ruth on trial."

"She won't do it, Miss Marget," answered Jenny. "I tried her before, and she flounces, and flames, and says all sorts of ill words again the lass, as how she's flappy and ragged, and knows nothing; and when I asked her what she could expect from childer as was found crying over their poor father and mother lying dead under a hedge; she said outright, she should expect they would turn out vagabonds, like them they belonged to. Yes, she said that; after you had given the poor things schooling for six years."

It was not the least of Margaret Mayburn's pangs, on leaving Wendon, that she must be compelled to abandon the poor children of the parish, whom she had long taught and cared for; and she sighed over the incapacity of the rough orphan girl that she now set out with her faithful nurse to visit.

Ruth and Jack Martin had been found one cold morning of winter in a lane leading to the village of Wendon, sitting by the side of the hedge, weeping over the dead bodies of their parents, who had perished from famine and fever, exposed to the storm of the previous night. The children were conveyed to the workhouse, and from their story, and further inquiries, it was made out that their mother had left a tribe of gipsies to marry a railway *navvy*, as the children called their father. He was a reckless, drunken profligate; and after losing his arm from an accident which originated in his own carelessness, was dismissed from his employment, and driven to wander a homeless vagrant. The children said they had lived by begging, and had often been nearly starved; but their mother would never let them steal or tell a lie, and she had often cried when their father came to their lodging very drunk, speaking very bad words, and holding out silver money, which their mother would not touch.

But at last he was seized with a bad fever on the road, and, houseless and penniless, they crept under a haystack; from thence the children were sent to the road-side to beg from passengers, or to seek some farmhouse, where charity might bestow on them a little milk or a few crusts of bread; but the poor wife sickened of the same disease which was carrying off her husband, and in their desperation the wretched sufferers dragged themselves to the road which led to the village, in hopes of reaching it, and finding shelter and aid. But it was too late. In the midst of the beating snow, and in the darkness of a winter's night, the man sank down and died. The wretched woman cast herself down beside him, and, overcome by sorrow and long suffering, did not survive to see the morning light.

The sympathy created by this melancholy event procured many warm friends for the orphans. They were fed and clothed, sent to school, and carefully instructed in that pure religion of which they

had formerly had but vague notions. Jack, the boy, who was about eleven years of age when they were orphaned, was a thoughtful, industrious lad; for three years he made useful progress at school, and in the last three years, under a good master, he had become a skilful carpenter. Ruth, who was two years younger than her brother, had inferior abilities; she was rough, boisterous, and careless; and was ever the dunce of the school, till at length the schoolmistress begged she might be put to something else, for she declared she made "no hand at learning." She was then placed with an old woman, who daily complained that "the lass was of no use; she was willing enough; but if she was set to wash the cups, she broke them; and she could not even stir the fire but she would poke it out." At fifteen years old, Ruth was a strong, active girl, extremely good-natured, true, and honest, fondly attached to her brother, and devoted to her kind friends at the rectory; yet, certainly, Ruth was no favorite with the wives of the neighboring farmers, who unanimously agreed that she must have "two left hands," she was so awkward in all her undertakings. Under these untoward circumstances, it had been arranged that Ruth should undergo an apprenticeship in the rectory establishment, to fit her for household service. This event was looked forward to by the girl with great delight, and it was with much regret that Margaret set out to announce to her their plan of leaving Wendon, which must necessarily extinguish her hopes of preferment.

There was still another who would deeply feel their loss; and Margaret was accompanied by her brothers, who were anxious to see their untiring assistant, Jack. It was he who gave his useful aid to them in the construction of bows, bats, leaping-bars, and all the wooden appliances of school-boy sports; and above all the people of the village, the boys murmured most that they must part with Jack.

They found the industrious lad busily engaged in making a new crutch for Nanny, the old woman with whom the orphans lived. "You see, Master Hugh," said he, "poor Ruth happened to throw down Nanny's crutch, and then the careless lass fell over it, and snapped it. I reckon it had been a bit of bad wood; but this is a nice seasoned stick I've had laid by these two years for another purpose, and it comes in nicely; for Nanny was cross, and poor Ruth was sadly put about, and this will set all straight."

At this moment, Ruth, who had been sent out to milk Nanny's cow, entered in woful plight. She had neglected to tie Brindle's legs properly, and the animal, irritated by the teasing bark of an ill-taught little dog, had struggled to extricate itself, kicked Ruth into the mud, and the milk-pail after her, and then run off, pursued by its tormentor; and the girl returned with her dress torn and dirty, and her milk-pail empty. Nanny scolded, Jack shook his head, Margaret gently remonstrated with her for her carelessness, and, worst cut of all, the young gentlemen laughed at her. Then Ruth fairly sat down and cried.

"Well, Nanny," said Margaret, "you must look over Ruth's fault this time, for we have some sad news for you all. We are going to leave Wendon."

Jack threw down his work, and Ruth, forgetting her own vexation, held up her hands, crying out, "Not without me, please, Miss Marget. You promised to try and make me good for something; please do, Miss Marget, and I'll pray God to make me of some use to you."

"But, Ruth," said Hugh, "we are going far away from here, across the wide sea, and among people who neither talk, nor look, nor live as we do."

"How many legs have they, Master Hugh?" asked the awe-struck girl.

"Only two legs, and one head, Ruth," answered he, laughing; "and we feel pretty sure that they will not eat us; but, for all that, I am afraid they are a little bit savage, if they be roused."

"Will you be so kind as to tell me, Mr. Arthur," said Jack, "where you may be going really."

Arthur then explained to Jack the plans of Mr. Mayburn, and assured him they all felt a pang at leaving Wendon; and especially they regretted the parting from the children they had themselves assisted to teach.

"Then let us go with you," cried Ruth vehemently.

"Cannot we both work and wait on you? If I stay here I shall be sure to turn out a bad lass. Jack, honey, we'll not be left behind, we will run after Miss Marget and Mr. Arthur."

Jack was thoughtful and silent, while Margaret said to the weeping girl, – "If we had only been removing to any part of England, Ruth, we would have taken you with us, if it had been possible; but we dare not propose such an addition to the family in a long voyage, which will cost a large sum of money for each of us; besides this, we are going to a country where your services, my poor girl, would be useless; for all the servants employed in cooking, house-work, and washing, are men, who bear the labor, in such a hot climate, better than women could."

"If you please, Miss Margaret," said Jack, eagerly, "I have thought of something. Will you be kind enough to tell me the name of the ship you are to go in, and I will get my master to write me out a good testimonial, and then I will seek the captain, to offer to work for my passage and for that of poor Ruth, if you will agree to try her; for you see, Miss Margaret, we must never be parted. And when once we're landed, please God, we'll take care to follow you wherever you may go."

Margaret was deeply affected by the attachment of the orphans; and though she felt the charge of Ruth would be a burden, she promised to consult her father about the plan, and the brother and sister were left in a state of great anxiety and doubt.

As they walked home, Margaret and Arthur talked of Jack's project till they satisfied themselves it was really feasible; and Arthur believed that, once landed in India, the lad might obtain sufficient employment to enable him to support himself and his sister.

"Oh, Jack will be a capital fellow to take with us," said Hugh. "I know papa will consent, for he could always trust Jack to find the birds' nests, and bring away the right eggs, as well as if he had gone himself. Then he is such an ingenious, clever fellow, just the man to be cast away on a desolate island."

"I trust we shall never have occasion to test his talents under such extreme circumstances," said Arthur; "but, if we can manage it, I should really like Jack to form a part of our establishment. As to that luckless wench, Ruth, I should decidedly object to her, if we could be cruel enough to separate them, which seems impossible. But I shall always be haunted with the idea that she may contrive, somehow, to run the ship upon a rock."

"Oh! do let us take Ruth, Meggie," exclaimed Gerald; "it will be such fun. Isn't she a real Irish girl, all wrong words and unlucky blunders. Won't she get into some wonderful scrapes, Hugh?"

"With you to help her, Pat Wronghead," replied Hugh. "But mind, Meggie, she is to go. Papa will say what you choose him to say; and I will cajole nurse out of her consent."

And serious as the charge was likely to become, it was at length agreed that Jack and Ruth should be included in the party with the Mayburns; and the girl was immediately transferred to the rectory, to undergo a short course of drilling previous to the momentous undertaking.

## CHAPTER II

### **Departure from Wendon. – Embarkation in the *Amoor*. – Ruth's Adventures in London. – The Deverell Family. – The Pleasures of the Voyage. – Tropical Wonders. – The Flying-fish. – The Stormy Petrel. – The Albatross. – Deverell's Plans. – The Indian Ocean. – A Storm**

Finally the successor of Mr. Mayburn arrived, was initiated in his office, introduced to his new parishioners, and had promised to supply, as well as he was able, the loss which the mourning poor must sustain in the departure of the charitable family. Mr. Mayburn's old friend, the Bishop of – , himself accompanied the family to London, directed them in the mode of fitting out for the voyage, and for their new residence, and supplied them with letters of instruction as well as of introduction before he left them. Some weeks of delay followed, and several disappointments; but at length they were induced to embark, with nurse Wilson, Ruth, and Jack, on board the *Amoor*, a good sailing vessel bound to Melbourne, with many passengers; and from thence to Calcutta, with cattle and merchandise; Captain Barton, who commanded the ship, being an old acquaintance of Mr. Mayburn. Established in a large and commodious cabin, Margaret begged that nurse would keep Ruth always with them, for the girl was distracted with the strange objects around her.

"Sit ye down, lass, and hem that apron," said Jenny, in a tone of authority. "Truly, Miss Margaret, I wouldn't go through the last week again to be Queen Victoria herself, God bless her; and all owing to that unlucky lass. Jack is a decent lad, and it's unknown what a help he was about getting the things here safe; but all the folks in London seemed of one mind that *she* was fitter for a 'sylum than for a creditable gentleman's family. It's no good blubbering about it now, girl; just see and mind what you are about, for there's no police here to look after you."

"Did the police really get hold of her, nurse?" asked Gerald. "What fun!"

"I never took her out for a walk, Master O'Brien," answered Jenny, "but they had their eye on her; they marked her at once as one that needed watching – a simpleton! Why, it was no later than yesterday morning when she worked on me, fool-body as I was, to go with her to see St. Paul's; and what did she do then but start from my arm and run right across a street thronged with cabs, and wagons, and omnibuses. I just shut my eyes and screamed, for I never thought to see her again living; and there was such a hallooing among coachmen and cabmen, and such screaming of women, as was never heard. How they got all them horses to stop is just a miracle; but when I looked again, there was a lot of police holding horses' heads, and one man was hauling Ruth right across; and he had his trouble, for when she heard all that hullabaloo, she was for turning back to me through the thick of it. Oh! Miss Marget, wasn't I shamed out of my life when they fetched her back to me at last, and one fine fellow said I had better lead my daughter in a string."

Ruth giggled hysterically at the recital of her adventure, and when Margaret said to her gravely, – "You behaved very improperly, Ruth, why did you leave your kind friend, Mrs. Wilson?"

"Please Miss Marget," sobbed the girl; "it was a window full of bonnie babbies."

"She's just a babby herself, Miss Marget," said Jenny, wrathfully. "It was a fine toyshop she saw, and she had no more sense but run among carriages to it. She's hardly safe shut up here; see if she doesn't tumble into the sea some of these days."

But when Ruth's curiosity and astonishment had somewhat subsided, the quiet and firm government of Margaret, and the watchful care of Jack, had great power over her; though still the wild boys Hugh and Gerald sometimes tempted her to pry into forbidden places, or to join them in some mischievous frolic.

The greater part of the accommodation of the *Amoor* was given up to a gentleman of good birth and property, who was emigrating to Australia. He had obtained a grant of an immense tract of land in the very midst of the country, further north than the steps of the colonists had yet reached. To this remote district he was taking his mother, his young sister, and a younger brother who had studied medicine; and besides these, a number of male and female servants, carpenters, smiths, builders, drainers, shepherds, and various workmen likely to be useful in a new colony. These men were accompanied by their wives and children, forming a considerable clan, all depending on their worthy and energetic chieftain. The vast amount of goods brought out by all these emigrants, much that was useless, as must ever be the case, among the useful, had heavily laden the vessel.

The Mayburns and Deverells were drawn together as much by kindred taste as by inevitable circumstances, and they soon became as true friends as if they had been intimately acquainted for years. Edward Deverell, with promptness and practical knowledge, managed the affairs and smoothed the difficulties of the Mayburns; while Mr. Mayburn instructed the ignorant, and, at the desire of the captain, a right-minded man, daily read the morning and evening services publicly – a most beneficial practice, producing order and decorum, and implanting in the minds of the young the seeds of future blessing.

"How truly I should rejoice, dear Margaret," said Deverell, "if we could induce your excellent father to join our expedition. I would then undertake to build a church; and might hope for a blessing on my new colony, if the foundation were so happily laid. The climate is declared to be exceedingly salubrious, much more likely to suit you all than the unhealthy air of India. It would be an inestimable advantage to my dear sister Emma; she has never known the care and tenderness of a sister; she needs a more cheerful companion than her good mother, who has delicate health; and you, Margaret Mayburn, are the model I should wish her to imitate."

"I need a sister quite as much," answered Margaret, "to soften my rough points, and your gentle, gay little Emma charms and interests me; but, alas! papa has accepted a duty which he must not relinquish without a trial to fulfil it. I regret that it should be in such a locality for the sake of my brothers."

"You are right, my dear friend," replied he; "observe how happily they are now engaged. Arthur has looked over the dried plants, and he is now dissecting rabbits with my brother. Hugh and your ingenious Jack are at work with my carpenters, making models of broad-wheeled travelling-wagons and canoes for the rivers. Even the mischievous urchin O'Brien is out of danger when he is engaged with my grooms and herdsmen, in attendance on my valuable horses and cattle. What can these ardent boys find to interest and amuse them in the arid and enfeebling plains of India?"

Margaret knew that if her father heard these arguments, they would certainly agitate him, and might even shake his determination to proceed in the undertaking, which she and Arthur were of opinion he was bound to complete. She therefore begged Deverell to use no further persuasions; but she promised him, that if the Indian mission was beyond the physical or mental strength of her father, she would try to induce him to return to Melbourne, and from thence they would endeavor to make their way to the station of Mr. Deverell, who had promised to leave directions for their progress with his banker at Melbourne, which he proposed to make his mart for business.

It was truly the fact, that in pleasant employment no one found the long voyage tedious. Jack was especially charmed with his increase of knowledge. "You see, sir," said he to Arthur, "I was qualified to make a four-post bedstead, or a chest of drawers, as well as the best of these chaps; but they tell me them sort of things isn't much needed in them forrin parts. But what they've brought along with them is quite another thing: frames for wooden houses, ready to nail up in no time; mills and threshing machines; great, broad-felloed wagons for their rough roads, and boats of all makes. Just look, Mr. Arthur, I've made bits of models of all them things, you see. We can't say but they may turn up useful some day."

Even Ruth the unlucky lost her cognomen, and became popular among the emigrant women; for when kept quietly at regular employment, she could be steady and useful; it was only when she was hurried, or thrown upon her own responsibility, that she lost her head, and blundered into mischief. She nursed the babes tenderly and carefully, helped the poor women to wash their clothes, and for the first time in her life began to believe she might be of some use in the world. Gerald, who always insisted on it that Ruth was not half so bad as she was represented, assured Jenny that all the girl's errors arose from improper management. "You do not appreciate her talents justly, nurse," said he. "She is quite a genius, and ought to have been Irish, only she was born in England. You have wronged poor Ruth; you see she has never drowned a *babby* yet."

"Well, Master O'Brien, wait a bit, we're not through our voyage yet," said Jenny, oracularly.

"The Ides of March are not gone, she would say," said Hugh.

"I didn't mean to say no such thing, Master Hugh," replied she; "you're so sharp with one. I'm not so daft, but I know March is gone, and May-day ought to be at hand; not that we can see any signs of it, neither leaves nor flowers here, and I cannot see days get any longer. How is it, Master Arthur? Is it because we're atop of the water?"

Arthur endeavored to make Jenny comprehend the natural consequences of their position, now within the tropics, and daily drawing nearer to the equator; but he only succeeded in agitating the mind of the old woman, without enlightening her.

