WILD ADVENTURES IN WILD PLACES

BY

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Freeditorial

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Chapter One

Part I—The Moors and Fens of England.

In the Depths of the Forest—Frank and his Toad—A Day with the Hounds—The Furies' Leap—"That Fox was my Fate."

There is no doubt at all that when young Frank Willoughby brought out his book with him, and seated himself on the trunk of the old fallen tree, he meant to read it; but this intention had soon been abandoned, and, at the moment our tale commences, the book lay on the grass at his feet, and Frank was dreaming. He was not asleep, not a bit of it; his eyes were as wide open as yours or mine are at this moment; but there was a far-away look in them, and you could tell by the cloud that seemed to hang on his lowered brow that his thoughts were none of the pleasantest. He was not alone, at least not quite, for, not a yard away from his feet, there sat gazing up into his face—why, what do you think? A great toad! Do not start; men in solitude have taken up with stranger companions than this. And Frank was solitary, or at least he conceived himself to be so; and day after day he left his home on the borders of the great forest of Epping, and wandered down here into the depths of the wood, and seated himself idly on that log as we see him now. The toad had come to know him, and he to know the toad. He even brought crumbs for him, which the batrachian never failed to discuss, and seemed to enjoy. So the two took a kindly interest in each other's welfare.

On this particular forenoon the summer sun was very bright; it shimmered down through the trees like a shower of gold, it glittered on the grass-stems, it brightened the petals of the wild flowers, and burnished the backs of myriads of beetles, as they opened their cloaks and tried to fly in it. No wonder that on this glorious morning the birds sang in every tree, and that the happy hum of insect life was everywhere around.

"Well, old gentleman," said Frank at last, addressing the toad, "you are like myself, I think; you are not over happy."

"Pooh!" the toad seemed to reply. "I'm enjoying the sunshine and the free, fresh air, ain't I? My house isn't many yards round the corner. I'm a jolly old bachelor, that's what I am, and there's no life like it. No, I'm not unhappy, if you are. Pooh!"

"Heigho!" sighed Frank.

But list! There is some one singing, some one hidden at present by the trees, but evidently coming nearer and nearer to where Frank is sitting—a rich, mellow, manly voice; and the song comes directly from the heart, that you can easily tell, and from a gladsome heart, too, and one in unison with the freshness and brightness to be seen on every hand—

"I wish I were as I have been,
Hunting the hart in forests green.
With bended bow and bloodhound free;
For that's the life that's meet for me."
Next moment, brushing the boughs aside, a tall, handsome young man of some five-and-twenty years appeared upon the scene. Brown he was as to beard and whiskers, bronzed as to cheeks and brow, and clear in eye as a little child.

"Why, Chisholm!" cried Frank, starting up and grasping his friend's extended hand.

"Why, Frank!" cried Chisholm, "you terrible old recluse; and so I have found you at last, have I? Fairly ferreted you out. Sit down, old man, and give an account of yourself."

"Well, you see," said Willoughby, "I—I want to go up for my degree, and I—the fact is I've been reading."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Chisholm, laughing till the forest rang again. "Been reading, have you?" As he spoke he kicked the book that lay on the grass. "Been reading Byron—ha, ha, ha! I do believe the boy's in love."

Young Frank turned red all over.

"Why, how do you know?" he said, "and how did you find me out, here in the forest? Chisholm, you're a wizard, or something worse."

"Been to your father's house, dear boy," replied Chisholm, explaining. "Splendid fellow, your father, by the way. Enjoyed some rare sport and fun—but missed you sadly, you may be sure; but your father told me everything. 'My young rascal,'—these are his very words, Frank—'my young rascal,' he said, 'has fallen in love, and wants to marry right away; of course I couldn't give my consent, because he is only a boy, you know, so he went into a pet, and has taken lodgings somewhere on the borders of Epping Forest, under the pretence of reading.' And that, Frank, was the only clue to your whereabouts that I could get; but you see I've found you, my boy. And now tell me all about it."

“A most modest request, I do declare,” said Frank, with a smile; “but never mind, I never did have a secret from you, and it may do me good to unburden my mind.”

“That it will,” said Chisholm; “but before you begin just pitch Byron at that ugly toad there, will you?”

“That I certainly won’t; he has been my only companion for weeks.”

“Well, well, well,” said Chisholm, “buried in the depths of Epping Forest, his only companion a toad, the once gay and jolly Frank Willoughby. Why you must be deeply in love.”

“I am, and that is a fact, and if you only saw the object of my affections, I do not think you would wonder much. She is—”

“Now Frank, dear boy,” Chisholm said, “I must apologise for interrupting you; but pray do not begin to dilate on the charms of your fair enslaver. I know she must be everything that is good and beautiful, else she never could have captivated you. Just tell me how it happened, and where it happened.”

“It happened down in Wales,” replied Frank, “that is where it happened; but the day, Chisholm, that was big with my fate, was a day with the hounds. You know how fond I am of hunting, don’t you?”

“I know,” said Chisholm, laughing, “that there used not to be a better man than yourself, Frank, in the field; that you crossed the very stiffest country at the very heels of the hounds, and though you often said you didn’t like to see a poor fox broken up, you managed, nevertheless, to be always in at the death. That is what you used to be, my boy. What you are now may be quite another thing, since a lady has come to be woven up in the web of your history. Remember the story of Hercules, Frank.”

“Oh! bother Hercules,” cried Frank impatiently; “pray let me get on with my own story.”

“Heave round then,” said Chisholm.

“Well, then, when I arrived this year, early in spring, back from my little trip to Malta, I brought with me a letter of introduction to General Lyell, of Penmawhr Castle, in Brecknockshire. He keeps a nice little pack of smallish foxhounds—oh! such rare ones for a run—they can puzzle out the coldest scent, and when they find, they follow in such

beautiful form, that it seems to me you could cover the pack with the mainsail of my father's yacht."

"Go on," cried Chisholm, "you're warming to your subject; there's life in you yet."

"You may be sure," continued Frank, "that I did not take long to forward my letter, and in due course an invitation followed. 'Hounds meet at the Three Cross Roads,' ran the epistle, 'on Tuesday, the 9th. Come and spend the Easter holidays with us, and take us as you find us.' There were three clear days before the 9th, but my impatience would not let me wait. I sent Bob, my man, down with my mare the next morning, and followed on the same evening. My man had chosen the best inn in the village, for I meant to meet the general for the first time with the hounds, and show him what sort of metal my mare and I were made of.

"Next morning, to my sorrow, the ground was hard with frost, the sky clear and blue, and the wind blowing high from the east. The day after there was no improvement, and my heart sank to zero; but my spirits rose that day, because down went the glass, and the wind veered round to about a south and by west. The sunset was a gorgeous one, and long after the god of day had sunk behind the hills, crimson clouds lying along in a sky of palest, purest yellow, shading off into the blue dome above, where bright stars shone, gave token of a beautiful to-morrow. I was up betimes, you may be certain, and found to my joy that a little rain had fallen. I ate a huntsman's breakfast, and then dressed. I donned a new coat of scarlet—in fact, it was so new that I felt ashamed of it, and had half a mind to make Bob splash it a bit with mud. It was well splashed before night, I can tell you.

"The meet wasn't a large one, but men and hounds and horses all looked as if they had plenty of go in them, and they required it too. The country is a rough, rolling one, and there is no want of stone fences; so you need pith and pluck if you'd keep the hounds in view.

"Not knowing any one, I kept aloof for a time until they drew a cover or two, until the mellow music of the hounds, mingling with the cheering notes of the huntsman's horn, told me they had found, and that the run had commenced. Across country, straight almost as the crow could fly, for ten miles, that old fox led us. Then he changed course near a plantation, and took us five miles in another direction. Then, doubling round, he took us almost straight away back, so that the stragglers once more had a chance of joining the hunt. But the terribly rough state of the country told on all but the best of us, and if we were few in number to start, we were still less numerous when the fox finally took to earth and refused to show again. A fine old gentlemanly fox, I can assure you,

who had apparently enjoyed the run as much as any of us, and having done so, bade us good-morning and retired.

"I had made acquaintance with the general, and we were laughing and talking together when he suddenly started and turned pale.

"'Great heavens!' he cried, 'it is Eenie, my daughter. Black Bess, her mare, has bolted with her, and is heading straight for the Furies' Leap. She is lost! she is lost!'

"I hardly heard the last word. I had struck the spurs into my own good mare, and was off like a meteor. I could see the lady's terrible danger. She was heading for an awful precipice. I saw I might intercept her if I crossed her bows, as a sailor would say. It was a ride for life—we near each other, riding swift as arrows. Onward she comes—onwards I dash, and we are barely fifty yards from the Furies' Leap, when our horses come into collision with fearful force.

"I remember nothing more until I open my eyes and find myself in bed, powerless to move. But a beautiful young girl rose from a seat near the window, and, approaching the bed, gave me to drink, but enjoined me to be still. This was Miss Lyell; she nursed me back to life, and the next few weeks seemed all one happy dream."

"She loves you?"

"She does, and has promised never to be another's."

"And she'll be yours, Frank, my boy. Come, I've news to give you. Neither your father nor her father object, except on the score of your youth and hers, and your inexperience of the world. Now, depend upon it, Frank, what your father advises is best. He wants you to spend your next few years in travelling."

"And I will," cried Frank; "I'll seek adventures and dangers in every part of the globe—among the snows of the north, amidst the jungles of India, in Afric's bush, and the wild plain-lands of far distant Australia. I care not if I am killed; life without my Eenie is not worth having."

"Bravo! Frank," cried Chisholm, jumping up and shaking him by the hand. "I'll go with you; and my friend, Fred Freeman, will go too. There's luck in odd numbers. But don't talk about being killed; it is time that we want to kill, and all the wild beasts we can draw a bead upon."

Frank left the gloomy forest a happier man than he had entered it. He was laughing right merrily too.

“Bless that dear old fox, though,” he was saying; “may he always be jolly and fat and frolicsome ’mid summer’s sunshine or winter’s snow. That fox was my fate.”

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Chapter Two

Frank undergoes the Process of "Hardening Off"—Camp-life on the Banks of the Thames—A Week among Rabbits—"'Ware Hare."

There was something about Fred Freeman which is difficult to describe, but which caused everybody to like him. He had the manners of a high-bred English gentleman, but that did not, of course, constitute the something that made him a favourite, because bon ton, manners are happily not rare. However, there's no harm in my trying to describe him to you, because he is one of our three heroes. Fred wasn't much, if any, above the middle height; he had a short dark beard and moustache—they were not black, however. He was very regular in features—handsome, in fact, handsome when he was in his quiet moods, which he very frequently was, and even more so when merry, for then he was simply all sunshine, and it made you laugh to look at him. He was very unobtrusive. He was a capital shot, and a daring hunter and sportsman, but never boasted about his own doings. His constitution was as tough as india-rubber, and as hard as nails. If there be anything wanting in this description, the reader must supply it himself. Anyhow, Fred was a genuine good fellow. He had hitherto travelled a good deal, sport-intent, chiefly on the Continent; but he jumped at the proposal to go round the world on "a big shoot," as he called it.