"God help us!" she exclaimed. "Nigher and nigher to the sun! It's downright temptation and wickedness, my dears; and my thought is, one ought to stay where it has pleased Him to plant us. And think ye, Master Arthur, we shall all turn black, like them niggers we saw in London streets."

"No; certainly not, nurse," answered Arthur. "It requires hundreds of years, under a tropical sun, to change the color of Europeans. Besides, the negroes, although we are all children of Adam, are of a distinct race from us. We are certainly not, like the thick-lipped negroes, the descendants of Ham."

"Likely he had been the plainest of Noah's family," said Jenny, "for beauty runs in the blood, that I'll stand to," continued the attached nurse, looking round with complacency on her handsome young nurslings.

To the young voyagers there was an indescribable charm in the novelties which the sea and the air offered to them in the tropical region they had now entered. Now for the first time they beheld the flying-fish rise sparkling from the waves, to descend as quickly; escaping for a short time from its enemies in the waves to expose itself to the voracious tribes of the air, who are ready to dart upon it. And sometimes the elegant little Stormy Petrel, with its slender long legs, seemed to walk the waters, like the fervent St. Peter, from whom it derives its name.

"But is not this bird believed to be the harbinger of storms?" asked Margaret of her father, as he watched with delight the graceful creature he had so often desired to behold.

"Such is the belief of the sailors," answered he, "who have added the ill-omened epithet to its name. It is true that the approach, or the presence, of a gale, has no terror to this intrepid bird, the smallest of the web-footed tribe. It ascends the mountainous wave, and skims along the deep hollows, treading the water, supported by its expanded wings, in search of the food which the troubled sea casts on the surface:

'Up and down! up and down!  
From the base of the wave to the billow's crown,  
Amidst the flashing and feathery foam,  
The Stormy Petrel finds a home,'

as a poet who is a true lover of nature has written. Yet it is not always the harbinger or the companion of the storm, for even in the calmest weather it follows a vessel, to feed on the offal thrown overboard, as fearless and familiar in the presence of man as the pert sparrow of London."

"Here, papa!" cried Hugh, "here is a new creature to add to your collection. I know him at once, — the huge Albatross."

With the admiration of a naturalist, Mr. Mayburn looked on the gigantic bird, continuing its solemn majestic flight untiringly for hours after the ship, its keen eye ever on the watch for any floating substance which was thrown from the vessel, and then swooping heavily down to snatch the prize voraciously, and circling round the ship, again to resume its place at the wake.

"I see now," said he, "why Coleridge wrote, —

'The Albatross did follow,  
And every day, for food or play.  
Came to the mariner's hollo!'

But the poet mistook the habits of the bird entirely when he added, that 'on mast or shroud it perched.' The difficulty of expanding its wing of five joints, so immensely long, would impede its rising from the mast of a ship; it scrambles along the waves before it can rise above them; and it has been well said, 'The albatross is the mere creature of the wind, and has no more power over itself than a paper kite or an air balloon. It is all wing, and has no muscle to raise itself with, and must wait for a wind before it can get under sail.'"

The family were assembled on deck in the close of the evening, after the fervid heat of an equatorial sun, and they beheld with enjoyment the wonders of the deep; but the old nurse seemed disturbed and awe-struck.

"Every thing seems turned topsy-turvy here," said she. "Days far hotter nor ever I mind them, and May-day not come; fishes with wings, flying as if they were birds, and birds walking atop of the water, as if it were dry land. It's unnatural, Miss Marget, and no good can come on it, I say."

"Ah! if you were but going with us, Mrs. Wilson," said Charles Deverell; "then I would engage you should see wonders. You should see beasts hopping about like birds, and wearing pockets to carry their young ones in; black swans and white eagles; cuckoos that cry in the night, and owls that scream by day; pretty little birds that cannot sing, and bees that never sting. There the trees shed their bark instead of their leaves, and the cherries grow with the stone outside."

"Now, just hold your tongue, Mr. Charles," answered nurse, angrily. "Your brother would scorn to talk such talk; but you're no better than Master Gerald, trying to come over an old body with your fairy stories."

"It is quite true, Mrs. Wilson," said Emma Deverell, "and I wish you were all going with us into this land of enchantments. Then, Margaret, dear Margaret, how happy we should be. You should be queen, and we all your attendant sylphs, and

'Merry it would be in fairy-land,  
Where the fairy birds were singing.'"

"Merry for you, little wild goose," said her brother Edward; "but Charles has told you the fairy birds do not sing; and our sylph-life will be one of hard labor for many months before we make our fairy-land and court lit to receive our queen. Then we must try and lure her to us. How shall we contrive it, Emma?"

Margaret smiled and shook her head. "Too bright a dream," said she, "to be safely indulged in. But you must tell us all you propose to do, and we will watch your progress in fancy."

"Oh, do tell us all about it, Edward," said Hugh. "But, first of all, make a dot upon my map, that we may know where you are when we come to seek you."

"Very prudent, Hugh," answered Edward, "though I doubt the accuracy of my dot on this small map; but I suppose I shall not be more than a hundred miles wrong, and that is nothing in the wilds of Australia."

"But I see you will be close on this great river that falls into the Darling," said Hugh; "so if we only follow up the rivers, we must find you."

"You would not find that so easy a task as it seems, my boy," replied Edward. "Neither are we, as you suppose, close on that river, but fifty miles from it; but we have a charming little river laid down on our plan, which we must coax and pet in the rainy season, that it may provide us with water in the drought."

"You have a most extensive tract," said Arthur, looking on the plan.

"Oh, yes," said Charles, "we propose, you know, to build a castle for ourselves, and a town for our vassals."

"There lies my castle," said Edward, pointing to some large packages which contained the frame of his future abode. "As for the town, I am not without hopes to see it rise some time, and do honor to its name."

"Deverell, I conclude?" observed Arthur.

"So my mother wishes the station to be called," replied he; "but my own 'modest mansion,' I should wish to name Daisy Grange."

"I never understood that the daisy was indigenous in Australia," said Mr. Mayburn.

"Certainly it is not, sir," answered Edward; "but we have fortunately brought out a number of roots of this dear home flower, and will try to domesticate them in our new country; though I fear they will be apt to forget their native simplicity, and learn to flaunt in colors."

"I know why you wish to call your house Daisy Grange, Edward," said Emma, nodding sagaciously at Margaret, and the general laughter showed the little girl had surmised correctly.

"A very pretty and delicate compliment," said Mr. Mayburn: "our own glorious Chaucer speaks of the daisy as —

'La belle marguerite,  
O commendable flower, and most in minde;'

and the noble Margaret of Valois, a Christian and a scholar, had the daisy, or *marguerite*, worn in honor of her name, and is herself remembered as the 'Marguerite of Marguerites'."

And thus they amused themselves till, without storm or delay, they had crossed the equator, and entered the South Sea, when a new source of enjoyment was opened to Mr. Mayburn, who had long desired to view the constellations of the south; and favorable weather enabled them to study astronomy every night. Never for a moment did the voyage seem tedious in the cheerful society of the happy families, and all things concurred to render it agreeable. The provisions were excellent, fresh meat and bread, with milk in abundance, prevented them from suffering from change of diet; and constant employment made the moments fly. In the morning the young Mayburns, with Emma Deverell, read with Mr. Mayburn, and studied Hindostanee; and in the evening they walked on deck, listening to the pleasant anecdotes told by Edward Deverell, who had been a great traveller. Then they had music, and occasionally dancing; and if sometimes a light gale tossed the vessel, or swept the dinner from the table, the *contretemps* caused mirth rather than wailing. Mr. Mayburn himself, busily engaged in teaching, lecturing, or in writing and delivering simple sermons to the poor emigrants, recovered his cheerfulness, and once more began to confide in himself.

And so, in good time, they reached the Cape, and Jenny discovered that now, "when May-day was turned," it was far colder than any May-day in England, and put on her warm shawl to land with her young charge to see the town, and to look after that "feckless Ruth." It was a great

pleasure to the ardent young people to set their feet on the shores of Africa, to see the vessels of many nations crowding the harbor, and the people of many countries thronging the busy streets, to make excursions to the mountains and vine-covered hills around, and to collect the botanical treasures of a new and fertile region. Mr. Deverell was more usefully engaged with his herdsmen and shepherds, in completing his stock of cattle and sheep, and in making other purchases for his great undertaking; and thus many days were spent pleasantly and profitably.

Once more embarked, a shade of melancholy was perceptible – among the young especially – as they daily approached nearer to the shores where they must be separated; for the two families, so kindred in taste and disposition, had become truly attached during their long voyage; and notwithstanding the pleasant prospect of new scenes and pursuits, they were less cheerful every day. Even Edward Deverell, with his mind crowded with plans for clearing, draining, cultivating, sheep-shearing, and tallow-melting, felt deep regret at the prospect of separation from the lively, intelligent boys, and their amiable and sensible sister; and Margaret herself, usually so composed and contented, sighed to think she must lose the valuable counsel of Edward, the friendly protection of his mild invalid mother, and the warm affection of the sprightly Emma; and every evening, as they walked on deck, they indulged hopes, and sketched plans of meeting again.

After they had entered the Indian Ocean, they had no longer the favorable and pleasant breezes they had so long enjoyed, and while Hugh and Gerald were anxiously looking out for pirates, and talking of Malays, of prahus, and of kreeses, the sailors were watching the signs of the sky, wrestling with contrary winds, and guarding against sudden gales.

"How vexatious," said Hugh, "to be drifted about every way but the right way, and to have all this noise and splashing and dashing, and yet nothing to come of it. Now if we had a grand regular storm, and a shipwreck, and were all cast away on an uninhabited island, it would be an adventure; there would be some life in that."

"More likely there would be death in it," said Margaret. "Do not be so presumptuous, unthinking boy!"

"I should enjoy the thing amazingly myself, Margaret," said Gerald; "so don't you look grave about it. Or what would you think, Hugh, if a great fleet of prahus were to surround us and try to board us, while we, armed and ready for them, were to pour our shots into them, and put the rogues to flight. But first we would take care to capture the fierce pirate captain, and take possession of all his treasures. Then wouldn't we enter Melbourne in triumph, and have the robber hauled up to the gallows?"

"Pirates do not usually carry their treasures about in their prahus," said Arthur; "nor do I think it is at all desirable that we should encounter a piratical fleet. Where are your guns to pour down destruction on the foe, Master Gerald?"

"Oh, murder!" cried the wild boy, "wasn't I forgetting the guns! Now, what for did we come in a merchantman, as quiet and dull as a quaker? Well, well, Arty, we have plenty of brave fellows, and our own rifles and pistols, besides knives and dirks. We should defend ourselves like Britons, I'll be bound."

But the next day there was no cause to complain of dulness, for a real gale came on, and all was confusion. The wind roared, the waves rose tremendously, the ship rolled fearfully in a heavy sea, and before night the maintop-gallant was carried away. Then sail was reduced; but louder and stronger grew the tempest amid the darkness of night. Mast after mast was rent away, and the crippled vessel continued to drift helplessly for twenty-four hours, when the violence of the gale began to abate. Signals of distress were made, but long in vain. At length a vessel appeared in sight, and distinguishing their signals, made up to them. It was bound to Melbourne, which was now within a few days' sail, and, with as much kindness as difficulty, the stranger succeeded in taking the disabled *Amoor* in tow, and bringing her into port in safety.

## CHAPTER III

### **Melbourne. – The Squatters. – The Two Convicts. – A Painful Separation. – The *Golden Fairy*. – Ruth's Misfortunes. – A Nocturnal Alarm. – Ruth's Confession. – The Ship on Fire**

Weary, distressed, and suffering, the passengers on the *Amoor* gladly landed on the busy wharf, and were conveyed to Melbourne, where Mr. Mayburn and his daughter, Mrs. Deverell and Emma, were settled in a handsome hotel; but Mr. Deverell and his people, with the young Mayburns, remained at the port to land the cargo and inspect the damage done by the storm. It was soon ascertained that the loss must be considerable – a number of sheep and cattle, besides a valuable horse, had been swept into the sea; and all that had been saved were in bad condition; but it was to be hoped a short rest at Melbourne might restore these, and fit them for their long journey into the interior. Then Deverell had to search for experienced drovers to guide and assist his own men; and finally, he undertook to inquire for the first vessel to Calcutta that could accommodate Mr. Mayburn and his family, as some months must elapse before the disabled *Amoor* could be prepared to resume the voyage.

The girls looked out from the windows of the hotel with admiration at the broad and peopled streets, the handsome churches, and the European aspect of a town on the spot which, but a few years before, had been a lonely wilderness; but the pious Mr. Mayburn called them away to unite with him in thanksgiving for this their first experience of the progress of divine and social knowledge, even into the farthest regions of the earth.

"The spirit which has clothed the desert with the blessings of peace and abundance," said he, "and has planted the gospel of life in a newly-discovered world, will by God's blessing spread onwards like a fertilizing river till the word of the Lord be accomplished; for the blessed day draweth nigh when the scattered people of God shall be gathered into one fold, and the great shepherd shall say, 'Well done.'"

"God speed the day, dear papa," said Margaret. "But we must not be mere watchers; we must all be workers. Wherever we go, we shall find an untilled field, and we must all put our shoulders to the plough."

"You are right, my child," replied he, with a sigh; for though ever willing to fulfil the duty lying before him, Mr. Mayburn wanted resolution to seek out the hard work of the fervent missionary of Christianity. Evening brought to them the fatigued young men with satisfactory news. A vessel, the *Golden Fairy*, which had landed a party of gold-diggers from England, was going forward to Calcutta with sheep and merchandise. The captain, very glad to obtain passengers, readily agreed to accommodate Mr. Mayburn's family; he was to sail in three days, so no time must be lost in making preparations.

"As to my own affairs," added Edward Deverell, "I have succeeded in finding quarters for all my live-stock. The cattle, horses, pigs, and sheep were certainly somewhat unruly; but the women and children ten times more troublesome. Such an amount of bundles, bags, baskets, cradles, and cats as they have brought! How we have housed them all is a miracle; and how we are to get them up the country is a puzzling problem. Finally, I have bought a train of wagons, and engaged two gentlemen as guides, who are her majesty's prisoners, released on *parole*; in fact, two ticket-of-leave convicts."

A scream from Emma, and a groan from her mother, followed this information.

"Surely you have not been so rash, Edward," said Mrs. Deverell. "Let us make our way rather with our own people only. Consider the contamination of such society for our poor virtuous followers. Besides, it is but too probable we may be robbed and murdered by such wretches."

"It is an inevitable evil, mother," answered Edward, "for we cannot attempt the journey without guidance. These men have behaved well since their transportation; they are brothers – poachers – who, like many in their situation, have erred rather through ignorance and weakness than depravity. At least, such is the report of the overlooker who recommended them. They have been out before in the interior with squatters, and know the valleys of the Murray and the Darling, beyond which our ultra-frontier tract is spread. I have been to the Colonial Office, and have obtained the necessary forms for taking possession of fifty thousand acres of *waste land*, as it is called, for a long lease of years. And now, mother, we are, according to the legalized and elegant form, *squatters*."

"*Colonists*, my son; I cannot bear the strange, uncouth word *squatters*," said Mrs. Deverell.

"Nevertheless, mamma," said Edward, laughing, "it is official language. We may call ourselves, if we choose, landed gentry; but the world of Australia will rank us only as part of the *squattocracy*."

"Am I a squatter?" asked little Emma, in dismay; and great was the mirth of her favorite friends, Hugh and Gerald, when Emma was pronounced to be legally a squatter.

Early next morning the two convict guides were admitted to receive their final directions from Mr. Deverell, and were regarded with some uneasiness and much curiosity. One was a rough country lad, dressed in a fustian suit and a fur cap, rude in manner, but of pleasing, open countenance: the other, who was older, had a shabby-genteel appearance; he had discarded his convict's habit, and had expended the earnest-money received from Mr. Deverell in an old suit of black clothes, and a very bad English hat, which he had placed on his head in a jaunty style.

"Please to show me your district by map, sir," said he, bowing at the same time in a very conceited manner to the ladies. "You must look to me, *cartee blank*, sir; for you see, sir, my brother is not intelligible; he has not had the blessing of eddication."

"And your education, my friend," said Edward Deverell, "has not been a blessing to you, I fear. Have you not rather turned it to evil?"

"Quite the *contrairy*, sir," said the man. "I look forrard to its helping me up-hill in this free country. Why, sir, a man born anunder an hedge may top over quality and ride in his carriage here, if he can only come round his parts of speech rightly. But Davy will stick where he is, for he never could tell an X from an *anpassy*."

"It's all true," said the rough rustic, "I'se no scholar like Bill, master, but I'se do my best for ye, and glad to get out from amang yon rogues. It's hard for a lad to be sorted with such company for just sniggling a hare."

"*Ensnaring*, David," said his brother, pompously; "*sniggling* is colloquial."

"Sniggling, you know, Bill," answered David, "our lads call it in t' north country; and little harm is there in't I say, that they should send a poor lad amang thieves and cut-throats. But, please God, I'se out of their way, and it will be mony a day afore I come nigh them again."

"You seem a simple, though ignorant youth," said Mr. Mayburn, "and I cannot understand how it happened you were so severely punished for poaching; though doubtless it is an offence against the law."

Bill laughed contemptuously as he replied for his brother, – "You see, sir, Davy was always a fool, or we need not both have been expostulated to this place. Our master always called him David Simple, and sure enough, if it had not been for his downright idiosyncrasy, we might have got clear off; but nothing would serve him but to show fight."

"Now, just be quiet, Bill, man," said David; "it was for thee I stood out. You'se hear all, master; I'se tell t' truth. Bill had his gun, and brought down a few birds, and I were knocking a few rabbits over, and it chanced to be a moonshiny night, when out pops a keeper, and fells Bill down with a club; and I heard him shout out to me, as how his arm was broken. That aggravated me bitter, and up I ran,

and leathered t' fellow well with my stick. Then Bill got up and ran off, but I was fain to stop, and give t' keeper a hiding; but he roared out so loud that two more chaps came up, and first took me, and then went off after Bill. When they got to our lodging, he made as how he knew nought about it, but they found birds and his gun underneath t' bed; and there was his arm all black and blue, but not broken, as he said. So off they carried us to prison, and Bill wanted me to say as how he that were with me were Jack Kay, an auld poacher; but I couldn't swear away a man's *charackter*, and t' keeper took his oath Bill wanted to shut him, and I were no better; so they sent us both over t' water. It's a thousand pities for Bill, for he's a scholar, cute as he is about sniggling."

David was the favorite of the family, who did not admire the flowery language and cunning look of *cute* Bill; but among a horde of lawless men, Edward Deverell congratulated himself that he had been fortunate enough to obtain two men less depraved than might have been expected.

It was with a sinking heart, oppressed with strange forebodings, that Margaret looked on the large, dark, dirty and gloomy ship honored by the inappropriate name of the *Golden Fairy*. She grieved for the separation from the new friends that the whole family had learned to love so well, and she shrunk from the prospect of unknown difficulties and dangers, when all decision and responsibility would be thrown upon her, from the helpless character of her beloved but irresolute parent. During the first voyage, the powerful and energetic character of Edward Deverell had swayed the judgment of Mr. Mayburn; but in future, Margaret felt she could only look to her young brother Arthur for aid.

"Yet have I not a greater aid?" she repeated to herself. "Forgive me, my heavenly Father! Thou art my friend and my counsellor! Let me ever turn to Thee in my trials, and I must be in safety." And thus, with a heart ever recognizing the presence and relying on the love of a watchful God, Margaret Mayburn walked on her way steadily and fearlessly.

The parting of the two families was very painful, yet they cheered themselves with the hope so unquenchable in the young. They talked confidently of their future meeting, the boys traced over and over again on the map the route they proposed to take to Daisy Grange; and, but for Margaret's firmness, even Mr. Mayburn, at the last moment, would have relinquished his hopes of spreading the gospel in the East, to follow the new colonists into the dreary untrodden deserts.

There was an appearance of neglect and disorder in the *Golden Fairy* that was repugnant to the taste of the Mayburns, after being accustomed to the trim, orderly arrangements of the *Amoor*; Edward Deverell pointed out to Captain Markham several necessary changes which must be made for the comfort of passengers who paid him so handsomely, and was annoyed to perceive that his suggestions were received slightly and almost contemptuously. He himself procured more conveniences for the cabin of his friends, and he besought Margaret and Arthur to be firm and determined with Markham, who seemed careless, and, he suspected, addicted to drinking. Now, when too late, he regretted that he had not induced the family to remain at Melbourne for the sailing of the mail packet; but Arthur had been anxious for his father to hasten to his mission, lest his vacillating nature should lead him to relinquish it. Besides which, the throng of gold-diggers made the cost of living at Melbourne a serious consideration.

Finally, with tears and sorrowful hearts, the friends took leave of each other, with the remote chance that favorable circumstances might bring them together again; and it was not till the fair sunny shores of Australia had faded from their sight, that the voyagers retired to their cabin to endeavor to resign themselves to their changed circumstances.

The want of order in their new home was particularly trying to the scarcely-reclaimed Ruth. She had learned to be useful among the emigrant women in the neatly-ordered *Amoor*; but she soon relapsed into her usual heedless habits, amidst the scattered packages and general confusion in the *Golden Fairy*. She stumbled over boxes which were not stowed in their proper places, she was thrown down by some terrified sheep that had escaped from its pen, she trod to death some rambling chicken that had found its way into the cabins, or she destroyed the cups and plates by officiously spreading the table in the midst of a gale, though she had been warned of the consequences.

"Margaret," said Mr. Mayburn, who had been uneasily watching the girl's unlucky movements, "I am of opinion that poor Ruth should be subjected to some restraint I observe that the inevitable result of her undertakings is destruction. She is a curious study; nor can I solve the mystery why she should always do wrong when she designs to do right I am alarmed, Margaret; I eat my food in terror, lest she should have poured laudanum into the curry, or scattered arsenic over the pudding."

"Have no fear, papa," answered Margaret. "Ruth is never intrusted with culinary preparations: the cook is too cross to allow her to touch any of his dishes, nor has she the means of procuring any of those dreaded poisons. I do not fear that she will harm any one but herself with her heedlessness; but, poor girl, she is covered with bruises and cuts from falls. Nor is she entirely to blame, for the cabins are filled up with packages which Arthur says ought to be stowed in the hold. We must, however, make up our minds to be inconvenienced for the short time I trust we shall be shut up in this prison."

"That I could do, my child," answered he; "but I fear Markham is not a man of understanding to depend on in emergency. This is a sea of perils, of storms and pirates. What would become of us if any of these dangers assailed us? Arthur, you look disturbed; you think with me, that Markham is unfit for his situation."

"Truly, papa, I have some doubts of him," replied Arthur. "I think he must be an experienced sailor, for he has made this voyage many times; and I should not have lost confidence in him, if I had not actually seen him intoxicated. And I fear he is utterly unprincipled, for he wanted us to join him in his nightly revels. Now, Margaret, if a storm should come on in the night, I feel assured that he would be incapable of giving orders."

"And a pretty set of queer-looking boys he has fished up at Melbourne," said Gerald, "to man the ugly ship. Hugh and I have marked our men, and haven't they *rogue* written on their black brows!"

"But, Gerald, is it not somewhat unkind to form so hasty a judgment?" said Margaret. "These sailors are strangers; why do you class them as rogues?"

"Because, Meggie," said Hugh, "Gerald saw with his own eyes a lot of fellows in their yellow convict dress brought up for Markham to choose a crew from, for all his own men had deserted to go to the diggings. And we both agree that he must have picked out the most villanous-looking of the lot. Now, just come up with us, Meggie, and take a look at the fellows, and you shall hear what Jack says."

Margaret went on deck with her brothers, to walk round the disorderly place; and, under the pretext of examining the various parts of the ship, she carefully marked the faces of the men she encountered, and could not deny that they were not only coarse and bold, but that most of them had the fierce, sinister, lowering expression which usually distinguishes the convict. She stopped to speak to Jack, who was busily engaged finishing a model he had begun at Melbourne, of one of the light-hung, commodious, broad-wheeled travelling wagons Mr. Deverell had bought at that place.

"I could easily make one for you, Miss Margaret," said Jack, "if it were needed; but they tell me you'll want no wheeled-carriages yonder. More's the pity. I wish master had been persuaded to stay with Mr. Deverell. I don't half like this, for, oh! Miss Margaret," added he, looking around, "we've got among a bad lot."

"What have we to fear, Jack?" asked she, pale with fear.

"Don't be down-hearted, miss," said the lad; "but I doubt we may have awkward work; for when Captain Markham is in his cups, everybody's master. But please God to send us fair winds, we shall soon get through the voyage."

"We must pray for His help, Jack," said Margaret; "and let us avoid these men as much as possible. You, Jack, as well as my brothers, must remain below; better endure confinement than encounter wickedness."

"And please, Miss Margaret," continued Jack, "would you ask Mrs. Wilson to mind and keep Ruth close; for these saucy fellows amuse themselves with sending her on some foolish errand, and getting her into mischief. I near had a fight with that big brute, the mate, for pitching her over a hencoop; but Wilkins, that little sharp fellow at the masthead, got me away."

Margaret and Arthur had many long and serious conversations on their uncomfortable position, particularly when their voyage was retarded by the contrary winds of that uncertain sea. Then the family secluded themselves in the two crowded cabins appropriated to their use, and endeavored, by prayer and regulation of the mind, to prepare themselves for the dangers into which such an ill-ruled vessel might be hurried.

After a day of great vexation, occasioned by the carelessness of Ruth, who had, by some mischievous device of the sailors, let all the poultry loose, and had been compelled by the violent captain to hunt them up from every corner of the vessel, the girl had been summoned before Margaret and Jenny, to be rebuked for her thoughtless conduct. She wept, and promised to improve, and was sent to her berth, Nurse declaring that she had made up her mind never to lose sight of her all the next day. Then, after meeting for prayers in Mr. Mayburn's cabin, they returned, to seek such repose as their close, uncomfortable berths afforded.

It might have been two or three hours after this, when Margaret awoke with a strange feeling of oppression and fear, which she vainly attempted to shake off. At length, she called out from her berth, "Nurse, are you awake? Will you go on deck with me for a few minutes? I long for the refreshment of the night air, for the cabin is more suffocating than usual to-night. Surely a storm must be at hand, for the air is positively scorching."

Jenny yawned and murmured, till at length, becoming aware of the request of her young mistress, she scrambled from her awkward berth; but no sooner was she on her feet, than, thoroughly awakened, she exclaimed, "God have mercy on us! for there must be something on fire. I smell and feel it must be so!"

Margaret sprang up, trembling in every limb, but firm in heart, to rush through the door that separated the cabins, and arouse her father and brothers. Jenny, in the mean time, opened the outer door, and then the smell of burning wood was plainly perceptible. While Mr. Mayburn and his sons hastily got ready, Margaret proceeded to the cabin of Capt. Markham, and knocked loudly in her fright, crying out almost unconsciously as she knocked, "Fire! fire!"

"Who calls fire?" cried Markham, with a bitter oath. "Who dares to say that?" and his head appeared from the cabin door. His voice was husky and broken, and Margaret feared he was intoxicated and might not comprehend her, as she rapidly narrated her observations and her fears. Deep and horrible were the curses of the wicked man, as he staggered forward, screaming and yelling for the watch. That there was any watch in this disorderly establishment, Margaret doubted. She hurried back to her father; and they were soon alarmed by the sounds of dreadful curses, the trampling of many feet, the ringing of bells, and the cries of the disturbed and terrified sheep. Arthur and Hugh were sent up to ascertain the fact of danger, and they found the lazy crew effectually roused to action; lanterns were flying about in different directions; and at length the fatal cry was heard, "Fire in the after-hold!"

## CHAPTER IV

### **Insubordination of the Sailors. – Rapid Progress of the Fire. – The Boats lowered. – Ruth's Prize. – A Man saved. – Black Peter. – The Adventure of a Reprobate Crew. – A Dangerous Comrade**

Then the harsh voice of Markham was heard pouring out orders, loud, but almost inarticulate with rage and drunkenness; while, regardless of his awful situation, with fearful blasphemy he imprecated curses on the negligence which had caused the accident, and on the tardiness of action among his insubordinate crew. At length the fire-engine was got to work; lengths of leather hose were stretched down to the burning hold; buckets were rapidly passed from hand to hand; and the splashing of water was followed by the hissing of the flames.

The four young men joined the sailors and worked manfully at the engine or with buckets, while Mr. Mayburn, alternately trembling, weeping, and despairing, and then, in earnest prayer, regaining his firmness and resignation, occupied the care and attention of Margaret almost entirely. Jenny, with practical good sense, was collecting the most valuable part of their property.

"If we be not burnt to death first, Miss Marget," she said; "Jack tells me we shall be took off in boats, God help us! so it's time to be making ready. Come, lass!" to Ruth, "and tie this bag. What ails ye, you simpleton? What are you staring round in that fashion for?"

Ruth was gazing about with a wild expression of terror in her eyes, and, unmindful of the injunctions of Mrs. Wilson, she suddenly threw down the bag, and fell on her knees before Mr. Mayburn, crying out, "Ah, master, will they hang me? I didn't think it would burn us all alive! I couldn't find it again, try all I would."

"Unfortunate girl," said Mr. Mayburn, "have you lost your senses, or what have you done? Speak the truth."

"I will tell truth, master," sobbed the girl. "It was when I were lating up them bonnie chickens as had got out, and big Peter tied a rope across in yon passage for me to tummel ower, and I rolled down t' ladder into that big, dark place where they keep great bales and barrels, and all manners of things; my lantern was broken and my candle was lost. I got mysel' gathered up, and I groped about for t' candle, but I couldn't find it, and I got sadly flayed in that dark hole, so I climbed up and said nought to nobody; but, oh, master, I couldn't get to sleep, for it came into my head, may be my candle might have set some of them bundles in a low, and we might all be burned in our beds, and me not saying a word alike, for fear."

"God forgive you, Ruth," said her master. "Pray for mercy; and if it please Him to save us in this fearful hour of peril, never forget the misery and destruction your carelessness has caused."

The penitent and affrighted girl shook in every limb, and Margaret kindly soothed and prayed with her till she calmed her agitation. Then the young and thoughtful daughter said, —

"Papa, we must not remain inclosed in this suffocating cabin. Let us go on deck, and if no other hope remains, we will demand a boat, that we may escape from a horrible death."

"Lead the way, my child," said Mr. Mayburn, "and I will follow you, as I ever do; for I feel utterly helpless alone."

They proceeded to the deck, followed by Jenny and Ruth loaded with packages; and when they reached the scene of terror and confusion, they were embarrassed among piles of boxes, barrels, and bales, which were continually drawn up from below, the bales which were blazing being immediately thrown overboard.

By the light of the torches, Margaret discovered among the throng her young brothers, busily employed in hauling ropes and carrying buckets; they were heated with exertion and blackened with smoke. O'Brien had even got his hair singed with the flames. Still untired, they would have continued their efforts, but all seemed ineffectual, from the total want of subordination and unanimity among the sailors. Mr. Mayburn walked up to Captain Markham, who stood aloof from the rest, in a perfect state of frenzy, from fear, anger, and intoxication. He continued to shout aloud contradictory and absurd orders, which were utterly unheeded by the lawless crew; each man doing what he chose, and nothing being done effectually.

"The fire is certainly progressing, Captain Markham," said Mr. Mayburn. "Let me entreat you to issue orders for some means of providing for the safety of so many human beings all unfit for death. We, who are your passengers, demand the means of escape."

With a fearful oath, the wretch said his passengers might care for themselves; he had enough to do to save his ship; and save it he would, if it cost him half the crew.

"I'll pitch the dogs into the fire," said he, "if they do not soon extinguish it; and not a man shall leave the *Golden Fairy* living."

"There's not many will do that," cried the audacious mate, "if they do not look sharp. The fire has just reached the tallow hogsheads, man, and where will your ship be then? Come along, lads, we can do no more; so let every fellow lay his hands on what he likes best, and lower the boats now or never."

The call was readily responded to, in spite of the threats of the infuriated captain; and though the flames were now heard roaring below, and were even visible in some parts, the after-deck was still uninjured; and from thence the boats were lowered. Arthur and Jack went up to the men to request that a boat, or at all events seats in one of the boats, might be given to their party, who would be willing to reward the men for any trouble they occasioned. The insolent mate, who seemed to have assumed the command of the rest, laughed at the request.