Freeman was a bachelor, and said he would always remain so; Chisholm O'Grahame was also a bachelor. Perhaps he was seen to the best advantage when his foot was on his native heath, and a covey of grouse ahead of him. He was one of the so-called "lucky dogs" of this world. On the death of an uncle, he would come into a fine old Highland estate. Meanwhile he had nothing to do, and plenty of time to do it in. After his visit to Frank, he went back to see Frank's father, who was delighted at the success of his mission.

"Ah," said he, "I'm so pleased! And so you must take the young dog off, and show him the world. But look here, he's in your charge, mind you; and if you take my advice, you'll show him some shooting in England before you go abroad. He's only a hot-house plant as yet; he wants hardening off."

Chisholm laughed. "I'll harden him off," he said.

And so the hardening-off process commenced at once. Frank was not sorry, after all, to leave the gloom of Epping Forest, and commence a sportsman's life in earnest. The plan adopted by Chisholm and his friend, Fred, to "break young Frank in, and to harden him off," was, I think, a good one. They were to travel a good deal in England, be here to-day and away to-morrow, and visit any of the fens or moors or shores where there was the chance of a week or two of good shooting.

That was one part of the plan. The other was that they were, as Fred called it, "to forswear civilisation, and to live in tents;" in other words, to do a deal of camping out, instead of living in hotels or houses of any kind.

"How do you think you will like that kind of thing?" asked Chisholm.

"Oh, I think it will be perfectly delightful," said Frank, enthusiastically.

"But Frank is a bit of a shot, isn't he?" asked Fred.

"Always during vacation times," said Frank, speaking for himself. "I used to potter around my father's property. I have done so ever since I was a boy."

"Ha! ha!" laughed Chisholm. "Why, you're only a boy yet."

"All stuff," said Frank stoutly. "I'll be twenty next birthday."

"Well, well," said Chisholm; "but tell Fred what you used to shoot."

"Oh, anything about the farms, you know, bar the song-birds; father thought it cruel to kill them. But there were rats, such lots of rats, and sometimes a hawk or a rabbit, or even a hare. Then there were the wild pigeons—wary beggars they are, too; I used to wait for them under the fir-trees."

"What, and kill them sitting?" asked Fred.

"Well," said Frank, "it isn't sportsman-like, I know; but I could hardly ever get near them else. Then the young rooks were great fun in spring; and mind you, there is many a worse dish to set before a hungry man than rook-pie."

"I believe you, lad," said Fred.

“Well, I’ve shot stoats and weasels by the score; and I once shot a polecat, and another day an otter, and another day an owl.”

“Well, well, well,” cried Fred. “What bags you must have made, to be sure! Never mind, you’ve got the makings of a good sportsman in you. Chisholm and I will bring you out, never fear. Did you often go owl-shooting?”

“No,” replied Frank; “I only remember one owl, and I don’t know which of the two of us had the bigger fright—Ponto the pointer, or myself. I had killed nothing that day but one old rook, a few field-mice, and a snake or two, and we were coming home in the dusk, when some great bird flew heavily out of the ivy-covered old tree near the churchyard. ‘Down you come, whatever you are,’ says I; and bang! bang! went both barrels. He flew a goodly way, but finally fell; and off went Ponto, and off went I in search of him. Ponto was in a way, I can tell you; he wasn’t pointing half prettily. ‘Hoo! hoo! hoo!’ the owl was screaming. ‘Come a bit nearer, and out come both your eyes.’ ‘I’ll stand here, anyhow,’ Ponto seemed saying, ‘till master comes up.’ Well, Chisholm, when I came up and saw the creature, it looked so like one of the winged images you see on tombstones, that, troth, I thought I’d shot a cherub of some sort.”

“Well done, Frank,” cried Chisholm, laughing. “Now,” he continued, pulling a letter from his pocket, “How will this suit? It is from a farmer friend of mine in Berkshire, a rough and right sort of a fellow. He farms about five hundred acres close to the Thames. He invites us down for a rabbit shoot, shall we go?”

“Oh! by all means,” cried Frank.

“I’m ready,” said Fred quietly.

And that “rabbit shoot” began Frank Willoughby’s sporting adventures. They had a whole week of it, and very much they enjoyed it. Chestnut Farm was a dear old-fashioned, rustic, rumble-tumble of a place, with a rolling country all around it, and the river quietly meandering through its midst. They pitched their tent not far from the river; under canvas they lived and ate and slept. Fred Freeman was a capital cook; he built his fire of wood and hung his kettle-pot gipsy fashion on a tripod, and the curries and stews he used to turn out were quite delightful. The farmer and his wife would fain have had them to live in their hospitable dwelling, but being told that Frank was undergoing the process of hardening off and general tuition in camp and sporting life, the good farmer looked at the young man for a moment or two from top to bottom, just as if he had been a colt.

“Oh!” he said, with a grunt of satisfaction, “bein’ broke, is he? Well, a rare, fine, upstanding one he be. He’ll do.”

But the farmer’s wife sent to the tent every day the freshest of butter and sweetest of creamy milk, with eggs that never had time to get cool, and so, on the whole, they were very well off.

It was deliciously comfortable, so thought Frank, this camping out. His bed was a hammock, and, though there were at first some things he looked upon as drawbacks, he soon got used to them. If a heavy shower came on it made noise enough to waken the seven sleepers, and large drops used to ooze in through the canvas. The gnats’ bites were hard to put up with, but Chisholm comforted him by bidding him “just wait until he went to India and had a touch of the jungle bugs.” Early to bed and early to rise was our heroes’ motto; early to bed to calm and dreamless slumber, such as your dwellers within brick walls never know; early to rise to have a header in the river, and to return to breakfast as fresh as a jack; early to rise to get the lines and punt clear and ready for a few hours’ fishing; early to rise if only to hear the birds singing, to watch the squirrels skipping about aloft among the trees, or to observe the thousand-and-one queer ways of the tiny dwellers by the river side, friends in fur and friends in feather. Why, in one week Frank felt himself growing quite a naturalist.

They had come down to shoot rabbits, but it must not be supposed that this was all the sport they had down by the charming river; for many wild-fowl fell to Frank’s gun, and he procured a good many beautiful specimens of birds, which he took the pains to skin and preserve for the purpose of having them stuffed. A good deal of their time was spent in fishing. They did not catch a Thames salmon, it is true, and grayling were not in season; but there were trout and perch and jack in abundance, and one day, greatly to his joy, Frank landed a lordly pike.

“I must tell you this, Mr O’Grahame and gen’l’m’n all,” said the farmer to our friends on the very first day of their arrival, “I have an order to kill five hundred to seven hundred rabbits, so there is plenty of sport for you all, and ’specially for the young ’un that’s bein’ broke; but mind, gen’l’m’n, ’ware hare, that’s wot I says, ’ware hare. My man’ll go with ye and see it is all right like, and my boys will carry the bags.”

“Whatever does he mean by ‘’ware hare’?” asked Frank afterwards.

“Why, that we mustn’t shoot a hare on any account,” replied Chisholm; “rabbits and nothing but rabbits.”

“Gearge,” the farmer’s man, went with them every day to help to carry the rabbits our sportsmen killed. On the other hand, there were boys in the rear to help Gearge. Besides Gearge and the boys, there were two dogs—a beautiful setter and a pointer, but good useful country dogs—dogs that did not think it beneath their dignity to retrieve as well as set and point. The most curious part of the whole business to young Frank, was the fact that these dogs knew a hare from a rabbit at first sight far better than he did. Well, to a young sportsman, to see a beautiful hare pass within easy shooting distance was a great temptation to fire. Frank had his doubts whether Gearge always knew one from the other, or t’other from which, because, no matter what it was, if Gearge saw only a bit of brown fur flitting from one bush to another, he sang out in stentorian tones, “’Ware hare.”

So it was “’Ware hare” all day long with Gearge. But once Frank did make a mistake, or his gun did, for the latter seemed to rise to his shoulder of its own accord, and next moment a hare was dead.

The pointer brought it and laid it solemnly down at Frank’s feet, and looked up into his face.

“See what you’ve done,” he seemed to say; “here is a pretty kettle of fish. What do you think of yourself? and how do you feel?”

And when Gearge came up and saw the result of the accident, his red, round face, which, as a rule, was wreathed in smiles, got long, and his jaw fell, while his eyes seemed wanting to jump out of their sockets.

“Well, I never?” said Gearge, rubbing the palms of his hands nervously in his cow-gown, “and I warned ye sir, too.”

“Bag him,” said Frank, “and never mind.”

“Bag ’im!” cried Gearge, aghast. “Bag he, bag a hare! No, sir, not if I knows it. Master’d give me the sack myself. We’ll leave ’im to the blue-bottles and the beetles; but oh! sir, in future, ’ware hare.”

“You seem fond of hare-shooting,” said Fred that evening, when Frank told him his adventure, or rather misadventure. “Why, if you had been where I was last winter you would have had hare-shooting to your heart’s content.”

“Beaters was it you had?” asked Chisholm.

“Yes, we had no dogs; but good sport, mind you—right and left sometimes, and one to each barrel if you only chose to hold straight.”

About the third morning, when Gearge came to the tent as usual, his face seemed rounder and redder than ever; his eyes, too, were so wreathed in smile-begotten wrinkles that they had almost disappeared. It was moreover observed that the pockets of his cow-gown were more bulky than usual.

“We’ll have a rare lark to-day,” said Gearge, pulling out first one polecat ferret and then another.

And so they had; for what with working the banks all the morning and shooting the rabbits in the open that succeeded in running the blockade, they had wonderful bags. Though Frank didn’t say much, he was glad to get back to the tent; his feet were swollen, and he could hardly carry his gun. He was certainly “bein’ broke” with a vengeance.

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Chapter Three

Frank is thoroughly "Hardened Off"—Deer-stalking in the Highlands—Partridge, Pheasant, and Duck Shooting—"Good-bye"—"None but the Brave deserve the Fair."

"How does he harden, Fred?" cried Chisholm, bursting all unannounced one morning into the dining-room of a North Wales hotel, where Freeman and young Willoughby were just putting the finishing touches to a glorious breakfast, with boiled eggs and mountain trout. Chisholm had been absent for a whole week. "How does he harden?"

"I think he is getting on famously. He's curing nicely."

"I declare," said Frank, laughing, "you talk of me as if I were a ham or something; and Chisholm asks about me in the same tone of voice he would use if he wanted to know how your meerschaum coloured."

"'Cause we're interested in you, dear boy," said Chisholm, feeling Frank's arm. "But, bless my heart," he continued, "there is a biceps for you; why, it's as hard as a hawser! And there's a sunburnt face for you! Waiter, bring the beef. And what are you doing, boys?"