"Charity begins at home!" cried he. "We have no places to spare. Come on, my lads! lower the biscuit and the brandy casks. I'll manage the strong box. Out of my way, gentry. If you say another word we'll pitch you all into the sea – men and women."

"There's no hope of our getting a boat to ourselves, Mr. Arthur," said Jack, "for they 're all afloat now, and they'll soon have them off; so I would say, if you'd help a bit, we should set about getting up a raft as fast as we can – here are plenty of spare spars about."

When Markham saw the men preparing to forsake the vessel, he became more furious than ever, and seizing the mate by the collar, he swore he would have him put in irons. But his attempts were useless against the powerful villain, who flung him on one side like a noxious reptile; and the rest of the remorseless wretches, to rid themselves at once of the opposition of the violent drunkard, hurled him down into the flames, which were already bursting through the crevices of the deck.

"I can't stand that," cried Wilkins, one of the sailors, coming up to Jack; "I'se not the chap to turn my back on my comrades; but I've never committed wilful murder, and I'll just cut away from a gang of such deep-dyed rogues, and join ye, my honest fellow. Come, I'se ready to lend a hand."

A helping hand was truly desirable in their extremity of distress; but Mr. Mayburn shrank from the fierce, rough aspect of the convict sailor, and besought Arthur, in a low tone, to reject any association with crime and infamy.

"Be satisfied, my dear father," answered he, "I will do nothing unadvisedly; but if this man shrinks from evil and turns to good, how shall we excuse ourselves if we force him back to destruction? Besides, it is now too late; see, the first boat has already deserted the ship."

With loud cheers, the most daring of the crew headed by the mate, rowed off in the long boat, and were soon lost in the darkness that shrouded all except the fearful space around the burning ship. The second boat followed, the hardened men turning a deaf ear to the entreaties of the passengers

whom they had abandoned on the wreck. They refused even to aid them in lowering their hastily-constructed and unsafe raft, but laughed and sneered at the rude workmanship.

But the flames, fed by the hogsheds of tallow in the hold, now blazed up through the cabin windows, and bursting through the decks, ran along with fatal rapidity, momentarily threatening the distressed family with a dreadful fate. It was now that the cool prudence and skill of their faithful friend Jack rescued them. His observing eye had noted the means adopted by the sailors; he had tools and appliances; he arranged and divided the labor, of which even the women had their share; and the rude raft was at length successfully lowered. A few necessaries were hastily thrown upon it, including a cask of biscuit and one of water, which Wilkins at great hazard had obtained; he had also brought up a small barrel of rum, but Arthur peremptorily refused to take it, and, to end all discussion, flung it into the sea, and firmly told Wilkins, he would rather leave him to perish on the burning ship, than carry him away with such a temptation to evil.

The man grumbled unavailingly, but at last returned to his duty. Nothing more could be secured, except a few ropes, and spars, with some tools to repair the raft. Then a spare sail was cast over the stowage, and, one after another, Mr. Mayburn and the trembling women were let down; the active boys quickly followed. Jack and Wilkins were the last to descend from their perilous position, where they had been so surrounded by the flames, now crawling up the masts, that Margaret dreaded every moment they should fall victims; but they happily alighted on the lumbering raft in safety. Then oars were taken up, and no time was lost in pushing off as far as possible from the ill-fated *Golden Fairy*; nor did they pause even to look round till they were at a safe distance, when they stood off for a few minutes to contemplate the splendid and frightful spectacle.

Wilkins now confessed to them that there were some barrels of gunpowder concealed in the vessel, which the reckless sailors had smuggled from Melbourne for their own purposes; for it had been their fixed intention, at a favorable opportunity, to murder the captain and passengers, or land them on some desert island; and to take possession of the ship for piratical enterprises in the Indian Ocean. The knowledge that this powder was in the ship had hastened their flight from the certain consequences, and Wilkins was surprised that the catastrophe had been so long averted. But now, as they watched the blackened ribs of the vessel, through which the intense flame glowed, while clouds of smoke, myriads of sparks, and burning flakes, rose from the wreck, a loud explosion almost deafened them; another and another succeeded; then blazed up a mass of flame, which seemed to rise to the very clouds for a few minutes, followed by utter darkness and silence.

"May God, in his infinite mercy, still preserve the weak creatures he has so miraculously delivered," said Mr. Mayburn, devoutly. "We were face to face with death, and never, my children, can the crackling, roaring sound of that fierce and unconquerable conflagration fade from my recollection. We had not the consolation of the martyrs who suffered for the faith, and who could look on the flames as the brief path to eternal glory. We were summoned in the midst of life's cares and frailties, unwillingly, fearfully, to be dragged to doom; and He spared us, that we might better prepare to appear before His tribunal. Blessed forever be His holy name!"

Solemnly and earnestly rose the Amen from the rescued. Even the hardened convict lowered his voice as he said, with levity, to Jack, "That was a canny bit prayer; will 'it help us ony, think ye?"

"Yes, Wilkins," said Jack, "I do believe that God never fails to help them who pray to Him. And some day, my man, you will be glad to believe it too."

Wilkins said no more, but he often remembered the new, strange words he had heard poured out amidst that horror of darkness.

"Now, Captain Arthur," cried out Hugh, "please to say where we are, and whither we are to go?"

"I wish I could determine where we are," answered Arthur; "but we have been so tossed about for the last two days, that I have no idea of our position. Certainly we are out of our regular course."

"If Bully Dan were right," said Wilkins, "we ought to be now a good bit north of Swan River, and among islands and reefs puzzling enough at noonday; and in this black darkness it's odd that we ever see land again. If any on ye had thought of an anchor, we might have laid off till day."

There was nothing but patience and resignation for the voyagers. The sea was less agitated than it had been during the day, and they drifted steadily over the waves; but in what direction they could not determine; for such was the confusion of their embarkation, and such the darkness that enveloped them, that no one could pronounce from what point the wind was blowing.

"What is that fluttering sound I hear?" asked Mr. Mayburn, in a voice of alarm.

A moment's silence followed, then every one distinctly heard the fluttering. At length Ruth said, "Oh! if you please, master, it was only me. I couldn't bide that they should be burned alive, bonnie things; it were not their fault! It's them bits of chickens as I were hunting up when all this bad work were done – God forgive me! – and I gathered them into a basket; and if ye please, Miss Marget, dinnot let them be eaten, they're so bonnie."

Margaret readily granted the noisy little prisoners their life, and applauded the humanity of Ruth, whose struggles to keep her restless charge in order created some mirth, and diverted them for a time from the contemplation of their own troubles.

But another sound was now heard above the monotonous rumbling of the unquiet ocean. It was surely, they thought, a human cry! It was again repeated; and Wilkins said very coolly, "It'll be some of our chaps. Like enough they'll have capsized yon big crazy boat. They'd a keg of brandy to fight about; and I'll be bound they'd never settle as long as there were a drop left in't."

"Can we not show them a light?" said Mr. Mayburn: "that was a cry of distress, and humanity calls on us to aid them."

"There's no room here for any more hands," muttered Wilkins. "Drunken rogues! they'd kick these few shaking clogs to bits in no time: and then where are we?"

"Nevertheless, Margaret, we must do our duty. Arthur, what do you say?" asked Mr. Mayburn anxiously.

A loud and dismal scream, at no great distance, decided the question without further discussion. Gerald produced a match-box; and though the wind had got up rather boisterously, they succeeded in lighting and displaying a long splinter of wood. Then a voice was heard to cry, "Help! help!" and Wilkins, with a suppressed curse, said, "It's that desp'rate rogue, Black Peter, and no mistake. Better let him drown, I tell ye, comrades; but I've heard 'em say, water won't haud him. They're all alike bad dogs to let loose among us; they've guns and powder, and they're up to ony sort of bloody work."

Mr. Mayburn groaned at this speech, and said, "What shall we do, Arthur? – we are wholly defenceless against those bad men."

"Don't you think of that, sir," said O'Brien; "Hugh and I looked after that. We brought off a pair of first-rate rifles, with lots of powder and shot. We are the boys to manage the defences. We left the nautical matters to our captain, Arthur; Jack sought up the spars and hammers, and such matters; and Margaret did the commissariat. Division of labor, you see, sir – all regular."

"I did not think your giddy brain could have arranged so well," said Mr. Mayburn: "I am ashamed to say I have not been so thoughtful."

"No, no, papa," said Hugh; "Gerald is taking more credit than is due to us. It was Margaret who arranged what each should do, and allowed us to add to our duties as we chose; in consequence of which, you see, Gerald and I thought of destroying life, and Ruth of preserving it."

While thus talking, the young rowers had been endeavoring laboriously to force the heavy raft, against the wind, towards the spot from whence the cries seemed to proceed. The darkness was so intense that it was in vain the eye sought to penetrate it; but the cry, still heard at intervals, seemed to approach nearer, probably directed by the light. Still it was not without an involuntary shudder, and a half-uttered shriek, that they felt and saw a hand grasp the raft, and heard a hoarse voice demand help. This was immediately given; Arthur and Jack, with much difficulty, drew upon the raft the almost

lifeless form of a tall, powerful man, who lay gasping many minutes before he was able to reply to the anxious inquiries of his preservers if any of his companions yet survived.

"Every rogue among 'em gone to his reckoning," said he, with a diabolical laugh. "A good riddance! If we'd only saved the gold and the brandy! But hand me a sup of something, good folks."

"We have nothing but water," said Arthur gravely.

The man made a wry face, and said, "I've had more nor enough of that. Well, then, what are ye bound after in this queer craft? It'll not stand much weather, I take it. And," with an oath, "Wilkins, man, how came you to drop in among these saints?"

Wilkins gave the man a fiery glance, as he answered, "It were a bit safer to-night among saints nor among sinners, it's like; and I guess ye were thinking so a bit sin' yersel'."

"Never heed that that's gone, man," said the careless villain: "I'm in as good a place as they are now."

"Ay, Peter," said Wilkins, "it's all true as how neither fire nor water will touch thee. We'se see what thou was born to."

"Keep a civil tongue in thy head," replied Peter, "for thou and me must chum together, and see what we can pick up."

"What was the cause of your accident, unhappy man?" said Mr. Mayburn, coming up to him.

"None so unhappy now," answered the surly fellow; "better off nor I have been for a few years past, if it were not for want of brandy. I'se free and idle, and can have plenty of grub, I reckon," looking at the casks; "so I'se do now. We might have kept together; but, ye see, we began ower soon with our brandy, and had only one drinking-cup among us, and everybody wanted it first; and so we chaps got to words, and then to hard hits, and then out came our knives. We were badly crowded; and, somehow, in our scrimmage, we all fell atop of one another, and capsized our boat, and away we all went down. Then, when we came up, such cursing and yelling never was heard on earth or sea, and, dark as it was, none could catch hold on aught to save him. It was soon settled, however; for all our chaps were over far gone in drink to help themselves, and they went down, shouting out, one after another. I had the luck to catch hold of the brandy-keg, and I took care to keep hold; but I could not stop it from leaking, and it vexed me sore that so much good liquor should be made into salt-water grog, and no time to get a sup. I shouted as loud as I could, and let myself float, till I got sight of your signal, and then I thought there was a bit of a chance; so I managed to swim a few strokes, keeping one hand on my barrel; but I made little way, if the sea and the wind hadn't brought me right up to you. When my barrel bumped again the raft, I lost hold, and I hardly know how it was I clutched the spars; but here I be snug and safe in harbor."

"Thank God for your preservation, reckless man," said Mr. Mayburn. "He, who is all mercy to His sinful creatures, has granted you a respite, that you may learn to know and serve Him. Cast not away the precious boon, but in this awful hour, turn to Him, repent, and pray."

The good man knelt down beside the reprobate, and offered up an earnest prayer for the wretched sinner, who was sound asleep before Mr. Mayburn had concluded; and it was with a sigh he turned from the man, sorrowful, but not hopeless.

## CHAPTER V

### **Afloat on an Unknown Sea. – The insubordinate Sailor. – The Coral Reefs. – An Island in view. – The Perilous Landing. – Peter's Rebellion. – The First Night on Shore. – Ruth among the Crockery. – A valuable Prize. – The March from the First Encampment**

As the morning light dawned on the distressed voyagers, they became aware of their perilous situation. Around them lay the wide restless ocean, now agitated by a south-west wind, which drove them onward, washed and drenched by the waves, which threatened destruction to their frail vessel, in the midst of which the little knot of united friends were now gathered, their unwelcome guest still lying asleep apart from them. As soon as the light permitted him, Jack began steadily and carefully to repair and strengthen the raft. The spare spars he now lashed round to form a sort of gunwale, to protect them from the spray; and after taking out a supply of biscuit for use, he nailed over the whole of the packages the large sail they had brought away, to steady and preserve them from any injury from the waves.

The man they had rescued from death now awoke, and joined the rest: he was a tall, powerful, savage-looking man, still wearing the convict uniform, so offensive to the taste of the civilized; and his manners were rude and insolent.

"Have you no better prog than this poor stuff?" said he, as his portion of biscuit and cup of water were offered to him. "The Queen allows us better rations nor this, after your grand laws have made us out to be rogues."

"You fare as we do," answered Arthur, mildly. "As long as we have biscuit, you are welcome to share it. We make no distinctions in our common distress."

"You were a pack of fools," said the man, "not to bring away something worth freightage, when you had space enough. Had you sense to fetch a compass?"

"We had no opportunity to secure chart or compass," replied Arthur. "Besides, we were too thankful for the means God gave us to save our lives, to have many thoughts or cares about where we should go. We are in His hands, and I trust, by his mercy, may reach some safe harbor."

"It's as well to tell you beforehand," said the sailor, "that you'd better not get it into your heads that you are going to give me up to hard labor and irons again. Wherever I set my foot on land I mean to be my own master, and the first among you that peaches on me shall rue it." Here the man drew from his breast a brace of pistols, and added, – "You see I managed to keep my barkers safe. What would you say, man, to a ball right through your ugly head?" – and he presented the muzzle of the pistol to Wilkins, who shrank behind Arthur.

"You must mean that threat for a jest, Peter," said Arthur, in a tone of displeasure. "If you are in earnest, I can only remind you that we also have arms. I am commander here, and the first man on the raft that shows any signs of insubordination, I shall certainly shoot dead."

Peter stared scornfully and vindictively at Arthur, but seeing his unmoved countenance, he turned off with a sort of laugh, and withdrew to the stern of the raft.

"What a capital fellow Arty is, Hugh!" whispered Gerald. "See how he has cowed that huge bully. Are we not proud of our captain?"

Towards noon the heat of the sun became excessive, and was most distressing to the voyagers exposed to its beams; Margaret and her father especially suffered from it, till Jack contrived an ingenious canopy for them by raising some spars, over which he spread the boat-cloaks, which the boys had fortunately worn to protect them from the flames in the burning ship. As evening came on,

the wind increased alarmingly, and they looked round anxiously to obtain some idea of their position, till at last Wilkins pointed out some hazy dots on the wide ocean desert, which he pronounced to be small islands.

"O Arthur," said Margaret, "if it be possible, let us land on an island; I long to feel my feet on firm ground. Have you any idea what islands these are?"

"I ken'em," said Wilkins, "and can tell ye they're all alike quite dissolute."

"Then I pray, Arthur," said Mr. Mayburn, "that we may avoid them. We had better continue to float on the solitude of the ocean, than seek the haunts of the wicked."

The boys laughed; they understood better than their father the peculiarities of Wilkins's language, and Arthur said, – "I have read, papa, that these north-western islands of Australia are generally small, barren, and uninhabited. If we could safely land on one of them, it would be desirable, that we might rest and improve our raft before we sought the mainland; but I fear they will be difficult of approach, from the coral reefs that surround them."

"Which I long to behold, Arthur," said Mr. Mayburn; "and I beseech you to endeavor to reach one of these reefs. I have ever desired to look upon the work of those toiling, wonderful insects; minute agents of the Omniscent for mighty purposes, laboring incessantly to carry out the plans of creative wisdom.

'As the kings of the cloud-crowned pyramid  
Their noteless bones in oblivion hid,  
They slumber unmarked 'mid the desolate main,  
While the wonder and pride of their works remain."

Wilkins stared at the enthusiastic naturalist, and, turning to Arthur, said, "Does he want us to land among them reefs, think ye? A bonnie clash we should have with this log float. If we'd had a few of them bark boats as them black fellows has up country, we might have made a shift; but, ye see," indicating the fair sex by a finger pointed towards them, "they'd make no hand of swimming among breakers."

"Indeed, they would not," answered Arthur; "we must contrive some safer method for them, Wilkins. But if we could, by using our oars, draw near to these isles, I should like to inspect them."

"Ye cannot suspect 'em, sir," answered Wilkins, "without ye were right atop on 'em. Why, they're all dry and bare, and clear of aught but a few birds but I'se willing to use an oar, if ye'd like to see 'em."

It was hard work rowing that heavy raft, and the ungrateful Peter refused to assist, but sat apart, smoking cigars, of which, it appeared, he had contrived to bring a box about his person; still before night they had approached within a mile of a rocky island. Then the sudden darkness of a tropical region surprised them, and compelled them to wait for day, uneasy at the dangerous proximity of the coast, towards which, Wilkins pointed out, a current seemed to be urging them.

"We must have all hands at work, captain," said he, "to keep off them ugly rocks. Come, Peter, man, take up an oar."

"Not I," said the savage, "I'se take a snooze; and when we're drifted a bit nigher hand, rouse me up, and I'll make a swim to shore. I've no mind for another capsizesize."

It was a service of toil and danger, and the active young men plied the oars vigorously for hours, trusting they were standing safely off the dangerous reefs, till at last, worn out with fatigue, one after another they dropped asleep.

Jack and Wilkins held out till a pale light showed them breakers close at hand, and they felt the current carrying them into the danger. It was a moment of deep anxiety. "See," said Wilkins, "yon uncovered reef – let's try to get a bit nigher to it; then we'll knot a rope to our raft, and I'll swim off and find a way to moor it. If three on us were atop on yon reef we might haul up t' rest on 'em."

All the youths were now roused, and anxious to share this service of peril, for all could swim: but Wilkins was strong, and the most experienced; so while he tied one end of the rope round him, Arthur and Jack secured the other end to the raft, and then they continued to hold off against the current as they watched the bold swimmer till they saw him standing safely on the dry reef. In five minutes more they felt, by the strain, that the rope was fast to the rock. Then Arthur went off with a second rope, secured from danger by having the first to hold by if necessary. When he reached Will, he found the reef was broader and safer than he had dared to hope, while beyond it the water was not more than a foot deep to a shingly beach.

"If we had 'em all here, ye see," said Wilkins, "they could easy wade out."

"Then what shall we do, Wilkins? what is our next step?" asked Arthur.

"We must get more hands," answered he. "And here's a canny opening, clear of breakers; we'll try to bring her in here."

Then, after he had, with sailor's skill, secured the ropes to two huge fragments of rock, he continued, – "Now, let's be off again, and see how we can manage it. If we could get that big lubberly Black Peter to lend a hand, he's a powerful chap at a tug."

"Then he shall work or starve," said Arthur, firmly.

"That's the text, captain; stick to that," said Wilkins, as they plunged into the water again.

Their return to the raft was easier than they had expected, for the tide was ebbing, and already some of the rocks were bare which an hour before had been covered with breakers; besides, the stretched ropes afforded a rest for the hands when they needed it. Arthur explained his plan to his friends on the raft, and called on all hands to aid in propelling or hauling the raft towards the smooth opening in the reef.

"You must assist in hauling the ropes," said Arthur to Peter.

The man swore violently that he would never submit to be ordered by a boy.

"I have the management of the party," answered Arthur, "and all are willing to obey me except you. Take your choice: if you refuse to share the work, most assuredly you shall not share the rations."

The wretch darted a furious glance at Arthur, and put his hand into his breast; but observing the little band had their eyes on him, he muttered with a sneer, "A parcel of fools!" and plunged after Wilkins and Arthur to the reef, to tug at the ropes.

The raft had drifted among scattered rocks, and there was much difficulty in preventing it from being dashed against them; but those left upon it used long poles to push off from these dangers, while the men on the reef continued to haul the ropes, in hopes of drawing the raft to the opening they wished it to enter, belaying the rope anew as they gained a few yards. Slowly and painfully the work progressed; sometimes they snatched a moment for food and rest; sometimes the faint-hearted threw down an oar or pole, as a strong wave cast them back, after they hoped they had made some way.

At length, wedged between two reefs that ran out to sea, they found they could make no further progress, though there was yet a hundred yards of deep water between the raft and the dry rocks to which the ropes were attached.

When Arthur saw this, he called out, "Haul taught and belay the ropes; and now, how shall we convey the weak to the shore, Wilkins?"

"Bad job!" growled he. "We might swim out and trail 'em after us; but likely they'd be flayed."

"Halloo! Arthur," called out Hugh, "come over and see what we are about."

When Arthur had reached the raft, he saw that Jack, with the help of the boys, had lashed together three or four light spars to form a sort of *catamaran*, large enough for one person to sit upon. To each end of this they had attached a long rope, with one end of which Jack proposed to swim to the reef of refuge, ready to draw over in this float, one at a time, those who were unable to swim; and he engaged, if the voyager only kept quiet, there would be no danger; and though the raft was now firmly fixed, it was probable it would be dashed to pieces at high-water, so no time must

be lost to make the trial, that the lading as well as the passengers might be saved; and Jack set off with the rope round him.

Now the question was, who would venture on this frail float the first? The water looked dark and deep, and all shrunk back. At length it was arranged that they should test the safety of it by first sending over a part of the freightage of the raft, as less valuable than human life. Still, these slender necessaries were precious to them, and they firmly lashed a part of the packages to the float, and anxiously launched and watched the light raft until they saw it safely drawn to the reef and unladed by Jack. It was then hauled back, and Margaret, to encourage her father, ventured next, her brothers having lashed her firmly down, and charged her to be calm and motionless.

After her safe arrival, Mr. Mayburn gained courage to follow her, and was succeeded by Nurse Wilson. Ruth begged to carry her basket of fowls; but was not permitted, which was fortunate for the chickens, for the terrified and restless girl, attempting to change her position, capsized the frail bark; but Wilkins and Arthur swam out to her assistance, and soon righted it, and, half-dead with fright and the salt water she had swallowed, she was turned over to Jenny, and the young men returned to the raft to assist at the removal of the most valuable part of the cargo – the provisions, guns, and ammunition.

In the mean time Peter had roused himself to take a trip to the raft, and when Arthur and Wilkins reached it, they found the ferocious man holding Hugh by the throat, and threatening to shoot him if he did not give up one of the guns, which the boy held in the case firmly grasped in his hand, while Gerald was releasing the other gun from the covering, that he might defend Hugh, and protect the powder and shot, which he guarded behind him.

As soon as Wilkins and Arthur stepped out on the raft, the savage relinquished his grasp of the boy; but called out in an insolent manner, "Give me one of the guns, and my share of the powder and shot you brought off. They are as much mine as yours, and I claim my right."

"You are mistaken, Peter," said Arthur; "the guns are our own private property. The powder is not legally yours or ours; but the necessity of the occasion caused us gladly to save it from destruction; at some future day we may be able to account for it to the owners. In the mean time, I choose to keep possession of such a dangerous material; nor will I allow you to commit deeds of violence. We have saved your life, and supplied you with food. If your nature does not prompt you to be thankful, at least be neutral; do not return evil for good."

The man did not answer, but there was a dogged look of ferocity in his eyes, that plainly spoke his feelings; and Wilkins whispered to Arthur, as they were tying on the packages, —

"Would you mind our twisting a rope round his arms and legs, and giving him a shove overboard? he's dangerous."

"No, Wilkins," answered Arthur. "Let the man live; we have no right to be his executioners, though I believe he deserves death. If we all reach land safely, we must watch and guard against him; and, above all, Wilkins, do you take care that he does not tempt you back to evil courses."

"We'se see," answered the man, "I'se not to reckon on; but I fancy I'd as lief take service with ye, as turn rogue again, with a cut-throat dog like him."

Arthur earnestly hoped that they might be able to reclaim this good-natured but ignorant man. He conversed kindly with him, as they carefully and successfully managed the transit of the whole lading, including Ruth's chickens; and then, Wilkins taking the charge of the two young boys as they swam to the reef, Arthur remained a few minutes to cut away the ropes, which were too valuable to be abandoned, after which he signified to the apparently careless Peter that he must look to his own safety.

"I see all that," said the man in a surly tone; "depend on't, I shall not stay here; you haven't got rid of me yet. So mind your own business, young fellow, and I'll mind mine."

Arthur left him and soon rejoined his friend; and Peter, drawing his knife and severing the cords that had lashed together the spars of the raft, he allowed them to float, and grasping one piece to support himself, he swam to the dry reef.

The tide having now left the beach uncovered as far as this reef, the family went forward to the lofty cliffs which rose from the narrow shingly strand, and immediately began to remove their property to a secure place above high-water mark.

"We may surely find a better spot for a night's encampment than this," said the indefatigable Arthur, when, resting from his labors, he looked up at the rocky heights. "There appears to be a belt of trees further north, that might possibly afford more shelter. Can you walk as far, papa?"

"I cannot exert myself more, my son," answered Mr. Mayburn. "Let us remain here; in this delicious climate, from what I have read, the night will produce no noxious vapor to harm us. Let us therefore offer our evening prayer to God, and rest calmly under the canopy of His skies, after this day of trial and toil."

The word of the father was the law of his children; and after they had made a sort of tent of the poles and sail from the raft, under which the boat-cloaks were spread, they joined in prayer and lay down to rest; but still apprehensive of the evil disposition of Peter, each took an hour of watching to guard the packages till daylight. The brilliant light of a tropical sun disclosed to the thoughtful castaways a smooth sea but a barren coast, and they looked round in vain for the means of subsistence or escape. They saw Peter at some distance, dragging out of reach of the tide the timbers of the raft, which had been thrown upon the beach.

"I am glad he is so usefully employed," observed Mr. Mayburn. "I trust he feels ashamed of his ingratitude, and means to build us a hut with these planks."

"Not he," replied Wilkins; "I ken him better nor that. He'd never fash to pick up them spars; but he wants 'em to use for his own purposes. But let him be, let him be. Chaps like him is always twining a rope for their own necks."

"Then, Wilkins," answered Margaret, "we ought not to 'let him be;' we ought to try and induce him to undertake some happier and more profitable undertaking; do, Arthur, speak to the man."

Arthur and Jack walked down to the beach, while Ruth made a fire and boiled some water from the casks, to make tea, a supply of which, and a considerable quantity of sugar, being among the provisions they had saved.

"Come, Peter," said Arthur, "you will need some breakfast, and such as we have, we offer to you. What are you going to do with these spars?"

"They are my property, by the laws of wrecking," grumbled the man, "so keep your mouth shut about them. I'll come to your breakfast, if I can get nought better nor your poor stuff."

Finding all their approaches to intimacy with this sullen creature repelled, they returned to the tent, where they found nurse in a state of great anger with Ruth the unlucky, who had literally *walked into* the China breakfast service, which the considerate Jenny had herself brought away from the ship, guarded on the wreck, and had just spread out on a clean napkin on the beach, when the girl being sent to summon Mr. Arthur, had rushed through the midst of the crockery, of which only the teapot and two cups escaped destruction. It was not in the nature of an Irish boy to be serious at such an accident, and O'Brien had laughed so provokingly, that Jenny was roused almost to distraction.

"A vagabond lass, as she is!" she exclaimed. "I blame myself, Miss Marget; I knew what was in her, and I ought to have seen to have had her shut up in one of them Union prison-houses. Nothing's safe where she comes; and see now, we may just drink tea, sup and sup round."

"And we may be thankful we have tea, nurse," said Margaret. "And see, here is a tin cup we used for the water, may do duty instead of our pretty Staffordshire ware."

"And we may meet with a china-shop before long, nurse," said Hugh. "We are not so very far from the great Empire."

"Well, Master Hugh," replied nurse, "I don't pretend to know where we may be; but there's little signs of shops or houses round us. – If that doesn't beat all!" exclaimed she, as Peter took up the cup of tea she had prepared for her master, drank it scalding hot at once, and then coolly sat down, drew out his knife and began to open and swallow oysters, with which he had filled his cap.

"Shares!" cried Wilkins, good-humoredly, holding out his hand.

"Seek them for yourself," said the churl, continuing his repast; on which Wilkins, calling on O'Brien to follow him, took his biscuit, and set out to search along the rocks. Margaret felt alarmed to see Gerald accompany this man; but Arthur assured her he believed Wilkins might be trusted.

In a short time Gerald came running up to them, and throwing down a cap filled with oysters, he cried out, "Give us a rope, Jack! we have got a turtle, and turned him on his back, that he may not get back to the water; but he is such a monstrous fellow that I don't know how we shall get him dragged all the way to this place."

"Then our best plan will be to go to him," answered Arthur; "we have no temptation to remain in this barren spot; and you seem to have found a land of plenty; therefore I propose we should march at once."

Each took up some burthen to carry, leaving the casks and heavy packages for the present, and moved forward to encamp in a new spot.

## CHAPTER VI

### **A Pleasant Resting-place. – The Turtle. – A Knavish Trick. – Destitution. – An Exploring Expedition. – Lake Scenery. – A Wrecked Vessel. – Strange Footsteps. – A Prudent Retreat. – Return of the Explorers**

After walking about a quarter of a mile towards the north, they reached a nook, surrounded by mangrove-trees, which, like the banyan-tree, formed bowers propped by pillars of successive trunks and stems, and interwoven with roots and branches. At the part nearest to the sea, the lower branches were without leaves, and had been evidently laid bare by the visits of the sea. These branches were now at low tide uncovered, and clustered with oysters. The mangrove-wood, spreading up the steep cliff, was backed by some loftier trees; and it appeared as if an impenetrable barricade was formed by nature to forbid approach to the interior.

A niche formed by the up-rooting of some aged tree, of which few remnants remained, offered a shady retreat, much more attractive than their late exposed encampment. Then Jenny was shown the enormous turtle lying on its back, waiting for execution, the innumerable oysters clinging to the mangroves, the crabs crawling on the uncovered rocks, and the clouds of sea-birds sailing overhead or sitting stupidly on the rocks fishing; and, charmed with the promise of plenty, she said:

"We may do a bit here, Miss Marget, while this fine weather lasts, if we can light on any fresh water. Birds and fish may serve us well enough."

"Where all those tall green trees grow," said Arthur, pointing to the heights, "there must be water to be found; and, in the mean time, we have a large cask, which we must bring up if we make an encampment here."

"I have brought the kettle full," said Jenny, "and a bag of biscuits too. We might have got more here, but nought would serve Ruth but hug them weary chickens with her."

"They will die, shut up in that basket, Ruth," said Gerald. "Come, Hugh, while Jack and Wilkins are killing that poor turtle, let us make a poultry-coop under the roots of the mangrove."

"Above high-water mark, remember, Gerald," said Arthur.

"Oh, botheration! Arty," answered he; "and you fancy I can't make a hencoop without a blunder; but you shall see."

The boys selected a space among the arched roots, out of reach of the tide, and interwove the sides with branches, making a snug and airy dwelling for the fowls, which rejoiced in their emancipation from the basket; and the tropical shades were startled with the novel sound of the crowing of a cock.

In the mean time, Jack and Wilkins had killed the turtle, cut the flesh into pieces, and cleaned the strong back shell, which they proposed should be useful; and, after a fire had been made, a portion of the turtle was cooked in its recent habitation, to the wonder and delight of Jenny, who was in despair for cooking-vessels. Then the rest of the meat was placed under the trees, in the most shady situation, and scattered over with the portion of salt they could spare from the small store they had brought; but, in that sultry climate, they feared they should not be able to preserve it more than one day.

"We could easily knock down a few of those boobies, if you would like them, nurse," said Hugh.

"Certainly not, Hugh," said his father; "with the abundance of food we possess, it would be merciless to destroy more life; and I am able to study the form and habits of the sluggish bird as conveniently while it is seated on that rock as if it lay dead on the beach."