"Well," said Fred, "you know we've been two months now under canvas, so we thought we would try a week of civilisation. But we've had rare sport enough, fishing in river and fishing in lake, and shooting almost whatever we came across—rabbits, leverets, pigeons, plovers, anything."

"Bad boys," said Chisholm. "But never mind, we're off to-morrow."

"Where away?"

"To the Highlands, the stern Scottish Highlands," said Chisholm. "I'm promised a week among the deer. You're hard enough for that now, Frank."

"What a ubiquitous trio we are, to be sure!" said Fred.

They certainly seemed so, reader; for two days after the foregoing conversation they were dining at a quiet little hotel in Beauley, and by four of the clock next morning they were on their way to the house of Duncan McPhee, the head keeper of the great forest of Cairntree, one of the wildest tracts of country in the wild North. Though termed a forest, it is only partially wooded; for gigantic hills, bare and rugged, tower skywards every here and there from amidst the pine-trees, and there are, too, vast tracts of bare brae or moorland, covered only with heather, the home of the grouse and the ptarmigan. Deer abound in this forest in countless herds; but, saving the houses of the keepers, you might journey for days in all directions without seeing the smoke from a single habitation.

Early as our heroes were abroad, Duncan and his dogs were there to meet them. But their first day was a blank, and they returned very tired and somewhat disheartened to the keeper's house, where, putting up with Highland fare, they determined to stay all night. The next day they were rewarded with the sight of deer in hundreds, but that was all; the deer were too wild and wary to reach. More than once that day, as some noble stag stood for a moment on knoll or brae-top, scenting the wind, then dashing wildly off adown the glen, the words of Walter Scott came to Frank's mind—

"The crested leader, proud and high,
Tossed his beamed frontlet to the sky,
A moment gazed adown the dale,
A moment snuffed the tainted gale;
Then, as the headmost foe appeared.
With one brave bound the copse he cleared,
And stretching forward free and far,
Sought the wild heaths of Uam Var."

But the third was a never-to-be-forgotten day, for Frank brought down his first stag, and it was a "royal." Luck seemed to set in after this. It never rains but it pours, you know, and nobody had any reason to be dissatisfied with that week spent among the red deer in the wilds of Cairntree.

I wish I had space wherein to tell you of one-half of the delightful sporting adventures our heroes had during the many months Frank was "bein' broke," or of the many happy, pleasant days they had to look back to, when afterwards sojourning with wild beasts and wilder men—of days spent among the partridges, or with the cockers at work, or following the pheasants. They all agreed that there was but little true sport attached to pheasant-shooting, the birds are so tame.

“It’s just like shooting hens,” Chisholm remarked.

But perhaps their dearest recollections went back to the time they spent in duck shooting. These were days they might have marked in their diaries with a red cross—spent entirely under canvas they were, in true gipsy fashion; for although the season was autumn, the weather was still bright and warm, and the nights just cool enough to be pleasant. By marshes or lonely moorlands, by inland lakes and ponds, or by wooded friths and estuaries, following up the wild-fowl never failed to give them the very greatest of pleasure and sport. In these adventures their chief companion was a dog of the Irish water-spaniel type, and Pattie by name. Red all over was Pattie, and one mass of ringlets, which even a whole day’s swimming in sea or river failed to unravel; he even had a fringe or top-knot over his bonnie brow, which quite set off his peculiar style of beauty. Pattie’s style of beauty was what would be designated in Scotland “the daft.” Mind, you couldn’t help loving Pattie—I defy you not to love him if you tried; but he had such queer ways, and such a funny face, that you couldn’t look at him long without laughing. Pattie was truly Irish, but grand at his work nevertheless, whether retrieving a dead duck or a maimed one. When plunging into the water after the latter, “Be quiet wid yer skraiching,” Pattie would seem to say. “Sure I’ll fetch you out, and you’ll never feel it at all, at all.” But you ought to have seen Pattie coming up out of the river with a dead duck that he probably had had to swim a long distance against the tide for; there was a pride in his beaming eye that my pen would attempt in vain to depict. “What do ye think av me now?” Pattie would seem to say.

But summer and autumn and the first months of winter wore away, and, after spending a whole fortnight at the white hare-shooting among the mountains of Perthshire—and harder work I defy you to find—Frank was at last declared thoroughly broken in, completely hardened off.

“A man,” said Chisholm, “that can stand a week or two among white hares, and not feel too tired to sleep at night, is fit for anything. Now, boys,” he added, “what do you say to a run right away up to the polar ice-fields?”

“I’m in,” said Fred quietly.

“Oh!” said Chisholm, “you’re always in for anything. If I asked you to take a trip to the moon you’d jump at it.”

“Or over it,” said Fred, smiling, “like the cow in the poem of ‘Hey, diddle diddle;’ but are you in earnest about the ice-fields?”

“Downright.”

“Well,” said Frank, with assumed modesty, “if you think I’m ‘broke’ enough, please I’d like to go too.”

“Bravo!” cried Chisholm O’Grahame, “that settles the question.”

They made arrangements to sail in a seal-and-whale ship in February. They got an introduction to a captain of one of these, and he gladly undertook to convey them to Greenland and back, “free, gratis, and for nothing, except the pleasure of their company, and the skins and blubber they would no doubt kill.” That was how the captain expressed it. “But, mind you,” he said, “you’ll have to rough it a bit.”

“We don’t mind that,” said Chisholm.

Before he left for the far distant north, Frank Willoughby spent some weeks at General Lyell’s castle. Happy, happy weeks they were, and how quickly, too, they fled away! I could make you feel very sentimental and “gushive,” reader, if I told you all that passed between the lovely young Eenie and our hero Frank, but I never tell tales out of school, so there. I may just say, however, that, when the last moment did come, poor Eenie could hardly breathe the fond “good bye” for the tears that she could not repress.

The General’s adieu was a hearty one.

“Good-bye,” he said, “keep up a good heart, and,” he added laughingly, as he patted Frank on the back, “remember—

“‘None but the brave deserve the fair.’”

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Chapter Four

Part II—The Polar Ice-Fields

Outward bound—Night in the Pack—The Aurora—The awful Silence of the Ice-fields—Seals! Seals!—The Battle with the Bladder-noses—Jack in the Box with a Vengeance—A Fight with Walruses.

The good ship Grampus slipped away from her moorings on the 13th of February, 18—, and steamed slowly seaward from the port of Peterhead, North Britain, hound for the wild and desolate regions that surround the pole. She steamed slowly away in the very teeth of a breeze of winds that might have frightened a man of less daring and pluck than Captain Anderson, for the sea was grey and stormy, the sky was leaden and threatening, and the very sea-birds that screamed around the vessel's bows seemed to warn him that there was danger on the deep. But the Captain heeded them not. He had said he would sail on this day, and he did, for well he knew what his vessel could now do, and had done before; besides, he was a true sailor, and had all a sailor's impatience to begin the voyage.

"It looks a bit squally," he said to the pilot as he bade him adieu, "and we may have a dirty day or two, but the Grampus can stand it, and I'm not the man to linger in the harbour one half-hour after I'm ready to start. Good-bye, old man."

The Grampus was a steam brig of some three hundred and fifty tons, fitted with powerful engines, and a screw that could be hoisted up out of the water when sail was on her. Built of wood, she was as stout and strong a ship as ever clove the waves. And she needed all her strength too—there was a wide and stormy ocean to cross, and there was ice to plough through that no fragile ship dare ever face. The captain was the owner of the vessel; and many a voyage, and not unsuccessful ones either, had he made to the polar ice-fields, but the present one was fated to be the most eventful of all.

From the very commencement of the cruise, until the first ice was sighted, the wind kept steadily ahead, and the seas kept washing over the brave brig from stem to stern. But she was not to be daunted, so steadily she steamed on northwards, ever northwards.

A week after the last of the lonely isles of Shetland had sunk like a little cloud beneath the southern horizon they were far away at sea—indeed, there was nothing to be seen from the masthead, only the great tumbling seas that dashed their sprays high over the funnel. Even the birds had left them, all save that strange mysterious creature that is ever seen wheeling around ships sailing over the broad Atlantic, or crossing the northern seas, and which naturalists call the stormy petrel, and mariners Mother Carey's chicken. No wonder sailors look upon this bird with something akin to superstition and awe, so dark and dusky is the creature, the very little white about it serving but to make its blackness visible; it flits from stormy wave to stormy wave like a veritable evil spirit.

Our friend Frank, in his voyage to the polar ice-fields, suffered somewhat from mal de mer—it sounds far nicer in French than in English—but he bravely stuck to the deck. He was more than once washed into the lee scuppers, but he had on an oilskin suit of fear-nothing dimensions; so he just scrambled up again, or in other words, like the cork leg of the merchant of Rotterdam, he got up "and went on as before."

The farther north the Grampus got, the shorter grew the days. Indeed, they seemed to be sailing into the home of eternal night, only it must be remembered that the season was yet early, and that in the polar regions for three months of the year the sun never appears above the horizon. If the nights were long, however, it cannot be said they were dark; they were lighted up with a magnificence never seen in more southern latitudes. The sky itself was at times of a deep and indescribably dark-blue colour, and the stars were great wheels of sparkling light. This was in itself a beautiful sight, and our heroes used to linger on deck till far on in the night, as if under some pleasant spell. But what pen can describe the gorgeous splendour of the northern lights, or Aurora. Imagine if you can a vast and broad bow, or arc of a circle, stretched athwart the heavens, twenty times as broad as any rainbow, and seeming to be ever so much farther away; imagine this bow to be composed of spears or needles of light—green, blue, crimson, and yellow—and imagine these spears in constant motion, shooting upwards and downwards, changing places incessantly, changing colours constantly, and this too with inconceivable rapidity, and you will be able to form some faint notion of the wonderful sight the Aurora presented to the eyes of our astonished travellers.

Reader, I have been alone in the ice-fields by night, while the Aurora was playing in the heavens above. You cannot conceive of the solitude and lonesomeness of such a situation, nor can you form any conception of the deep, the indescribable silence that reigns in the frozen ocean. Well, upwards as I gazed at the northern lights, I have heard sounds emanating from them. That I do not remember having ever read of anywhere. A

line of spears would advance from the east and another from the west; they would meet and commingle with a subdued clashing and hissing noise, such as you might make by rubbing the palms of the hands rapidly together. What this strange sound can be is a mystery that may never be revealed.

Captain Anderson told our heroes that he never thought the voyage had begun until the crow's-nest, or out-look barrel, was hoisted to the mainmast head.

One morning our travellers were awakened by the sound of singing and shouting, and on going on deck they found the brave skipper rubbing his hands with glee, as he gazed up at the ascending nest.

"Cheerily does it!" he was crying. "Heave, lads! heave, heave, and she goes. Now, young gentlemen," he continued, "are your rifles in order? In two days more, if all goes well, I'll show you such sport as you couldn't even have dreamt of before."