The mosquitoes were so numerous among the trees in their new resting-place, that Mr. Mayburn, who suffered remarkably from the attacks of insects, was greatly distressed; and Margaret said to her brothers:

"It will be impossible for papa to remain among these mosquito-haunted trees; we must either try to penetrate further into the island, or we must return to the bare and quiet rocky strand we have quitted. At all events, we must have the sail brought to make a tent."

It was finally decided that after their dinner they would, for one night at least, return to their landing-place; and the turtle being cooked as well as turtle could be cooked under such adverse circumstances, with Nurse Wilson as *chef de cuisine*, they sat down to enjoy it. Knives and forks they possessed; plates they had not; but the shells of some of the large oysters tolerably well supplied the want. After they had dined, sultry as it was, they were glad to resume their burdens, and flee from the venomous mosquitoes which followed them for some distance; but, unwilling to forsake the trees, their tormentors abandoned them when they reached the bare cliffs.

A cry of dismay from Hugh and Gerald, who had preceded the rest, announced some vexatious catastrophe, and hurried them forward to see with bitter mortification the disappearance of the casks and the various packages they had left on the spot where they landed.

"I mistrusted that rogue," exclaimed Wilkins, "specially when he didn't turn up to his dinner. He's a deep un, and no mistake."

The boys went to the sea, now flowing over the reefs, and saw that the spars of the broken-up raft, which had been thrown on shore, were also gone. It was plain the artful villain had constructed another raft, and set out on it, carrying off their provisions, one of the guns, and the powder and shot.

"And worst of all," said Jack, "my tool-chest, and my axe, which he borrowed from me this morning."

"More fool you to lend it to him," said Wilkins, furiously enraged. "It seems to me as how roguery thrives better nor aught, say what ye will otherwise."

"Do not speak so foolishly, Wilkins," said Margaret. "Wickedness can never thrive, even on this earth. This bad man has probably run into greater distress than he has left, with the added torment of a bad conscience. It is only when we walk in truth and honesty that we can hope for the protection of God."

"Where can the fellow mean to steer to?" asked Hugh.

"With a light raft," answered Arthur, "he may perhaps work round to the east of the island, if it be an island, and from thence he probably hopes to reach the mainland. We have sustained a heavy loss from his knavery; but we shall sleep sounder to-night from the knowledge that he is not near us."

After a good night's rest, they arose to look round them and consider what was the best course in their destitute situation. Mr. Mayburn was dejected, Margaret was anxious, but the boys were full of hope and energy.

"Hugh and Gerald," said Arthur, "I call on you to listen seriously to me. It is all very well to hunt turtles, and I do not object to your knocking down a few boobies, for we must have the means of supporting life; but we have a great object in view at present. We must ascertain where we are, and what step we are next to take. We cannot yet be sure that this is, as we suspect, an island."

"It seems a desolate spot," said Margaret, shuddering.

"Worse than Robinson Crusoe's island, Meggie," said Hugh, "for we have not even the goats. Not a four-footed animal have I set eyes on yet, and the bipeds are few and ugly."

"I wish we may not find some bipeds," said Arthur, "that are more offensive than the gulls and boobies."

"Oh, botheration!" said Gerald. "Sure you won't mean the savages, Arty. What jolly fun if we had an invasion! Wouldn't we drub them like British heroes as we are?"

"And pray, most valiant knight of Ireland," answered Arthur, "where are your weapons of warfare?"

"Oh, murder! what a blunderer I am!" replied the boy; "I had forgotten the state of our armory. Let us consider. We have one rifle, with a small amount of ammunition, one bowie-knife, two penknives, one capital stick-knife, the table-knives, and – has anybody else any dangerous weapons?"

"I have a silver fruit-knife and a pair of scissors," said Margaret.

"Quite useless," replied he. "Now, nurse, turn out your pockets."

Jenny produced a housewife, containing needles, thread, and scissors, thimble, a nutmeg-grater, a cork-screw, and the half-dozen useful forks. Jack, always prudent, still retained in his pockets a large clasp-knife, a hammer, and a few nails. Mr. Mayburn had a small microscope, forceps, a case of delicate instruments of surgery, some blotting-paper, and a sketching-book and pencils; all of which were regarded with contempt by the warrior Gerald.

"Well," said he, "we must just set to work to make bows and arrows, pikes and clubs. Those trees we saw yesterday will supply us with materials."

"We will trouble you, then," said Arthur, "to take your axe and cut down a tree."

"There you are caught again, Pat," said Hugh. "Another blunder! Poor unhappy fellows we are; destitute of means, we can neither fight nor run away, if this be an island we have been thrown on."

"That brings us to the point again," said Arthur. "That is the thing necessary to be known; so, without further delay, we three will set out and make a careful inspection of the coast. We will leave Wilkins and Jack to guard the encampment; I will carry the rifle and the few charges we have left, but I trust I may not be called on to use them, for I should grudge them exceedingly."

"Shed no blood, I beseech you, my son," said Mr. Mayburn. "We are intruders; do not let us become invaders. If we can obtain immunity for ourselves, let us be satisfied. Even if we should be attacked, we have no right to retaliate, but should rather take to flight."

"But, dear papa," answered Hugh, "we cannot fly without wings. We are at bay here, and must fight or fall. But, depend on it, we shall be cautious, with Arthur the prudent to lead us; and remember, this is only an exploring and foraging expedition."

The bold little party then set out towards the mangrove-wood, through which, with much toil and many windings, they forced their way, and gained more open ground. They crossed the bed of a river, which was now, however, but a series of muddy pools, from which, though anxious to have a draught of fresh water, they felt no inclination to drink. Beyond this spot some low bare sandhills rose, which they crossed, and thence to a steep eminence. They climbed up this, and found themselves among vast piles of rocky fragments mixed with tall wiry grass.

They looked round; all was silence and desolation, the barren chaotic scenery being varied only by the tall bare trunks of a species of acacia, which here and there broke the monotony of the prospect; and now the boys felt convinced that they were placed on a truly desert island.

Still they moved forwards, though depressed and silent, over the dismal wilderness; till at length they were cheered by the sight of vegetation, and hailed with pleasure some tall trees. Arthur recognized the cabbage-palm, the slender stem sixty feet in height, with the round tuft of edible leaves at the summit. Hugh would willingly have tried to climb the tree to procure the leaves, but his brother persuaded him to defer the exploit till a more favorable opportunity, and pointed out to him a fringe of the graceful casuarina, which promised the blessing of water. They made up to it, and found it bordered a broad and glittering lake, in the clear waters of which they distinguished multitudes of large fish, while on the banks the noisy water-fowl were building their nests. The edge of the lake was stuck over with fresh-water mussels; and but for the flies and mosquitoes which haunted the trees, this spot appeared a terrestrial paradise compared with the dreary bay they had left.

"This is the place for our camp and fortress," said Hugh; "let us bring up our rear-guard at once. We shall have the lake for our water-tank, and its feathered and finny inhabitants for our rations."

"And these winged monsters for our besieging foes," added Gerald, striking a mosquito from his nose.

"It is a pleasant and tempting situation, certainly," said Arthur; "and we might select a spot sufficiently distant from the water to avoid these bloodthirsty insects. But we must be certain that we shall have no neighbors more dangerous than the mosquitoes. We had better explore to the coast."

Hugh and Gerald had contrived to knock down two pairs of ducks, which they slung across their shoulders, and marched forward towards more fertile plains, where high grass and low bushes spread a verdant covering over the soil, till they reached a thick wood, sloping downwards, through which they penetrated, and found themselves on a narrow strand, similar to that on which they had landed.

A rocky promontory ran out to the sea at a little distance; the broken, rugged, rocky sides were clothed with brushwood, and a lofty headland jutted out at the summit. Their further progress would have been cut off had it been quite high water; but the tide was still low enough to permit them, with some care, to turn round the promontory, and gain a broader strand, which was strewn with huge fragments of rock, amongst which they saw, with great astonishment, the wreck of a large vessel lying. The hull was divided; the fore-castle-deck was in one place, and at a distance lay part of the quarter-deck.

At first the boys were struck speechless with this unexpected sight; then they began to climb over the rocks to reach the wreck, and Gerald breathlessly asked: "Will we find any of them alive?"

"Alive, man!" exclaimed Hugh. "You may see at once this is no recent affair; look at this chain, the sea must have washed over it some hundreds of times, for it is covered with rust."

The sea was even now breaking over the scattered rocks, making the approach to the wreck at once difficult and dangerous; but the boys made out that the vessel must have been first thrown on the rocks, and afterwards broken up by the sea. It now remained a melancholy spectacle; timbers, decks, masts, and yards, scattered or piled in confused heaps, apparently untouched by man for weeks or months. The upper parts of the stern and hull as far forward as the mizen chains were entire, lying on the stern-frames; but no bodies were found, and the boats being missing, Arthur suggested that the crew must have got off, carrying with them the useful articles they might need; for little could be seen except the mere timbers, except that where the marks of an axe were found on the mizen-mast, the axe itself, though much rusted, was lying near, and gladly seized by the boys.

"Margaret will become alarmed," said Arthur, "if we delay our return; but to-morrow we must examine this wreck more closely. Much has doubtless been carried off by the boats or the waves; but even the yards and chains may be useful to us."

"I wish we could find any thing to eat," sighed Gerald.

"Depend on it, Gerald," said Hugh, "the greedy sea will have devoured the provisions. I cannot even see an empty cask which might be useful. But, halloo! captain, our retreat is cut off; the sea is washing the headland, and we may be glad to use the old hull as an ark now."

"I think we may be able to turn the next point," said Arthur, pointing to another jutting rock of the indented coast which stood out about a hundred yards in the opposite direction, and where a sort of shelf a few feet from the water afforded an unsafe pass. "Be quick, boys; we must beat the waves if we would escape before next tide."

Away the daring boys darted among the windings and over the barriers of broken rock, till they reached the second promontory, and with the waves dashing close below them, rounded it, coming out on an almost impassable narrow hem of encumbered beach, which stretched before them for several hundred yards. Crawling close to the cliffs, they found at length the strand grew broad and level, and they sprang forward to enjoy more freedom, when they were suddenly startled by the sight of the shell of a turtle, which they could not but suspect the hand of man had removed from the back of the rightful proprietor.

They looked intently on it, then Arthur said, "This shell has undoubtedly been roughly cut from the animal. The important question is, who cut it?"

"Perhaps the crew of the wrecked vessel," suggested Hugh.

"It may have been so," answered Arthur, somewhat relieved.

Then O'Brien shouldered the large shell, and they moved forward thoughtfully for a few minutes; till a dark spot at some distance from the water attracted the attention of Arthur; they hastened towards it, and saw to their great consternation, not only the traces of a recent fire, but the naked footmarks of men, the head of a turtle still bloody, a long wooden spear, plainly hardened by fire, and an instrument which Arthur recognized from description to be a throwing-stick for the spear, as it had a hook at one end which fitted a notch at the heel of the spear, which the holders were thus enabled to project with great force.

"We must carry away these curious arms," said Hugh.

"Certainly not, I think," replied Arthur. "In the first place, we have no right to take them, since they have been left here in good faith, as we might have left our spades in our own grounds at home; and next we should thus place ourselves in the position of invaders and marauders, and incur the enmity of dangerous foes. We had better obliterate all traces of our visit, and, like prudent fellows, retreat quietly."

"Run away! Arthur," exclaimed O'Brien. "You may as well speak plainly. And won't Margaret think us a set of poltroons?"

"We will talk of that as we retreat," said Arthur, laughing; "but we must carefully examine the way we came, that we may leave no footsteps."

As it happened, the vivacity and restless curiosity of the boys had induced them to keep close to the cliffs, leaping from rock to rock, peeping into crannies for nests, so that no traces were left, except where the tide would soon wash them away, and Arthur resolved now to ascend the cliffs at once, instead of going round the island, to escape any risk of meeting the savages. He calculated that they had reached a part of the shore nearly opposite to that on which they had first landed; and by directly crossing the island, which he felt could not be more than three miles over, they might safely and speedily rejoin their friends.

"I do not think it probable," he said, "that this barren island has any permanent inhabitants. The people who have left their traces on the coast may come over from some more productive soil, solely to catch the turtles."

"Do you think they came from the mainland?" asked Hugh; "I fancied from the heights of the east cliffs, I could make out a gray line, which was doubtless Australia."

"I scarcely can fancy," answered Arthur, "that a people whom we have seen described as so deficient in intelligence should be able to construct canoes to come such a distance. It is more likely they are inhabitants of one of the hundred dangerous islands of this sea. It will be prudent, at all events, to avoid them if we can."

As they rapidly made their way directly across the island, O'Brien wished there had been a boat left on the wreck, and Hugh said, "Couldn't we build a boat, Arthur? Jack is up to any work of that sort."

"We have not tools or time, Hugh," answered Arthur. "Only consider how long it would take, even if we had the means, to complete a boat to be useful to us. No; at present we must content ourselves to make the best of our situation; and as I do not think the savages have found the bay of the wrecked vessel, I shall propose that we move our encampment into that snug nook."

"What capital fun," cried Gerald. "We will bring them off directly."

"Softly, good youth!" said Arthur. "We must hold a council on such an important matter. But see Jack perched on yon tall tree, to watch for us and give notice; and here comes Meggie to meet us and hear the news."

## CHAPTER VII

### **The Results of the Expedition. – The Long Vacation. – Removed from the Landing-place. – Birds and their Nests. – Fishing. – Tapping a Cask of Potatoes. – Tent-making. – The Shell Spades. – Digging a Tank. – A Grand Attempt at Boat-building**

"Get all into marching order, Meggie," said Hugh. "We have found out a better site for a settlement than our present encampment, and Gerald and I mean to build a shealing."

"And not a mangrove or a mosquito to be seen near it," added Gerald; "nothing but a ship at anchor."

"A ship!" exclaimed Margaret, in astonishment. "What does the wild boy mean, Arthur?"

"You will only see the remains of a ship, Meggie," answered Arthur; "and though you may think the scene of a shipwreck a melancholy spot to select, yet it seems a convenient, sheltered cove, and a desirable retreat for a short time, till we arrange our plans for the future."

When they arrived at the encampment, and the adventures of the day had been told, Jack heard with especial interest the account of the wrecked vessel; and as he examined the rusty axe, he planned great undertakings with the aid of his new tool; while Jenny looked with much satisfaction on the ducks, which she declared were "more Christian meat than them slimy, fat turtles;" and Ruth, smoothing the beautiful plumage with her hands, and thinking, with foreboding dread, of the fate of her favorites, said —

"Bonnie things! what a sham' to kill 'em."

"And see what papa and I have found," said Margaret, producing a basket half-filled with the eggs of the turtle, while Jenny served up to them some roasted in the ashes, which the hungry rambles thought delicious.

Then a consultation was held on the project of removal. Margaret shrunk from any risk of meeting with the savage islanders; but Arthur considered they should be safer from any encounter with them in the secluded nook they had discovered, which was guarded by coral reefs, dangerous even to such light canoes as these people usually had, and hidden by the jutting promontories, than they should be to remain in their present exposed encampment, or even in the more fertile regions of the interior.

Mr. Mayburn had some shadowy fancies of civilizing and converting the whole horde at once; but Arthur argued that the time was not favorable for the undertaking, and that they must try to establish themselves in a more independent position before they indulged any hopes of reclaiming a large body of heathens.

"Besides, papa," added he, "we must look forward to some plan of leaving this dull and desolate island, and we may have an opportunity of signalling some passing sail if we establish ourselves on the beach."

"Ye'll not see mony ships amang yon reefs," said Wilkins, "barring they're drove there in a gale, and then, as ye've seen, there's poor chance of they're getting off again."

"But we might build a boat with the remains of the wreck," suggested Jack.

"There's some sense in that," answered the man; "but when ye've gotten your boat fettled up, what port would ye be making for?"

"I am pledged to go to India, Wilkins," said Mr. Mayburn.

"Pledged to a fiddlestick," replied he, with contempt. "Think ye now ye can sail to Indy in a crazy bit boat like what we chaps can put together. Ye'll have to make right across for t' mainland;

and mind what I tell ye: I'se stick to ye, and work for ye, and fight for ye, but ye're not to be 'liv'ring me up at Sydney yonder to be shackled and drove like a nigger slave."

"I fear, Wilkins," answered Arthur, "there is little probability of our reaching Sydney; but we are all too grateful for the services of a faithful adherent, to think of returning evil for them; and you may be satisfied we shall continue to protect you to the utmost of our power. And, my dear father, you must no longer distress yourself with the idea of fulfilling your appointment in India. We shall be reported lost in the *Golden Fairy*, and the mission will be filled up. You must resign yourself to accept any safe refuge that is accessible, and wait for happier circumstances."

"In the mean time, papa," said Margaret, "God will surely provide us with work. And till we have more extended opportunities our own hearts require our labor. We must not neglect our duty at home."

"I thank you, my child," answered he, "for reminding me of my wasted hours. It is indeed full time that I should resume the active duties of my profession. I have a weighty responsibility. Do you not think that I should begin at once, by recalling my boys to their daily studies?"

O'Brien looked piteously at Hugh, who laughed at his mournful countenance, and Margaret replied,

"The boys are not idle, papa. They are studying in the great book of Nature. Every hour shows to them some new wonder of creation, and raises their thoughts to the mighty Creator. Every sight and sound develops a new idea; and all you are called on to do, papa, is to watch and to water."

"That is all I am fit to do," answered he. "I want the energy and firmness that you possess – a blessed boon from God. The deep sorrow that ever haunts me is, that my life has been spent in vain purposes, never accomplished."

"My dear, conscientious father," said Margaret, "be comforted; I trust the hour may yet come when you will have a field for your pious labors: till then, have no remorse in following your simple and blameless amusements. I have no merit in my duties of attending, governing, and lecturing these wild boys. I love the office; I was certainly not born for any sphere more elevated. But you, papa, whose sole enjoyment is to sit in an easy-chair before a table laden with books and a cabinet filled with eggs and wings, were wrenched violently from your nature when you were doomed to pass days in forcing these unwilling boys to learn the rules of syntax, or the crabbed mysteries of Euclid. We are shaken from our propinities here; you cannot teach Latin or work out problems without books; so you must take your ease, and consider this the long vacation."

"You are the girl for knowing a few things, Meggie!" said O'Brien, admiringly. "Be sure, sir, Hugh and I will work to any amount to help you in your ornithology and oology, if you will spare us the philology a bit. There's no running about with a conjugation in one's mouth."

"And as Arthur has demonstrated his problem on the best position for the encampment," said Hugh, "I conclude we had better move at once. No occasion to send forward notice about well-aired beds."

"And no occasion, Hugh Harebrain," said Arthur, "to be overtaken by darkness on our journey. Let us be deliberate. Jenny must roast the ducks for our breakfast in the morning, Jack must collect his valuable work-tools, Ruth must again imprison those luckless chickens, and then we must all have a night's rest. It will be time enough to set out in the morning, and we must take care to start before the sun blazes out in all its fervor."

All obeyed orders; and, with the first ray of light, the whole camp was alive. It was very important this time that nothing should be left behind. Peter had relieved them from the charge of biscuit and water, which he had carried off with the tool-chest and gun; but there was still a little tea and sugar, which was carefully preserved. The sail-cloth was rolled up; even the oars used for tent-poles were taken; and, after morning prayers, they set out slowly along the beach, and through the mazy, ascending woods, till they reached the table-land of the rocky isle. They crossed it this time at the head of the lake which they had discovered the preceding day, and found this part of the

island still more fertile and lovely than any they had yet seen. Mr. Mayburn was in ecstasy; he stopped continually to point out some new and beautiful grass, some bright nameless flower, or some strange tree; while the notes, harsh, musical, or merry, of thousands of birds, filled him with amazement and delight.

"From this moment, my boys," said he, "I release you from the severe studies which, Margaret truly observes, are unfitted to our circumstances and the relaxing climate. I merely require from you to obtain me specimens – single specimens only – of the eggs and nests of these birds; and, if it were not cruel, I should long to possess some of these rare creatures in all their beauty."

"I fear, papa," observed Margaret, "that you have no means of preserving birds; therefore it would be useless to take them."

"You are right, Margaret," he answered. "I will be content with a nest and an egg of each species."

"Would you mind about having the nest and egg of that fellow, sir?" asked O'Brien, pointing to a majestic black swan sailing on the lake.

"*Rara avis!*" exclaimed he; then added, with a sigh, "no, no, Gerald, we have no means. The animal is weighty, therefore the nest must be large, and not of a portable nature. I relinquish the precious possession. But let us linger on the borders of the lake, to examine its wild charms. Would that I had saved my botanical library, that I might have made out the species of these broad flags and thick bamboos!"

"These round reeds will make capital arrows," said Hugh, cutting down a bundle of them; "and I doubt not but some of them would be elastic enough for the bows. We may surely, with all our learning, succeed better in making them than untaught savages. Then we may bring down our birds noiselessly, and defy the thievish tricks of Black Peter."

"But first, Hugh," said O'Brien, "we must have a trial with some of these big fellows in the lake," pointing to some large perch-shaped fish.

Jack sharpened some of the reeds to a point, and the boys were soon plunging about in the clear bright lake, pursuing and striking the fish; and after fifty vain attempts, they succeeded at length in spearing two, which, though young, were of large size, and Arthur concluded they must be the river cod (*Grystes Peelii*), so much praised by Australian travellers. Then, regardless of wet garments, which the hot sun soon dried, the boys triumphantly proceeded on with their spoil. Jack, in the mean time, had struck off from the edge of the lake a cluster of fresh-water mussels of various sizes, and emptied them, to serve for spoons and drinking-cups.

Thence they moved forward, anxious now to seek some shelter from the increasing heat of the day, and gladly entered the wood, from which, with some difficulties in the descent, they reached the wreck-encumbered bay. All were at once attracted to the side of the vessel; Jack, especially, examined it with intense interest, considering its future service to him. Margaret and her father were moved to tears, as they contemplated the shattered fabric, and thought on the brave but probably unprepared men who might have been hurried into eternity before the final catastrophe.

While Hugh and Gerald climbed the sides to explore the interior of the wreck, Arthur observed that some of the timbers had been carried away by the tide even since the previous day, and he consulted with Jack about the possibility of breaking up and endeavoring to save such parts as might be useful to themselves; and in order to lose no time they grasped a loosened plank, to draw it away beyond the reach of the tide. No sooner had they removed it, than a large cask rolled from the opening, which they concluded led into the hold. The cask broke open with the fall, and a number of potatoes ran out. Every hand was quickly summoned to collect and save the valuable contents; the cask was righted and carefully removed up the beach, and it was great amusement to the boys to pursue the straggling potatoes, and save them from being swept away by the next tide.

"I say, O'Brien, my boy, I wonder your Irish nose did not scent the *pratees* yesterday," said Hugh.

"Now isn't it luck, Arty," said Gerald. "Will we plant some? and then we shall never want as long as we stay here."

Margaret looked alarmed at the plan of planting potatoes for future provision; but Arthur replied, he hoped they should be able to leave the island before the potatoes were exhausted; nevertheless, he approved of the provident project of Gerald, and promised to seek a favorable spot to plant some, for the benefit of future visitors to this unproductive island.

"But do not be afraid, nurse," added he, "to boil us a large *shell* of potatoes to-day; we have abundance; and in our scarcity of bread, we could not have found a more valuable prize."

Ruth had been in the wood to seek for a convenient place for a hencoop, and now rushed out with torn garments, exclaiming, – "Oh! Miss Marget, come and see what a bonnie beck there is."

A *beck*, or stream of water, was, indeed, a valuable discovery; and, conducted by Ruth, Arthur and Jack forced their way through entangled roots and brushwood, till they reached a narrow rivulet of clear water, probably flowing from the lake by some unseen channel beneath the grassy region they had crossed; and after trickling down the rocks, it again disappeared in the sand and shingles of the beach.

"This is but a slender supply, Jack," said Arthur; "I fear it might fail us in a drought."

"We must dig a tank, Mr. Arthur," he answered; "that is, if we can raise a spade."

Jack considered for a few minutes. He was not to be checked by apparent difficulties in his undertakings. "What do you think, Mr. Arthur, of one of those big oyster or mussel shells? I could tie one to a stick with some of these stringy fibres of creeping plants; or, better far, there's a tree up above, that seems to have a bark you might ravel out into strings; and there's another tree, with a stiff, regular sort of gum, as good as glue, oozing out of it. Now, with all these, I'll be bound to make a spade or two that will turn up this light soil fast enough."

"Then the sooner we set about it the better, Jack," answered Arthur. "We cannot do better than remain in this spot, if we meet with no disturbance, until we can make some canoe or raft to take us off; and it is absolutely necessary to secure a supply of water. Let us go and choose our shells."

But when they returned to the beach, they found Mr. Mayburn so much overcome by the scorching heat of the sun, that their first care was to get up a tent or shelter of some kind for him. They selected a deep niche in the cliff, where the rocks formed a complete angle, and having procured from the wreck some suitable spars, they fixed them in the crevices of the rocks, to form the rafters of the roof, which they covered with the long grass which grew above the cliffs. The sail was thrown over the front, as a curtain, and they were thus provided with a shady and convenient apartment.

At low tide, Hugh and Gerald amused themselves with searching for nests in the extremity of the promontory, and finding an opening, they had penetrated into a spacious cave, the mouth of which would be covered at high-water; but as it shelved upwards to a considerable distance in the rocks, the back part was safe and dry.

"Just think, Hugh, my boy," said O'Brien, "what a fortress this would be for us if we were invaded. One man could defend the entrance with the gun, even at low-water; and how we should defy the rogues when the tide was up."

"But it would be horribly dismal, Gerald," answered Hugh. "We could never bear to live in it long; and, you know, we need no sleeping-rooms or houses to cover us in this fine climate; so we will leave it uninhabited, at least in peaceful times. But we will show it to Arthur, and ask him if it would not make a good storehouse."

Arthur congratulated the boys on their discovery, and the timid father was highly gratified at the thoughts of such a secure retreat; after he had satisfactorily ascertained that it could always be accessible at low-water, and never dangerous at the highest tide; and Margaret proposed that the cookery should be accomplished within the cave, that the smoke might not attract the observation of the dreaded natives. So Jenny established her kitchen here, and prepared an excellent dinner of fish, and potatoes boiled in the shells of the turtle, while Margaret kept watch for the returning tide,

though Jenny said, "It's all little use, Miss Marget; it has to be, I feel. Ruth's sartain to be caught and fastened up in this eerie place."

Jack made a careful inspection of the remains of the vessel, and from the stern cabin, which was still uninjured, he drew out, with the help of the boys, a rough bench and a table, – useful acquisitions; and still better, a good-sized empty cask, which had contained brandy, and was now conveniently employed as a water-cask. Then, after a long survey of the state of the timbers, Jack announced that, with the help of Wilkins's strong arm, and Arthur's judgment and perseverance, he would undertake to build a sort of boat.

Wilkins shrugged up his shoulders at the prospect of hard work under a burning sun, and said, "Why, one had as lief be working in irons down yonder; where one was safe of full rations, and bacca, and rum into t' bargain."

"And ruin to body and soul, you may add, unhappy man," said Mr. Mayburn. "Be not discontented that the mercy of God has rescued you from evil, and cast you among true friends, who ask you to do no more than they do themselves; to fare simply, and to work. You were not placed in this world to live like the beasts, who eat, and drink, and perish for ever. Your life is here but the beginning of eternity; the hour of death is close at hand to all, when those who have done evil shall receive their punishment, and those who have listened to God shall find a blessed home in a new and glorious world."

Wilkins never replied to any of Mr. Mayburn's *preachings*, as he called these admonitions; but he scoffed less than formerly, and Margaret observed that his manners were somewhat softened; and she daily prayed to God that they might be permitted to aid in reclaiming, at least, one sinful soul.

The next day Jack succeeded in binding two large shells to stout handles, and fixing them with gum; then, while he left them to harden, he set to work to clean the rusty axe with sand and stones, and at length rendered it serviceable. He was thus enabled to break up the wreck, and to select such timber as would be useful for his projected undertaking; he extracted all the large nails that were uninjured, and after many days' labor, had accumulated materials to begin his great work.

But the first employment of the youths was to be digging the well; they went every morning to the lake to procure fish, birds, or eggs, for the provision of the day, and then returned to assist in digging, the spades being now available, as the gum had become as hard as the shell. After they had sunk the tank sufficiently deep, they lined it with flat stones; and saw with great satisfaction, that they need never be without a supply of fresh water, if they remained at this cove.

Some time passed, and they saw no more traces of visitors to the island, and they ventured to ramble to some distance along the beach, bringing in occasionally a turtle, or a basket of turtles' eggs, to vary their diet. They also used daily a small quantity of potatoes, but they were economical with these valuable roots, of which they hoped to raise a crop in the island, and, should they ever reach it, on the main land as well.

After the tank was completed, Jack selected a spot conveniently near high-water mark, and seriously set about boat-building. He had carefully examined the boats during their voyages, and while in the *Amoor* he made many inquiries of the obliging ship-carpenter; but though bold and sanguine in all his enterprises, he did sometimes feel that he had undertaken a stupendous task.

The planks that would best have suited his purpose were more or less injured by the sea; he had no means of forming iron bolts or screws, yet the indefatigable youth persevered; but the month of August, the early spring of that climate, was advanced before the boat assumed a form of promise. It was then caulked with matted cordage found in the vessel, and with gum, of which they had abundance. Now, though rough and clumsy, Jack declared it "looked like work;" and after two pair of oars had been made with little difficulty, to the great delight of the young workmen, a day was fixed for launching the boat.

## CHAPTER VIII

### **The Launch of the Boat. – An Alarming Catastrophe. – Disappointed Hopes. – Jack's Perseverance. – A Peep at the Old Encampment. – Black Peter again. – The Loss of the Boat. – Canoe-building. – The Luggage-van**

It was necessary to carry the boat fairly out to deep water, to test its perfect security; but the reefs were impassable before the cove, and they were aware they should be compelled to row to some distance within them till they found an opening. A roller, left in the wreck, enabled them at high-water to run out the boat, and Wilkins and Arthur volunteered to make the first trial in it. Jack was detained on shore, where he was always usefully employed, and the two boys were considered too wild to be risked in the first trip – an arrangement which they would gladly have rebelled against.

The anxious watchers stood on shore to mark the boat first float on the water, and then the strokes of the oars, which carried it round the promontory at the south out of their sight. Then Jack and the two boys ascended through the wood to the heights, and crossed the cape, to watch the further progress of the precious vessel. But what was their consternation to see no traces of it. They hurried down to the beach beyond the promontory, and gazed wildly around, uttering cries of distraction. A few minutes of horror succeeded: then they saw the heads of the two swimmers, who appeared to be struggling violently against the receding waves.

The two boys would have plunged at once into the water; but Jack, in a tone of authority, commanded them to remain still, and throwing off his own light frock, he rapidly cut a long branch of mangrove, and swam out, holding it out towards Arthur, who seemed nearly exhausted, and who eagerly clutched the branch as soon as it was within his reach. Then Jack turned round, and swimming with one hand, drew the almost senseless Arthur, still firmly grasping the branch, after him into shallow water, where Hugh was waiting to receive him. Still fresh and unfearing, Jack set out again towards Wilkins, who had grasped an oar and was supporting himself with it, when, just as he saw his friend coming up to aid him, he either dropped the oar from exhaustion, or some unseen rock dashed it from his hand, and he immediately disappeared.

A great cry rose from the boys on the beach; but the minute after, he rose again, lying on his back, and apparently insensible. This enabled Jack to approach him with greater safety, and catching hold of his long hair, he drew the senseless body of the poor man towards the shore. But Hugh perceived Jack could not long hold out, and throwing off his clothes, he struck out to meet him, compelled him to relinquish the charge of Wilkins; and thus they were all enabled at length to reach the shore. But all were greatly exhausted, and Wilkins was apparently dead when they drew him on the beach.

O'Brien hastened through the woods, and by cries and signals brought Margaret and Jenny to their assistance, by whose prudent care and applications the poor man was restored to consciousness. No sooner was he recovered, than, trembling excessively, he looked wildly round, and said, —

"Good Lord! it is a terrible thing to die in one's sins!"