And sure enough, in two days' time they had made "the country," as the ice-fields are termed. If, however, any one on board had expected to find wealth, in the shape of plump seals, lying thereon ready for the gathering, he was much mistaken. There was the ice, to be sure, but never a seal in sight, neither in the water nor out of it, for it seemed that the country was unusually open that year.

"Well," said Anderson, one day, "I'm tired of this north Greenland work; I'll bear away for the west land."

A week's steaming through fields of slushy ice and floating snow, and streams of flat snow-clad bergs, brought them into open water, and they sighted the lofty and desolate shores of Greenland West, and much to their surprise, found a large three-masted Dutchman quietly lying at anchor in a bay, sails all clewed up, and men away on the ice. It was not long ere the Grampus had followed her example, so far as letting go the anchor went, and making all snug and ready for action. A great bear—always a sign seals are about—stood sniffing on the edge of a floe. Perhaps he had never seen a steamship before, or perhaps he was wondering what the crew were having for breakfast. Frank got his Henri-Martini up, and began potting at him with a long-range sight, and presently Master Bruin remembered an appointment he had, and made tracks to keep it.

It was a glorious morning when the boats were called away. All hands were half frantic with joy at the thought they would soon be among the seals. In they trundle, and down go the boats with a splash into the water, and next moment they are off. Frank and Chisholm are in one boat, Fred Freeman in another, and there is a grand race between the two to see who shall first touch the ice and fire the first shot. The boats seemed to fly

over the water, and when they at last ran alongside the floe and the crew jumped on shore, there was hardly a yard's length between them; but Fred was declared winner.

And now the day's work was begun. Warily at first, the riflemen had to creep towards their prey on hands and knees, taking advantage of every hummock or boulder to screen themselves from view. On each piece of ice some forty or fifty seals lay, and each "patch" had a sentry set. When they succeeded in killing him, the others were very much at their mercy; but oftentimes the seal on watch would succeed, even before his eyes closed in death, in giving his companions warning. Then, almost ere another bullet could reach them, they had leapt helter-skelter into the water. But when the sun got higher, the seals seemed to get almost too lazy to move; they could then be approached very much more closely, and the work of death was carried on with an earnestness and energy that was terrible to behold. Indeed, a kind of madness to shed blood seemed to take possession of every man on the ice. There was no thought but to slay. The excitement was intense—awful in its intensity. The sun went slowly round and down, and as he set behind the rugged hills, his disc seemed to reflect the blood on the ice. Even his parting beams had borrowed the self-same hue, and the tops of the highest icebergs looked as if dipped in gore.

When the shadows fell, tired and weary enough now, our heroes went slowly back towards the boats.

"Oh! boys," cried Fred, "don't you remember how bright and lovely the snow was in the morning? Behold it now!"

"Ay, behold it now," said Chisholm. "Indeed, Fred, this is murder. I don't feel I can call it by any other name, and I'm half ashamed of myself."

"So am I," said Frank, "for a seal can't defend itself."

"But the bladder-nosed seals can," said the first mate, who had just joined the trio. "They are terrible beasts to deal with. I'd rather fight a bear single-handed than I would one of these. Once they fill that kettle-pot-like bladder over their noses, they mean mischief, I can tell you. A rifle bullet has no more effect on it than a pea from a pea-shooter."

"Is that so?" said Fred.

"Five years ago," continued the mate, "I was one of the crew of a boat, of ten men in all, that were attacked by these monsters of the deep. They seemed mad with rage and fury;

they swarmed up from the sea to the ice where we stood, with blazing eyes and flashing teeth, by the dozen and by the score. We all fought like fiends; we fought with spears and axes and our rifles clubbed, but the faster we killed them the faster—they came. Our shouts brought assistance from the ship, but not before a whole hour was spent in this battle with the bladder-noses, and not until we were quite exhausted, with three of our number lying dead on the ice."

They were walking over a floe of thick bay ice as the mate told his story. No sooner had he spoken the last words than—

"Down, men, down!" he cried; "the ice is rising ahead."

They followed the mate's advice, and threw themselves on their faces.

In two places the ice was heaving and rising. Then all at once it gave way, with a noise like the firing of great guns, and up from the depths of the dark sea rose two gigantic forms, with wild eyes and yard-long tusks, and of such fearful aspect that Frank's heart almost stood still with dread.

"By George!" cried Chisholm, "this is playing at Jack in the box with a vengeance."

Bang, bang, bang went the rifles, and down sank the apparitions, leaving the broken ice all red with blood.

"They are only wounded," said the mate; "they'll have revenge if it is a month hence, depend on that."

The Grampus, sealing intent, steamed farther and farther north, and the nearer to the pole they got, the heavier grew the ice. There was shooting every day now for three months and more—seals and bears, and sometimes a fox—and, when there was nothing else to go for, they brought down gulls for their feathers, and looms for the sake of fresh meat. Sometimes they were rewarded by the sight of the lonely narwhal, or giant unicorn of the sea—a creature which always makes direct for a boat as soon as it spies one, and has been known to attack and sink a whaler or gig.

They were after the looms one day, Chisholm and Frank being as usual in one boat, with the first mate steering.

Suddenly, "Stand by your clubs and guns, men!" cried the mate; "Here they come. Now we're in for it. I knew they'd seek revenge."

The sea around them seemed alive with the great tusked heads of walruses, coming from all directions and making straight for the boat.

“In oars, and keep cool, lads,” said the mate, seizing an axe; “but for mercy’s sake keep the boat trimmed. If she capsizes we are all dead men.”

How long they fought with those desperate brutes Frank could never tell; but it seemed to him an age ere the other boats came to their relief, and poured volley after volley into the midst of the pack of walruses. Then they disappeared, and but for the sea around them, all reddened with blood, and the floating corpses—which, however, speedily sank—there was not a sign of the fearful hand-to-hand and all-unequal contest.

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Chapter Five.

The West Land of Greenland—A Fall! a Fall!—Danger on all Sides—"Man the Ice-saws"—Working for Life—Beset in the Dreary Pack.

"I feel," said the captain one day, at breakfast, "that I am making a dangerous experiment. I am keeping far in to the west land; I am all but hugging the shore; and if it were to come on to blow from seawards, we would—Steward, I'll have another cup of coffee."

"You think," said Chisholm, "our chances of further cups of coffee wouldn't be very great, eh?"

"I don't think they would," said the captain. "Well, lads, I've shown you a bit of sport, haven't I? And if we had only a little more blubber in her, troth, I'd bear up for bonnie Scotland. I've just come down from the crow's-nest, and what do you think I've spied? Why, open water for miles ahead, stretching away to the north as far as eyes can reach. There are whales there, boys, if we can but wait for them."

After breakfast it was, "All hands assist ship!"

Up sprang the men, and ere one could wink, so to speak, half the crew were at the side with poles, pressing on the ice to make room for the Grampus. It was strange work, and it seemed at first impossible that twenty men with a spar could move a floe. But they did, and three hours afterwards they were in this mysterious open sea.

"Why," cried Frank, "I declare there is the Dutchman dodging yonder with foreyard aback. A sailing ship beat a steamer!"

"Ay, she's got the pull on us, boys," the captain said. "And see, she is flenshing (skinning) a whale; the crang (the skinned corpse) lies beside her. She has met with a lane of open water, and taken advantage of it."

Just at that moment came the cry, "A fall! a fall! on the weather quarter!"

“A fall! a fall!” Surely never was excitement seen like this before, thought Frank.

There was no waiting for orders. The ship seemed to stop of her own accord, and the escaping steam roared uselessly through the funnel.

“A fall! a fall!” Up tumble the men, many undressed, with their clothes in a bundle. They spring to the boats, our heroes follow the example, and in three minutes more are tearing through the water towards the coveted leviathan. The Dutchman has spied the monster too, and her boats are soon afloat. Who shall be first?

(The origin of this cry is this, I think. “Whaol” is the ordinary Scotch for “whale,” but Aberdonians use the “f” instead of the “wh” in such words as “what,” “where,” etc, which they pronounce “fat” and “far.” Hence “whale” would become “faul,” or “fall.”)

“Pull, lads, pull! Hurrah, lads, hurrah! We’ll never let a Dutchman beat us!”

Is the whale asleep, that she lies so quietly? Nay, for now she scents the danger, and, lashing her tail madly skywards, is off; but not before the roar of the harpoon gun from the foremost boat has awakened the echoes of the Greenland sea.

“A fall! a fall! She is struck! she is struck!” Vainly now she dashes through the surging sea; another boat pulls around to intercept her, and again she is struck; the lines whirl over the gunwale of Frank’s boat till it smokes again. There is blood now in the great beast’s wake, and her way is not so swift; she dives and dives again, but she is breathless now. Dreadful her wound must be—for see, she is spouting water mingled with blood; and now she lies still on the surface of the ocean.

“In line, men!” cries the mate, springing up and seizing his long lance, and standing bravely up in the bows. “Pull gently alongside, and stand by to back water the moment I spear the fall.”

“How bold and daring he looks!” thinks Frank; all thought of danger swallowed up in admiration of the man who stands, spear in hand, in the boat’s bows.

They are close now. Swish! Quick as lightning the spear is sent home; quickly it is turned, to sever the carotid; next moment the backing boat is almost swamped in blood. But not quickly enough can they back, I fear, to save the boat from destruction, themselves from speedy death. High, high in air is raised that dreadful tail; half the animal seems out of the water; they are under the shadow of it; and now it descends, and every oar on the port-side of the boat is broken off close to the rowlocks. But the

boat is saved. For fully half an hour the whale flaps the sea in her dying agony, and the noise may be heard for miles around, while the waters around her are churned into crimson foam. Then there is one more terrible convulsion; her great jaw opens and shuts again. The leviathan is dead. The men of the brig and the men in the boats answer each other with boisterous cheers; but the Dutchman fills her sails, puts about, and bears sullenly up for the south.

Well would it have been for the Grampus had Captain Anderson followed her example; but he would not.

"She can go," he said; "she is a full ship, and only a sailing ship. Now let us get but two other 'fish,' then hey for the sunny south, boys."

For a whole month they remained dodging about in that open sea, but without seeing another whale. All their good luck seemed to have gone with the Dutchman, and the captain was about to bear up, and force his way once more out through the southern ice to the open sea beyond, when suddenly a change came o'er the spirit of the scene. To their surprise, if not to their horror, the ice began to close in around them in all directions. Nearer and nearer came the mighty floes. They came from the north; they came from the south and the east; they even deployed into two long lines, or horns, that crept along the land until they met. At the same time a heavy swell began to roll in from seawards.

"There is a gale of wind outside," the captain said to Chisholm, "and this is the result; but come, I don't mean to be caught like a mouse in a trap." Then, addressing the mate, "Call all hands, Mr Lewis. Get out the ice-saws and anchors."

"Ay, ay, sir," replied the mate.

"Now, my lads," continued the captain, when the men came aft in a body, "you've all been to Greenland before, and you know the danger we are in as well as I can tell you. If we are caught between two floes in that heaving pack, we'll be crunched like a walnut-shell. So we'll have to work to make a harbour. That alone can save us. Call the steward. Steward! we'll splice the main brace."

The men gave a cheer; they stripped off coats and jackets, and even their gloves. They meant business, and looked it. Meanwhile the Grampus was going ahead at full speed, straight towards the ice in shore. Why, it looked to our heroes as if the captain was positively courting destruction; for he was steering for the very largest berg he could find, and presently he was alongside it. The ship was stopped, and every man that could

be spared sent over the side. The anchors were got out speedily, and made fast to the berg. Then the men began to work.

The iceberg against which they directed their operations was indeed a mighty one. Although not very high close to the edge, it towered above them many hundreds of feet, a snow-clad mountain of ice, its green and rugged sides glittering in the beams of the mid-day sun. It was soon evident to Chisholm O'Grahame that the captain's object was to hollow out a temporary harbour in the side of the berg, sufficiently wide to enable the ship to fit into it, so that she might be safe from being ground into matchwood when the whole pack was joined.

"Come," he cried, to his comrades, "three hands of us here idle! We can work too, captain. Only tell us what to do, and we'll do it."

"Bravo! my lads," said the captain, cheerily. "Over the side with you then, and help with the ice-saws."

Those great ice-saws were about twenty feet long, and had four cross handles at the top, so that when let down, on the perpendicular, against the piece, four men standing above could work one saw. Frank and his two friends, with Mr Lewis, the mate, took charge of a saw, and the work went on cheerily. The men sang as they laboured, and there was as much laughing and joking as if they had been husbandmen working together in the harvest-field, instead of men working for their dear lives. By eight o'clock the harbour was complete.

By eight o'clock the ice had almost closed upon them.

And now to get the ship into this portus salutis. There was so little time; other giant bergs were close aboard of them, rising and falling on the swelling waves with a noise that was simply appalling. The captain had to give his orders through the speaking-trumpet, and even then his voice was often drowned by the grinding, shrieking din of the heaving floes. But at last they have worked her in, and now for a time at least she is safe, for she rises and falls with the ice; and, though hemmed in on all sides, has nothing to fear.

The Grampus was "beset;" and from that very hour began one of the dreariest seasons of imprisonment that ever a beleaguered ship's crew experienced. They were far away from aid of any kind that they knew of, the ice was terribly heavy, and, worse than all, the summer season was far advanced, and already the sun dipped very close to the northern horizon at midnight.

The storm abated; in twelve hours the ice had ceased to rise and fall, and a silence, deep as death, reigned once more over the frozen sea.

“We must do the best we can,” said brave Captain Anderson, “to amuse ourselves and each other. God only knows when we may get clear, but we can trust in Him who rules the sea as well as the dry land.”

“Amen!” said Chisholm, in a quiet and earnest voice.

“We’ll make off skins now for a week or two,” said the captain; “that will help to pass the time.”

So it did, reader, and it also brought the birds around them in millions. These, as usual, they shot for feathers and fresh meat. Bears in twos, and sometimes in threes, prowled round the ship to pick up the offal. Ugly customers they looked, and ugly customers they were. Poor Tom Reid, the cooper’s mate, sat on a bit of ice one day smoking, not far from the ship. A monster bear crept round a corner and clawed his heart and lungs out with one stroke of his mighty paw. The carpenter and captain were both on the ice one day, when they were suddenly confronted with the man-eater. They had no arms, and would have been instantly killed had not the danger been perceived by Fred Freeman; he fired from the deck of the Grampus, wounded the bear, and saved their lives. After this it was determined to hunt and kill the bears, and many good skins were thus procured. One day Fred surprised the man-eater in a corner, licking his wounded foot. The bear bellowed like a bull, and prepared to spring. Fred was too fast for him, and rolled him over at ten paces distance. Poor Fred! he did not see that this bear had a companion within hail, and that he was coming up fast and furiously and intent on revenge, not fifty yards away. Men are behind him, but they fear to fire, lest they kill Fred. Chisholm is on an adjoining floe, but the warning he shouts comes all too late; for next moment his poor friend lies helpless and bleeding in the talons of the terrible ice-king. Chisholm kneels to fire. It is a fearful risk, but it is Fred’s only chance. The sound of the rifle rings out on the silent air, the bear quits his victim, springs upwards with a convulsive start, then falls dead beside the man he would have slain. It is three weeks ere Fred can crawl again.

Meanwhile the whole of the skins have been “made off.” (The seal-skins, with blubber about three inches thick, are spread on boards on idle days in Greenland ships, and the fat pared off. The skins are then rubbed in salt and stowed away in a tank; the blubber also is put in tanks by itself. This is called “off.”) There are no more bits of flesh and fat thrown overboard, so the birds all leave them, then the bears; and, except that a

wondering seal sometimes lifts its black head for a moment out of a pool of water to stare at the ship, there is no sign or sound of animal life on all the dreary pack. They feel more lonely now than ever, but they play games on the ice and games on board, and they read much and talk a great deal about home. This last makes them feel the time still more long and monotonous, but one day—

"Happy thought!" says Fred, "let us get up theatricals."

Well, this passed the time away pleasantly enough for a whole month, but they tired at last even of theatricals; and then a dense fog rolled in from the south and the west, and enveloped the whole pack as with a dark pall. They saw no more of the sun for two weary months, but they knew he set now, and that the order of day and night had been restored; but alas! they knew likewise that it would, in a few weeks more, be all one long night, and their hearts sank at the very thoughts of it.

The mist rolled away at last, but shorter and shorter grew the days and colder and colder the weather. I hesitated before I wrote that last word "weather," for really in that ice-pack there was no weather. Never a cloud in the blue vault of heaven, and never a breath of wind—not even as much as would suffice to raise one feathery flake of the starry snow. But the silence—it was a silence that was felt at the heart; you could have heard a whisper almost a mile away, there was nothing to break it. Nature seemed asleep, and all things seemed to fear to wake her. No wonder that poor Frank said one day, as he closed his book—

"Heigho! boys, it is such a treat to hear the clock tick."

Night was the most trying, cheerless time; for after they had turned into their box-like bunks, they would lie for hours before it was possible to get warm. Then in the morning each bunk looked like a little cave of snow, the breath of the occupant during the night having been frozen into hoar-frost, which covered the sides and the top, and lay half-an-inch thick on the coverlet. It was, indeed, a dreary time.

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Chapter Six.

Winter in the Ice-fields—The Ice breaks up—Sailing South—A Sledge Adventure—The Storm and Shipwreck—Afloat on an Iceberg—Land! land!—A terrible Journey—Cronstadt.

Was it always so silent and still in that lonely ice-pack as I have tried to describe it? Not always: there were times when the floes around the ship began to move slowly up and down, telling of a swell beneath them; then the rending, shrieking, and groaning noises were indescribable. But only twice during the months of darkness did a breeze blow, and, when it did, snow fell, or rather was borne along on the wings of the wind, with a fierce bitterness that no living being could be exposed to for an hour and live. A snow-house was built over the decks, and this served in some slight measure to mitigate the terrible cold.

And so the winter wore away, for the longest time has an end. Our heroes had borne their privations and their deprivations nobly. They did not even let down their hearts when the captain told them they would have to go on "short commons," and only laughed when the steward reported the eggs finished, and the last potato vanished. The biscuits held out, however, and the soup in bouilli, so they rejoiced accordingly, and were thankful.

But when the sun showed face one day, there were no bounds to the joy that every one on board manifested. They even manned the rigging, and gave him three times three heartfelt cheers. Even Rouskia, the ship's dog, seemed glad to see the light of day again, and joined in the cheering with a kind of half hysterical bark, as if the tears were in his throat and partially stopped his utterance. The sun did not stop to look at them long, but, like an invalid in the stage of convalescence, he stayed up longer and longer every day, and his presence soon began to work a change in the appearance of the ice; the snow on the top of it became less dry, and the cold to a large extent left the air. Then the ice began to float farther apart, and, on taking the reckoning one day, the captain found, to his joy, that the whole pack was moving slowly southwards.

After many days the Grampus left her harbour, and began "boring" her way through the ice. It was slow, tedious work; but slow as it was they were homeward bound, so there

was happiness at the hearts of all on board. But their hopes of escape were doomed to be blighted; for once again the light wind which had begun to blow from the gentle south fell to a dead calm, winter once more resumed his sway, and the good ship Grampus was beset a second time. Although the ice was not heavy, but hummock-covered or flat, it was dangerous enough in all conscience.

One day they were surprised by a visit from some natives, with sledges drawn by dogs. They brought fish with them, and the carcase of a reindeer, and begged, in their strange but musical labial language, for blankets and tobacco. They came from land that was visible on the starboard bow, and this country, or island, or whatever it was, Chisholm begged leave of the captain to be allowed, with his friends, to visit.

"It must be at your own risk, then, gentlemen," the captain replied; "for, although we are most likely to lie here for six weeks to come, the ice may break up at any moment."

But our heroes did risk it. They packed a sledge with many things which they knew the natives would appreciate, and off they started, the captain waving his hand and wishing them luck. It was more pleasant to run for a little way on first starting; but having by this means succeeded in starting the circulation of the blood, as Chisholm phrased it, they handed the whips to the natives, and squatted on the tops of the curious and primitive sledges.

They found the Esquimaux very friendly, and willing to barter. Their huts were mere mole-hills, and far from cleanly inside, and were built with no attempt at architecture; but they were strong, nevertheless. The only kind of religion these people had was a kind of sun worship. They were expert in hunting and fishing, and very brave and daring. Chisholm soon found that he could accomplish the journey from the ship to the village of Redinvolsk in an hour; so he started a sledge, drawn by two dogs, and, great though the risk was, went on shore almost every day. But these little trips of his had a sad and all but fatal ending. His team one day took fright, and, instead of running directly for the village, dashed over a precipice. Half-way down the crevasse the sledge was brought up by a snow-covered shelf of rock. But kindly aid was at hand, a rope was lowered by some friendly natives, and a sheathed knife. With the latter he cut the poor plunging dogs adrift, sorry in his manly heart that he had to leave them to their fate. He was then drawn to bank much bruised and shaken, but thankful to escape with life.

One morning clouds began to bank up in the sky, and that very day the ice broke up, steam was got up, and, more quickly than before, the Grampus headed homewards.

There was an air of greater gravity about the captain, as he came below to dinner that day, than ever Frank and his friends had seen.

“I hope there is nothing serious the matter, captain?” Chisholm inquired.

“Not as yet, gentlemen,” replied the captain, with an uneasy kind of a smile, “but the glass is going tumbling down, and the ice grows heavier and more dangerous the nearer to the open sea we get. I fear we’re going to have a blow.”

He soon after went on deck, whither our heroes followed him. The floes were of great size, heavy, mischievous-looking pieces, covered with snow on the top, but with a deal of hard green stuff under water. Against these the ship was constantly bumping, with a violence that made every one on deck stagger and reel. The captain himself was on the bridge giving constant orders, for the ship was being steered by the ice; the object being to strike the pieces stem on, and so save the more vulnerable bows or quarters.