"How glad I am to hear you say these words, Wilkins!" said Margaret; "and now let all our words and thoughts be thanks to Him who has given you time to turn from these sins, and lead a new life. Pray to Him openly. We are all your friends, and we will join you;" and kneeling down by the side of the convict, Margaret offered up a simple and short thanksgiving for the two men happily rescued from death, and a prayer for continued mercy for their souls. For the first time the lips of Wilkins moved in prayer, and he audibly uttered "Amen."

In order to remove the anxiety of Mr. Mayburn, they returned to the encampment as soon as the exhausted swimmers were able to walk. Then Arthur related to his friends that as soon as they had got the boat into deep water, they suspected there was something wrong about her, and were endeavoring to make to shore, when she whirled round and was swamped in a moment, and the labor of weeks and the hopes of escape were at once lost.

The whole party were greatly dejected; but Jack, who was at first deeply mortified, was the first to shake off his chagrin, and to declare boldly that he would make another experiment. "We have plenty of materials quite handy," said he; "and it cannot be so far to the coast of the main land. If you will let me try again, sir, I feel quite certain I could make two bark canoes that would take us all, and, if we were once fairly over the reefs, could be paddled across without danger."

"My good boy," said Mr. Mayburn, "I am but an indifferent judge of nautical affairs; but you must allow your first adventure has been signally discouraging. Nevertheless, I admire that perseverance which must in the end subdue obstacles and command success, and I do not object to your continuing your experiments; but I would advise you to try your next boat on the lake, where, in case of accidents, no fatal consequences need be feared."

"I will make a canoe at once," answered he; "but I will risk no lives. I will paddle it across to the mainland myself, and then return to convince you of its security. This time I have no fears, provided we do not overload our vessels. I will set out to seek a tree immediately."

"You will eat your dinner first, my man," said nurse; "and if you had a bit of sleep after your swimming, before you set off to cut down trees, there would be more sense in it. Here's some good roast duck for you; a grand dinner it might have been if we had only had sage and onions."

Jack found Jenny was right. He was not equal to a long walk after his exertions and vexations; so he sat down to eat his roast duck, and then set about making models of canoes, prahus, and catamarans, from the recollection of what he had seen or read of. But next morning, leaving Wilkins, who was much bruised, and still weak, and subdued by mental and bodily suffering, in the care of Margaret and her father, the young men set out to explore the island for a tree of proper height and girth to make use of for their first attempt at a canoe.

"After all, Mr. Arthur," said Jack, "if this should fail, we could try catamarans. That would be easy enough, and we have mangroves close at hand that would answer exactly for making them. But then I have my doubts if the master, or Miss Margaret, could be brought round to trust themselves on such bits of floats for a voyage that far. Here's a grand tree! Now, if we can only peel it clean, it will set us up."

It was a tall fine tree of the *Eucalyptus* or gum species, with a thick rough bark, which seemed as if it might be easily removed. Arthur began by making a deep incision round the trunk at the bottom, and also in a perpendicular line as high as he could reach. By standing on a fragment of rock, he was able to carry it up to the height of twelve feet, and to finish it by another circular incision. Hugh and Gerald stood at the foot of the tree to receive the bark, which, when gently raised from the trunk, was easily separated, and let down in one piece without any injury, to the great delight of the boys. Jack was anxious to have it transported to the cove immediately; but the boys wished to take a peep at their first landing-place before their return, and they all turned their steps in that direction. Hugh and Gerald had distanced the two elder youths, who had not reached the cliffs, when they saw the two boys returning in haste, with dismay on their faces.

"Oh! Arthur," cried Gerald, "such a vexation! We are in for a battle, and we have no arms! The savages are ready for us on the beach."

"But we are not ready for them," replied Arthur, "and must therefore keep out of sight. Do you two hasten homewards with the bark, while Jack and I reconnoitre."

Then cautiously creeping along to the edge of the cliffs, they looked down on the narrow strand below, and saw a number of the dark natives gathered round some object close to the water, which

seemed to have excited their curiosity. Jack, with a muttered exclamation of vexation, recognized this to be his unfortunate boat which had doubtless drifted on shore here.

"Oh! Mr. Arthur," whispered the lad, in great agitation; "as sure as you are living, I see that rogue, black Peter, that got all my tools, among the savages; depend on it he has brought them here to seek for us."

"To seek for the remainder of our property, I suspect, Jack," replied Arthur. "They are probably not very anxious to encounter our fire-arms; and we should be no prize to them, even if they could capture us. But we had best decamp now, as we are quite unarmed, and it might be dangerous to be detected; and, Jack, we must set to work directly. I am anxious now to get away as soon as possible, for these fellows will be constantly in our way on this small isle."

They withdrew with the same caution with which they had approached, and then hurried to overtake the boys, who were moving slowly along, carrying the bark; and with the additional hands they soon brought it safely into harbor, to the admiration of Mr. Mayburn, who was, however, greatly distressed to hear of another visit of the savages. Then, as they measured and arranged the work, they discussed with wonder the appearance of black Peter among the natives, and the cause of his disturbing their quiet seclusion.

"Peter's in his reet place amang 'om," said Wilkins, "and it's time for us to be off when he shows his black, ugly face. As sure as we're here, master, if he cannot 'tice me off to join his crew, and start bush-ranging, he'll take my life. He's a reg'lar black-hearted un for a bit of vengeance."

"But, surely, Wilkins," said Margaret, "there can be no fear that you, who have now learnt to know good from evil – you, who have seen the wickedness of your past life, should ever go back to such sin."

"Why, ye see, miss," answered the man, "it's little that such as ye know, what a queer tempting a chap feels for a free, roving life. Why! half of our biggest rogues *did* know good from evil; and what of that? They liked evil better nor good. I reckon there's a bad spirit as is always tugging at a fellow's heart."

"You are right, Wilkins," replied Mr. Mayburn. "It is the power of the Prince of Darkness that you feel in your heart, dragging you to the pit of perdition. But if you pray to God, my poor man, he will send you strength to resist the evil one."

Wilkins groaned, and his friends felt true pity for the unfortunate man, who was sensible of his own weakness; and while all deeply regretted that the infamous Peter had chosen to pursue them, they resolved continually to watch and pray for the complete reformation of Wilkins. Neither could the family feel in safety while they believed the savages remained on the island; it was therefore arranged that Arthur and Jack – the most prudent heads – should return to the cliffs above the landing-place of these unpleasant visitors, to watch their proceedings, and endeavor, if possible, to discover their plans, and the motives that brought them to the island.

In the mean time, the other boys transferred the bark to the capacious cave; the tent was also stowed there, with every other trace of their habitation; and it was arranged that, if there was likely to be any danger of detection, the two sentinels were to announce it by a sharp whistle, when the whole family would be ready to take shelter in the gloomy but secure fortress.

Concealing themselves as much as possible among the tangled mangroves, Arthur and Jack went round to the spot from whence they had previously seen the strangers, and beneath the abundance of brushwood above the cliffs they made for themselves a complete hiding-place, with loopholes for observation. They saw the men still assembled round the boat, but the sound of the hammer induced them to conclude that Peter was engaged repairing some damage in it; and, to the great vexation of Jack, he saw his own tool-chest, which he valued so highly, standing on one side, and at a little distance lay the boughs of a large mangrove tree, and the axe with which they had been felled.

Arthur suggested that Peter had brought these men to the island, hoping to find the remainder of their property, and bringing the tools to cut down a tree and make a raft to carry away the spoils; for

the light canoes which were lying on the beach were only fit to contain one person, or, at the most, two in each; and that, finding the boat, Peter had thought it more convenient than a raft for the purpose.

"Do you think, Mr. Arthur," said Jack, "they will be leaving any of the canoes behind them? I should like to see how they finish them off at the ends. But surely they'll never start off in that unlucky boat; I could hardly bide to see them enter her, knowing what we know."

But Arthur was of opinion that they were not called upon to risk their own lives and the lives of their friends, by going forward to report the character of the boat. Besides, Peter, the only person who would be able to understand their language, would probably not believe them.

So they continued to watch till Peter had completed his work, and then, by the efforts of the natives, the boat was launched, the whole party celebrating the event by dancing, singing, and flinging about their arms with childish delight. Peter selected three of the men to accompany him in the boat, which, with the aid of some long poles and paddles from their canoes, they pushed off and forced over the rocks. The rest of the natives leaped into their canoes, and followed with shouts of admiration.

In deep anxiety the two young men continued to watch the boat, which they expected every moment to see disappear; but whether Peter had found out its defects and remedied them, or the water had swelled the wood and rendered it fit for service, it was impossible to say. One thing only was clear, that as long as they could observe it, till it had passed towards the south, out of their view, it continued to move slowly, but with apparent security.

Leaving their position, they crossed over to a high point at the south of the island, from whence they could perceive the little fleet – the canoes now diminished to mere specks – proceeding towards a dark object, which they judged to be a distant island.

Satisfied that the people had all departed, they descended to the beach to inspect the scene of their visit, Jack remaining for some time silent from the mortification of seeing the product of his labors appropriated so successfully by the unscrupulous Peter; and almost disappointed that he had not witnessed the boat go down, as he expected. But when they reached the strand, he recovered his spirits at the sight of a canoe which they had not been able to carry off conveniently after manning the boat. It was not useful as a prize, for it would only contain one person in comfort; but he was able, as he wished, to examine the workmanship.

"Shall we carry it off, Mr. Arthur?" he said. "A fair exchange is no robbery; and you know, sir, this is poor payment for my good boat."

"I think we had better leave it, Jack," answered Arthur. "The blacks will certainly return for it; and when they find it removed, they will be convinced that we are still concealed on the island. If we remain unsuspected, Peter will naturally conclude from the sight of the wrecked boat, that we are all drowned; and will then think no more about us. You see the simple construction of the canoe, closed at the ends by the stringy bark, which we can easily procure; or better still, we can use hempen ropes, of which we have still some; and we must strengthen the bottom by an extra layer of bark, or by thin planks."

"It's not badly put together," said Jack, with a critical air; "but it will be strange if a regular taught English carpenter cannot beat it. I'm not daunted, Mr. Arthur, after all my vexations. And here's something that pleases me better; and, say what you will, sir, this is my own, and I'll take it."

This was a small saw, which had been left beneath the lopped branches of the mangrove; and Arthur, prudent as he was, not only agreed that Jack had a perfect right to carry away his own property; but he thought he might do it with safety; for, in the place where it was lying, it would certainly be washed away by the next tide, if it was left behind; and, charmed with their prize, they hastened home to report that the intruders had departed.

Hugh and Gerald were in a high state of indignation at the audacity of Peter in carrying off their boat; and Wilkins was furious, upbraiding Jack for his professional unskilfulness; when a fellow like Black Peter could make the boat fit to stand a voyage.

"We do not know yet how the voyage ended," said Margaret. "It may be the boat has again foundered where help could not be had."

"God send it may!" said Wilkins. Mr. Mayburn reproved the thoughtless man for the exclamation, telling him he ought rather to pray that the sinful man might be long spared, that he might have opportunity to repent.

"Him repent!" cried Wilkins; "bless you, master, ye might as lief look to Miss here turning bush-ranger! It's not in him. He were just born for nought but to die a rascal, and that he'll do, and no mistake!"

"It is a mistake, rash man!" replied Mr. Mayburn. "God sent no man into the world marked for perdition. There is ever a door open that the vilest may enter. Let us all pray that he may find that door; and if God permit me, I would gladly use my humble efforts to reclaim the wretched sinner."

"Well, all I can say is, sir," answered Wilkins, "God send ye may never have a chance. Ye're a deal ower good to be thrown away in running efter such a rogue, and ten to one he'd twist yer neck if ye said a word to him."

Wilkins could not be convinced that there was any hope for Black Peter; and Margaret besought her father henceforth to talk to the ignorant man of his own peril, rather than of that of his worthless comrade; of whom he was not yet in a frame of mind to tolerate the mention.

The bark canoe was now begun in earnest. It was twelve feet in length, and broad enough to admit two persons seated on the bottom, for benches they did not venture to introduce. The ends were closed firmly with the stringy fibres of the tree named the "stringy bark tree," as the tough fibres of this bark seemed more suitable for the purpose than the hemp-twisted ropes found in the ship.

Ten days completed the first canoe, and hardened the gum used to coat it. Paddles and oars were added, and then the workmen fondly looked upon it as a success, and Jack was sanguine in his expectation that in fair weather it must reach the mainland safely. But it was not large enough to contain the whole party, and a second visit to the interior was necessary, and a second gum-tree was barked. At this visit, and on several occasions, the younger boys looked out on the coast for traces of the natives, but all continued so tranquil that they began to hope they should not again be disturbed.

Before they began to make the second canoe they made a trial of the first, by carefully conveying it over the reefs, and launching it beyond them. Wilkins offered to take it alone; but Jack chose to accompany him, that he might note any imperfection and correct it. It floated beautifully, was easily governed, and the workmen were full of pride and hope as they deposited their canoe in the cave, and turned to work at another.

"If we can but succeed as well with the next," said Jack, "we shall have nothing to dread but a gale, or too heavy a loading. Let us consider, Mr. Arthur; we shall be four in the first boat, and five in the second. Five will be too many for it, sir."

"And my clothes," said Margaret, "the gun, knives, and axe, with all our table utensils, besides necessary provisions. How are they to be stowed?"

All were silent; for to stow all these things besides the four passengers, would be more dangerous than even the fifth person.

"I say, Jack, my lad," said Wilkins, "ye'll have to rig up a catamaran, like them they have down yonder, to land folks over a high surf. I'se see and manage it myself, and then ye'll be shot of me. Ye ken I'se a good-to-nought; and maybe I'd be bringing down a storm on ye all, like that Jonah as master was reading on."

Though Mr. Mayburn assured Wilkins God would not pour his vengeance on them for protecting a man who had shown some hopes of amendment, the suggestion of Wilkins was fully approved. A catamaran was obviously desirable, and as soon as the second canoe was completed, they set to work, lopped the stems of the mangrove, and lashed them together to form as large a raft as they required. This they surrounded with a frame of thin wood, and the catamaran was completed

to the satisfaction of the workmen, ready for the cargo to be tied to it. Gerald named it the luggage-van, and declared he would certainly take his passage on it.

When all was finished, it became an object of consideration what might be the nature of the coast they should land upon. They had read that many parts of the west coast of Australia were mere deserts, arid and barren, without food or water, and they knew not but they might be driven on such an inhospitable shore. It was therefore advisable, before they abandoned the plenty that now surrounded them, that they should collect stores for possible contingencies. The brandy cask they had found in the wreck was large; this, before they embarked, they proposed to fill with fresh water from the tank, the most important provision for the voyage. And for the rest, one fine morning the whole party set out with bags and baskets on a foraging expedition to obtain food to victual their fleet.

## CHAPTER IX

### **The Foray. – Young Potatoes. – More Intruders. – Ruth's Introduction to the Savages. – The Sailing of the Fleet. – The Desert Shore. – The Giant Ant-hill. – Once more at Sea. – A Storm, and the Loss of the Catamaran**

When they arrived at the lake, they found the margin crowded with the nests of aquatic birds, built among the reeds, and a dozen fine ducks were soon taken. Ruth filled a large basket with eggs, and finally a quantity of fish was procured. With this ample provision they turned homewards; but passing the plot they had sowed with potatoes on their first arrival at the cove, they were astonished to see how forward the plants were; and on digging they found young potatoes, of which they carried away a small bag; but as they still had a large supply of those found in the wreck, they left the greater part for the benefit of succeeding visitors.

When they came near the height above the beach, on which they had first seen the footsteps of the natives, Hugh and Gerald went to the cliff to look over once more on the well-remembered spot, but started back immediately, for, to their deep distress, they beheld a considerable number of naked savages, painted with white chalk in a most frightful manner, dancing, singing, and throwing up their arms as if they were frantic.

The boys made a signal of silence to the rest; but Ruth, who was always, as Jenny said, in the wrong place, had followed the boys to the cliff, and, curious to know what they had seen below, she leaned forward to look down through an opening in the bush. O'Brien, alarmed lest she should be seen darted forward to seize her arm and draw her back; but startled by the action, and terrified by the scene below, she lost her balance, and, encumbered with the heavy basket, tottered over the edge, rolled down the steep cliff through the crackling, thorny brushwood, and alighted amidst the strange wild crew on the beach.

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