The day wore gloomily away, and the night closed in dark and stormy. No one cared to lie down or seek for rest; there was a cloud on the heart of every one on board—a strange foreboding of evil to come. The wind soon increased to all the fury of a gale; the waves dashed over the ship with such violence that when struck you couldn’t have told whether it was with a piece of ice or a green sea.

It was just two bells in the morning watch, and the night was at its darkest, when the good ship was caught with tremendous force between two mighty floes, which, as soon as they had done the mischief, began to part and leave the sinking ship to her sad fate. The next moment the engineer had rushed on deck to say the engines had stopped. All was now confusion on board, for there was a strange steadiness about the vessel that told she was sinking fast.

Boats were of no use in that terrible tempest-tossed ocean, so orders were given to get ready the ice-anchors. By dint of courage and strength, the anchors were thrown, and the ship made fast for a time, to the nearest berg. It was but for a time, alas! And now commenced all the hurry and horror of this pitiful disembarkation. The waves washed over both ship and berg, making the former quiver all over like some creature in the throes of death, and causing the berg itself to heel over like a great raft.

Morning broke grey and cold and dismal; but hours before, the Grampus had slipped her ice-anchors, and gone down head foremost; and, out of all her crew of fifty men, fifteen only were alive to see the sunrise, and thank the God who had spared their lives—fifteen, and the ship’s dog. Our heroes were saved, or this story would not be written;

but, with the exception of Captain Anderson, every other officer met with a watery grave.

I have not the heart to harrow the feelings of my youthful readers with a relation of the horrors the survivors of the foundered ship had to endure on that floating iceberg. For a whole week they were tossed about among the stormy waves of that cold ocean, drifting before an eastern gale that blew with almost the force of a hurricane. But if their half-frozen hearts were still capable of feeling one atom of joy, they must surely have beat faster when the captain, glass in hand, but half buried in spray, shouted—"Land, land! I see it, I see it!"

Ah! there were hearts on that berg that would never beat again, for at that moment six of the original fifteen lay dead on the berg.

The storm now abated, and the sea went down; but yet another danger had to be encountered, for strange black monsters, with fierce eyes, rose up from the depth of ocean and sought to scale the berg. Was it after the dead they had come?

Boats at last!—only the boats of native Indians, but they came with friendly intentions.

So they committed the bodies of their late comrades to the deep, and, embarking with the Indians, were rowed on shore to a new land. Frank was in a sad way: he was carried to the hut of a chief; medicine men were sent for to look upon him and administer to him herbs strangely compounded, and wise old squaws uttered their spells over his prostrate form; but it was the nursing he received, after all, from Chisholm and Fred that at last brought him round.

Their fare while they lived among the Indians was very poor of its kind; but then, a gift-horse should not be looked in the mouth. These poor people gave them a portion of all they possessed, and they gave it, too, with right good will. Captain Anderson could speak their language—a kind of Yack patois—and held many long conversations with the chief—a great man in the estimation of the tribe, and in reality a true man, although only a savage. Anderson held him spell-bound, as he told of some of the strange cities and countries there were in the world. He liked to hear the captain talk, and still, from the sinister look and incredulous smile on his face as he listened, you could see that he thought the narrator was drawing largely on his imagination.

It was very kind of this chief to invite the captain, our heroes, and the survivors of the melancholy shipwreck to stay with him for the rest of their lives.

“Blubber,” he said, “would never fail them; salt fish and seal’s flesh could always be had in abundance, with now and then a bit of a whale as a treat. Then they could take them wives from the daughters of his people, and the smoke from their wigwams would ascend for ever.”

It was a pretty picture, Anderson allowed; but—there is no accounting for taste; he loved his own home in England better.

“Then in that case,” said Kit Chak—and here spoke the noble savage—“I and my brother will guide you through the great forest to Inchboon, where lies a Danish whaler. The journey will take us one moon.”

One moon!—nearly thirty days. It was a fearful undertaking; but what will not men do for home and country? So all preparations were made for the march, and in three days they were ready to start.

“You do well to wrap up, Frank, my boy,” said Chisholm to his young friend; “but, beside the captain, you do look odd.”

In twenty-five days, after sufferings and hardships that they never forgot, they arrived at Inchboon, and sure enough they found the Danish ship. She was bound to Russia, though; if that would suit them, said the captain, his vessel was at their service.

They gladly accepted his offer, bade brave Kit Chak and his brother adieu (not without well rewarding them), and in six weeks’ time they were landed at Cronstadt.

Our travellers now were as happy as kings; but where, they wondered, would they turn up next?

Wild Adventures in Wild Places by William Gordon Stables

Chapter Seven.

Part III—The Russian Steppes.

Quiet days on the Kyra—Captain Varde's happy Home—Fred Freeman's Rustic Russian—The Captain tells a tale of Adventure.

The captain of the Danish barque, who had brought our three heroes safely into Russian waters, was one of those individuals who are never so happy as when ministering to the comfort and pleasure of others.

"Having landed you in Europe," he said, on the very last day they dined together on board, "I dare say I ought to let you go, but I assure you, gentlemen, I am not tired of you, and if you will accept of a few weeks of the kind of rude hospitality I can offer you, at my little country home on the banks of the Kyra, I shall be delighted."

"Stop," he continued, smilingly, holding up his hand as Chisholm was about to speak, "I know everything you would say, so there is no occasion to say anything. I have been kind to you, and you feel so much indebted to me already, that you are unwilling to trespass further on my goodness. That is what you would say; but, dear gentlemen, if you do feel under an obligation to me, you can amply repay me, and even confer a favour on me, by giving me a few weeks of your company."

"What say you, Fred?" asked Chisholm.

"Oh!" Fred replied, "I am delighted at finding such a pleasant 'new way of paying old debts.' Let us go by all means."

"As for me, my friends," said Captain Anderson, "I must leave you to-morrow. Although the loss of my ship was no fault of mine, it was a terrible misfortune, and one which it will be long ere I can forget, and longer still ere it will be forgotten against me."

"We need not tell you," said Chisholm, "how truly sorry we are to part with you. We will live in the hopes of meeting you some day in England, and renewing our acquaintance with one in whose ship we sailed so long and spent so many happy hours."

So next day the captain of the lost brig Grampus and our friends parted. They stayed just one week in Cronstadt, communicating by telegraph with those at home, then, in company with their new friend, started for his cottage on the Kyra. They were not sorry when, three days after leaving Saint Petersburg, they found themselves down in the very heart of the cool green country, and in a spot which, but for the different dress and language of the people they met, they could easily have fancied was a part of England itself. If they were delighted with the country, they were not less so with the house and home itself of Captain Varde, their kindly host. Half buried in trees, it was approached by a broad and beautiful avenue, which led through well-kept lawns to what you would have been bound to have styled the hall door, or front entrance, but the truth is Captain Varde's house had no front, or, in other words, it had two; for the spacious hall led you straight through to the wide terraced lawn and flower garden, that skirted the lovely river.

"When we go down to the village," said Varde, "which is situated about three miles from here, we sometimes go by boat, and sometimes with the horses in the conveyance I have landed you in to-day. But here comes my wife and daughter, the only two beings I love on earth."

The first greetings betwixt himself and family being ended, Captain Varde introduced our heroes, who were very kindly welcomed, and made to feel perfectly at home; so much so that before the first day of their visit had come to an end, they seemed to have known this family all their lives.

When, after dinner, the ladies had retired, and the gentlemen lingered over the walnuts and wine,—

"Captain Varde," said Fred Freeman, "I cannot tell you how much astonished I and my comrades feel at all we see around us in this pretty home of yours. It is so different from anything we could have expected to meet with in Russia."

"It is, indeed," added Chisholm, "there is an air of refinement everywhere, and, if you will excuse me for saying so, captain, the English spoken by Mrs and Miss Varde, with the exception of a slight foreign accent, which, in my opinion, adds a charm to it, is as perfect as any you will hear in London."

"We have travelled a good deal, even in your country," said the Danish captain, with a smile.

“Yes, but,” said Fred, “you would travel a very long way in England without meeting with a family who could talk the Russian language. As linguists, the people of this country undoubtedly beat us. Now, my idea of a Russian peasant, or small farmer, was somewhat as follows—shall I offend you if I describe my beau-ideal rustic Russian?”

“Certainly not; though my wife and child are Russians by birth, I myself am a Dane.”

“Well, then,” said Fred, “the rustic Russian that I had on the brain, and whose prototype I look for here in vain, was indeed a sorry lout—a short, stout, rough, and unkempt fellow, with less appearance of good breeding about him than a Nottingham cowherd, and less manners than a Newcastle navvy, with a good deal of reverence about him for the aristocracy, and an extraordinary relish for rum. He was guiltless of anything resembling ablution; dressed in sheep’s skins, with the hairy side next the skin; slept in this same jacket, and never changed it from one year’s end to another, except for the purpose of taking a bath, which operation he performed by getting inside the stove and raking the hot ashes all about him; his principal diet was the blackest of bread, and the greatest treat you could give him a basin of train-oil and a horn spoon.”

Captain Varde laughed. “Anyhow,” he said, “I am glad you have already found yourselves undeceived, and I do not doubt but that, in your intercourse with the people of this country, you will find many of them brave, generous, and gentlemanly fellows, and quite worthy of being reckoned among the number of your friends.”

And Captain Varde was right.

The first two or three months of their life at the house of their newly-found friend was quite idyllic in its simplicity. Much of their time was spent in fishing and shooting, or in climbing the hills to obtain a view of the wild but beautiful country around them; but in whatever way the day had been passed, the afternoon always found them gathered around the hospitable board of their worthy host. Then the evening would be spent in pleasant conversation, with music and story-telling, the stories nearly all coming from the captain himself. He had spent a great deal of his life at sea, and had come through innumerable adventures both on the ocean and on land.

“Old sailors,” said Varde, once, “are sometimes accused of spinning yarns, with less of facts about them than there might be; but, for my own part, I think that a man who has knocked about the world for about twenty years has little occasion to draw upon his imagination.”

“I fought a bear one time,” he continued, “single-handed, face to face—ay, and I may say breast to breast.”

“No easy task that, I should say,” remarked Chisholm, “if he were of any size.”

“He was a monster,” said Varde, “of Herculean strength; yonder is his skin on the couch. You may be sure though that I did not court the struggle, nor am I ever likely to forget it, for two reasons—the first is that in my right leg I still carry the marks of the brute’s talons; the other reason is a far dearer one.”

Captain Varde paused, and took his wife’s hand in his, gazing at her with a look of inexpressible tenderness.

“But for that bear adventure I never should have met with my wife. How my Adeline’s father came to settle down for life in the wild unpeopled district where I first made his acquaintance and hers, I can hardly tell. In his youth he had been a merchant and a dweller in cities; in his old age he built himself a house many many versts even from a village of any pretensions, on the confines of a great gloomy forest, and close by a lake that people say is far deeper than the great hills around it are high. Here he lived the life of a recluse and a bookworm.

“In the summer of 1845, myself and a few friends had encamped in the neighbourhood of this lake, chiefly to enjoy the excellent fishing there to be obtained. Not that we did not find work for our guns as well, for there was abundance of both fur and feather; but my chief delight lay in the gentler art. One of my friends, Satiesky by name, could do enough gunning for the whole camp, so I at least was content, and the time was spent most pleasantly until it set in for settled wet weather.

“At last after several days’ rain it was evident the weather was broken, and the summer gone; so, very reluctantly, we prepared to pack our horses and trudge back again to the distant city. Packing did not take us long, and, having packed, we started. A march of six or eight versts brought us to the little village or hamlet of Odstok. We had just reached its first house—a small outlying farm built on a wooded eminence. It was well for us we had, for in less than ten minutes the low land that we had just passed was completely covered with water. What had been fields before was now an inland sea. Swollen by the mountain torrents, the river had burst its bounds and swept down the valley with terrible force, carrying before it fences and trees, and even the scattered houses which stood in its way, and drowning oxen, horses, sheep, and alas! human beings as well.

“For three whole weeks we were in a state of siege. Not that we wanted food, however; Jerikoff the farmer’s larder was well stored, and he was very good to us indeed. He found his old boat, in which he used to paddle about in a little canal before the floods,

very handy now. I shouldn't have cared to risk my life in the ricketty tub; but Jerikoff did, and used to make voyages to a distant shop, and return laden with many a little Russian dainty. Once he brought in a haul of hares and rabbits from the flood. They had doubtless taken refuge on a tree as an extemporised island; but when that island itself became flooded, down the stream, nolens volens, they had to float. It is an ill wind that blows nobody good, and Jerikoff set out in great glee to reap this rich harvest of living fur. His face was a study while so engaged. 'Oh! my pretty dears,' he said, addressing his victims; 'I couldn't think of seeing you drown before my very face. Come into my boat; there is room for you all.' But when the old man, before landing, began to knock them on the head, I daresay the little mariners thought they had got out of the frying pan into the fire.

"But about my bear, gentlemen. Well, I am coming to that."

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Chapter Eight.

The Captain's tale continued—Winter brings the Bears from the Mountains—The Tragedy in the Forest—Bears at Bay—Breast to breast with Bruin—Fred Freeman falls in love!

"Kind and all as our host Jerikoff was," continued the captain, "none of us were sorry when the floods began to abate and finally disappeared. But hardly had they gone when yet another change came over the landscape; for hard frost set in, then small powdery snow began to fall, followed shortly by great flakes, and before twenty-four hours were over our heads the whole country was locked in the embrace of an early winter. We weren't altogether sorry for this, for we could now prolong our stay with prospects of good duck and wild-goose shooting, for both these and many other kinds of game would visit the running streams. We would also have an opportunity of doing old Jerikoff a favour by filling his larder for him. Your Russian rustic, Mr Freeman, is oftentimes as proud as a prince. Jerikoff was, at all events; and we dared not insult him by the offer of a single rouble.

"Our host used to do a little shooting himself. One day he met a young peasant leading his horse from the forest, where he had been for wood. The little lad's eyes were as round and apparently as big as saucers—he had seen a bear. Jerikoff made haste home to tell us, and we determined to go in search of Mr Bruin. Hardly had we made up our minds and got ready our guns when another report, and that a very singular one indeed—although we had no reason to doubt the truth of it—reached us.

"A farmer's sledge drawn by three horses, and on its way to the very hamlet in which we now dwelt, had been attacked by a bear of monstrous size and terrible ferocity. It was not the horses, however, but human flesh on which this brute made up his mind to regale himself. He had sprung from an ambush, alighting in the very centre of the sledge. The poor kyoorshik's struggles I trust were brief, but very dreadful nevertheless; his screams were heard by more than one individual—powerless, however, to render aught of assistance—as the terrified horses plunged madly through the forest, a tragedy being acted behind them which it makes one's blood run cold even to think of. The poor beasts pulled up at last with the shattered remains of the sledge, and the mutilated body

of the unhappy driver, at the very door of the little village inn; but of the bear there were no signs save the ghastly work he had accomplished.

“News like this only served to stimulate our desire for revenge on this bold and ferocious bear, and we set out in all haste to seek him in the forest. There were four of us, all told, with two moudjiks in two sledges drawn by six horses. We were all armed to the teeth, but this did not prevent us from taking proper precautions to avoid a sudden surprise. Farther than the confines of the great forest it was impractical to take our sledges; but the horses were unlimbered, and accompanied us until we came upon the trail of our first bear. They were then fastened to trees, and left in the charge of the moudjiks.

“‘Now,’ said Satiesky, one of my friends, ‘these tracks are very recent. Mr Bruin cannot therefore be very far away, and as it will be unsafe to go a long distance from our horses, let us try the effects of a little ruse. I have come all prepared to carry it out.’

“To build a fire, camp-fashion, was with Satiesky the work of but a few minutes. He piled it in an open space or glade in the forest, so that the heat should not bring down the snow from the pines over it. Having got it well alight, he hung from the tripod above a three-pound piece of ham, which was soon frizzling away in fine style, and making us all hungry with its fragrance.

“‘Let us get under cover, now,’ said Satiesky; ‘if a bear is any where within six versts, you’ll soon see him prowl round, licking his chops, and looking for dinner, which pray Providence we will serve up to him hot.’

“We took up a position, as he spoke, as well screened as possible by the snow-laden branches, and waited. Half-an-hour went wearily past, and after that every minute seemed interminable. We were rewarded at last, though, but in a way we little expected. Some of us know, to our cost, the terrible bull-like bellow which a bear emits from his stentorian lungs, when he is suddenly disturbed and means mischief. This is intended, no doubt, to startle and paralyse the victim on which he means to spring. Be this as it may, such was now the sound we heard, yet not anywhere near the fire, but close in the rear of our position. It was an immense bear, probably the very same that had attacked and killed the poor sledge-driver; for, as Satiesky afterwards said, having once tasted human flesh, he would prefer it to the best bit of bacon that ever was frizzled.

“He gave us little time now for consideration. But Satiesky was quick; he discharged his rifle almost point-blank at the charging beast. Down rolled Bruin, not dead, but so dreadfully wounded that it was an easy enough matter for us to dispatch him with our pikes.

“Hardly had he ceased to writhe, when down the wind came the sharp ring of another rifle.

“‘Hark!’ cried Satiesky, springing out into the open; ‘that sound comes not from the direction where we left our horses. There is another party in the forest as well as ourselves.’

“Satiesky’s surmise was right, as he knew a moment afterwards to his sorrow. The strange hunting party had wounded a bear, and were following him up, and, in his desperation, he charged our companion. He had no power or time for defence, and next moment we saw him laid senseless on the snow; while over him stood his terrible antagonist, his eyes flashing fire, his jaws dripping blood.

“I will not attempt to describe to you, gentlemen, the wild melée that followed. Bar a shot at close quarters with a revolver, there was no time for using fire-arms. With pikes and axes and rifles clubbed, we fought the giant beast until strength succumbed to skill, and he lay dead beside Satiesky. With the exception of a few scratches, nobody was any the worse, and we found, to our delight, that our fallen companion was merely stunned.

“You should have seen the spread that Jerikoff placed before us that evening, on our return. Jerikoff excelled himself for once; and it needed but little wine-drinking, I can tell you, to make the feast pass merrily by.

“Jerikoff would have bear hams all the winter. That was the reason he was so pleased; that was the reason he invited a pair of inseparable companions, in the shape of an old fiddler and a dancing bear, to minister to our amusement after dinner was over.

“Next day we bagged three more bears. We had, however, no adventure to speak of; they succumbed to their fate with a kind of sleepy dignity, after they had been pitted by some peasants hired for the occasion.

“On this particular day I had wandered some distance away from my companions. I had got clear out of the forest, and had climbed an eminence, where I could see well about me, accompanied by an armed servant; but certainly apprehending no danger, for the coast all around seemed well clear. I had reckoned without my host, however. My host on this occasion was an enormous bear, who had probably been asleep in the sun behind a boulder, and a very disagreeable entertainment he had provided for me.”

“He wasn’t very hospitable, then?” said Chisholm, smiling.

“Rather much so, I might say,” said the captain; “indeed, he received me with open arms. He was too affectionate altogether, and even now I think I hear the roar of delight he gave vent to as he commenced the fearful hug. I tried to prick him under the ribs with my knife. It broke on a bone, which caused the brute to increase rather than diminish the pressure. I could feel my bones crack, and my breath was squeezed out of me. Why at this awful moment my scared moudjik should hand me his knife, instead of using it himself, I never could tell; but God gave me strength to handle it, gentlemen. I had one hand free, and with that I plunged the weapon into the animal’s chest, and we both rolled down together.

“That evening two sledges in particular left the forest, going in different directions. One dashed along as fast as three horses could carry it, towards the house of my dear Adeline’s father. It was the nearest house to the forest; therefore thither was I borne, all but lifeless from loss of blood. The other sledge went more slowly, of course, towards the village we had that morning left so merrily together. That sledge brought Bruin home. Gentlemen,” said the captain, concluding his narrative, and once more taking his wife’s hand, “I need not tell you how kind the old merchant was to me. Here is a proof of it.

“The house where he and Adeline used to reside is now tenanted by some relations of ours, for my father-in-law has long since crossed the bourne whence no traveller ever returns; but we often visit the dear old home by the lake, and spend a few weeks there. We hope to do so this Christmas, and if you will but prolong your stay till then and accompany us, I think I can show you some nice sport.”

What could our heroes reply to so kind an invitation, but that they would be delighted to do so? One of them, indeed, was much more delighted than either of the other two; and that was Fred Freeman. Would you know the reason why, reader? You may learn it, then, from the following fragment of a conversation which took place between the trio one evening when they were alone together:—

“Chisholm O’Grahame,” said Fred, “we used to laugh at poor Frank for being so deeply in love with his beautiful Eenie Lyell. You must laugh alone now, my boy, for I can feel for him.”

“What!” cried Chisholm, delightedly, “Are you too in for it?”

“I fear it’s a fact,” said Fred; “and so you two can leave me here to my fate, if you choose, and go on with your adventures by yourselves—that is, if Miss Varde will look kindly on me.”

“Ridiculous!” said Chisholm. “No, no, Fred, my lad, engage yourself if you like, and return some other day for this charming girl; but round the world with us you come, and, indeed, I think the sooner we start the better.”

“Heigho!” sighed Fred, and Frank felt for him if Chisholm did not.

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Chapter Nine.

The Russian Steppes (concluded).

Pleasant Times—A Glorious Hide—A Happy Christmas—Boar-hunting—Attacked by Wolves.

Still pleasantly passed the time of our heroes away at Captain Varde's delightful residence. He did all in his power to render them happy and comfortable; he even invited friends from a distance to visit at the house, in case they should be dull in the evenings, with no one to talk to but himself; and very pleasant people they turned out to be. As autumn wore away, and the days got shorter and colder, they were, of course, confined a good deal to the house; but, what with whist and chess, music and dancing, they never thought a day too long.

Fred's "little love affair," as Chisholm somewhat irreverently styled it, flourished apace. In fact he was engaged to Miss Varde, and the engagement received the sanction of her parents.

"What a pity it is," said Captain Varde, one day, "that I cannot find a match for you, Mr O'Grahame."

"You are very kind, I am sure, to think of me," said Chisholm.

"Yes," continued Varde, "for then, you know, there would be no more occasion for you to leave Russia."

"Ah! but," said Chisholm, "I have that young dog, Frank, to show the world to. He is in my charge and in Fred's. After we have done the needful by him, we may return—Fred is bound to—and then there is no saying what might happen."

One day, when our friends came out to have their usual run before breakfast, they found the ground all white with snow. This would have warned them, if nothing else had, that Christmas was on ahead; but they also found the moudjiks busy at work getting ready the sledges, and preparations going on everywhere for a long journey.

The morning arrives, and the sledges are brought round, and soon filled with as happy a party, probably, as ever set out on a long dreary mid-winter journey in the wilds of Russia. Crack go the whips; the horses toss their saucy heads and manes in the air; then, with a brave plunge, forward they flee, and, with a cheer from the servants left behind, and a shout from onlooking moudjiks, they are off. Paddy, in the song of "The Groves of Blarney," talks about "the complatest thing in nature being a coach-and-six or a feather bed;" had he ridden in a Russian travelling-sledge, I daresay he would have considered it a sort of combination of the two. Conversation is easy, as there is no rattling of vile wheels; the air is bracing, and the scenery charming, though hills and dales, and the great still forests themselves, are robed in a garment of snow. At noon they stop for rest and refreshment, then mount and go on again; but in the evening they reach a town of some importance, and here they stop for the night. Onward again next day, and onward the next; and at noon of the fourth the country gets wilder; there is hardly a house to be seen; there are giant trees in the wide, wild forests they traverse, and giant hills on the horizon. Suddenly, at a bend of the road, a great lake—frozen hard, and partially snow-clad—makes its appearance; and not far from its banks, though almost hidden by trees, a lordly mansion, from many of the chimneys of which blue smoke is curling upwards, against the white of a hill that almost overhangs it.

Captain Varde hails the second sledge, and points laughingly towards this mansion, and they know they are nearing the home of his people. Half an hour afterwards, everybody is dismounting from the sledges, greetings are being exchanged, and steaming horses led away to their stables by smiling retainers.

I am not going to describe the life our heroes led at this mansion, which might well be termed a castle; nor even to tell you of the many adventures—some of them wild enough—they had among the hills and in the forests around.

One evening the sledge containing Captain Varde and Chisholm got behind the others, and they were attacked by a pack of hungry wolves in fine form. They had had a good day among the boars—our friends, I mean, not the wolves—and one was towing astern. This particular "piggie" the wolves thought would make them an excellent supper; although, for that matter, being, as they are, hippophagists, they would not have objected to a bite of horse-flesh. The sun was declining in the west, as the sledge tore along through the forest; they had still many versts to ride, and attacked in flank and rear by such a number of these unwelcome guests—for the woods seemed alive with them—the danger was one not to be made light of. Happily for them, their horses were hardy and fleet; they had good guns, and plenty of ammunition, so the slaughter was immense. Kept at bay for a time, the wolves, being reinforced, rallied and pressed the

sledgemen closely. Chisholm thought of cutting the boar adrift, but Varde wouldn't hear of it.

"Nay, my boy, nay," he cried, "we will never strike our colours while we've a single cartridge left unfired."

Chisholm laughed, and peppered away, and with such good effect, that ere the sun had quite gone down, the enemy drew off and left them, and they soon after regained their companions.

There was much more of this kind of thing; suffice it to say that they spent a Christmas of never-to-be-forgotten happiness, and left at last with the heartfelt farewells of their kind entertainers ringing in their ears, and promises that, if Providence spared them, this visit would certainly not be their last.

Wild Adventures in Wild Places by William Gordon Stables

Chapter Ten.

Part IV—The Wilds of Africa.

Off to the Cape—Among the Rock Rabbits—A Wild Ride—Lost on the plains.

"Isn't it a glorious morning," said Chisholm, coming on deck and joining his friends Frank and Fred, who were reclining in their lounge chairs, books in hand, under the awning reading, or pretending to read. And Chisholm himself looked glorious, glorious in the strength and beauty of his young manhood. He was dressed in white from top to toe, with sun hat and low cut collar, which showed his brown and shapely neck to perfection. His face was weather-beaten, that was the least that could be said of it, and loosely dressed as he was, you seemed to see the play of every muscle in his manly form, as he moved; and, when he waved his arms almost rejoicingly in the balmy but bracing breeze, that fanned the sunny sea, he looked as lithe and graceful as a young tiger.

"A glorious morning," he said again.

"Beautiful," said Fred, gazing languidly around him.

"You seem in fine form," said Frank, smiling.

"Just had a salt water bath. The other fellows in my cabin had soda and brandy. I feel fresher now than they do."

The ship was a steamer, Druid, but she was staggering along under a power of canvas and, bar accident, two more days would see them safe in Cape Town.

Fred Freeman had been very loth and sorry to leave his friends in Russia, for reasons well known to the reader. Frank, for reasons of a similar nature, had been just as anxious to get back to dear old Wales, to enjoy, so he said, six weeks' hunting. But Chisholm had looked at him with a right merry twinkle in his blue eyes as he replied,—

“Nay, boy, nay, the next hunting you’ll do will be at the Cape. I promised your father to take you right round the world, and I told some one else that some one else wouldn’t see you again for three years at the very least. So there!”

Here is an extract from Chisholm’s diary, written three months after:—

“The Cape hills in sight at last. But I shouldn’t say at last, because our passage has been everything one could wish. Fred and Frank are both a bit low, leastways they don’t talk enough, perhaps they think. Wonder if it is their late lotus-eating life that is telling upon their constitutions, or is it merely that they’re in love. A little bit of both, perhaps. But they’ll wake up ere long without a doubt.”

Chisholm was perfectly correct in his surmises, both Fred and Frank did wake up, and as soon as the roaring of the steam from the funnel, and the rattling of the anchor chains, convinced them that the voyage was indeed at an end, they threw aside their hooks, pulled themselves together, and entered heart and soul into the excitement of shore going.

A whole week was to be spent at Cape Town, and it was the best and sweetest time of all the year they could have chosen to visit the place. In the town itself and the suburbs the gardens were gorgeous in their floral beauty, and all the wild romantic hills around were crimson and white with geraniums, and the rarest and loveliest of heaths and wild flowers. Roaming among the mountains was pleasant even by day, for the sub-tropical heat of the sun was tempered by the pleasant breeze that blew inland from the ocean. Although they never went abroad for a ramble without taking their guns along with them, of sport, properly so-called, there was but little. They managed to make several good bags of rock rabbits, nevertheless. These funny little creatures are as much like rats as rabbits, but they are delicious eating. It was quite half a day’s journey to reach their haunts, over the hills and through the stunted bush, and across broad uplands where little else save a kind of hard, tough grass grew, and walking among which was dangerous, owing to the number of deadly snakes that slept or crept among it. Beyond this there would be more bush, in which bright-winged but songless birds flitted noiselessly about, then the rocks or cliffs where dwelt the coneys.

There is one trait in the character of a rock rabbit which breeds it a deal of harm, and that is curiosity. They like to know all they can learn about any one who honours them with a domiciliary visit. No sooner had our heroes appeared at the foot of the chaos of boulders which formed the cliff, than one rock rabbit mounted a stone to see what they looked like. I suppose he meant to go back and report to his comrades, but Frank’s gun spoiled his good intention, and he came tumbling down to meet them. The crack of the

fowling-piece brought a dozen at least of his relations out, to see what on earth the matter was, and many of them, not content with the advantage of the good view which a bit of boulder gave them, must needs stand on their hind-legs to add to their elevation; then it was bang, bang, right and left, and bang, bang, left and right ad libitum, or as fast at least as the rabbits appeared. Did they kill all they fired at? Oh! no, not by a very great deal. Many downed to the flash, and many that were knocked over succeeded in reaching the friendly shelter of their holes, and it is to be hoped, for their sakes, that their hospital arrangements were as complete as possible, else many of these poor curious creatures must have suffered a good deal more than our heroes meant them to.

On their way to and from these little shooting excursions snakes were shot wherever seen, whip snakes and sand snakes, black snakes and cobras.

"It's no sin to slay a snake," Fred would say, "and it expends the ammunition, you know."

Well, this sort of life was certainly less slow than lotus-eating, but a week of it was enough. They felt "crowded," as the Yankees call it, even at Cape Town. They wanted to be off and away into the wilds; the only question was how to get into the interior. The subject was broached one day at the table d'hôte, at which they were dining, and Chisholm thought the best plan would be to hire a dhow to take them on to Zanzibar.

"For it strikes me," he said, "that it is quite the orthodox plan to start for the interior of Africa by way of Zanzibar, just as it is to go to New York from Liverpool."

"It is," said a gentleman present, "but you'll find it slow work getting to Zanzibar in a dhow, and precious rough work too. I'm Commander Lyell of the Dodo; my gunboat sails to-morrow for Zanzibar. I've heard you mention my uncle's name, General Lyell, and if you like to rough it with me, I'll take you."

A nephew of General Lyell! This was news indeed, to Frank at least; and it is needless to say the offer was gladly accepted.

Three spare cots were rigged in the Commander's cabin, and in every way they were made as comfortable as could be.

Half a gale of wind was what they had to start with, up the Mozambique; next day it had increased to nearly hurricane force. They saw many ships lying-to, but the Dodo did nothing of that sort; wet enough though, she was in all conscience, in fact she seemed to

spend most of her time under instead of over the waves; very wet she was, and likewise very lively, but she made a good passage, and in little over a week, she had cast anchor in a beautiful wooded hay on the African coast, where white-roofed houses, close by the shore, peeped out through the greenery of trees.

“There is a bit of fun to be got not far from here,” said Captain Lyell, “for a day’s journey beyond the little Portuguese village there, the antelope swarm, and horses, too, are procurable, by paying for them.”

Frank was a splendid horseman, and his delight at the prospect of a hunt was unbounded.

Horses they could and did procure, and wild and unmanageable brutes they proved at first, but after the third day they became quiet enough. Their way led through a most beautiful well-timbered undulating country, and travelling was far from difficult, but as they journeyed more inland, and bore more to the north, not only their difficulties, but their dangers too, increased; the land got more rugged and mountainous, the jungles more dense and impenetrable, and the forests grew darker and deeper. They found themselves, too, bordering on a country, the inhabitants of which were far from friendly, and it was then they found their Portuguese guides of the greatest of use; they could speak the language of these savages, and their relations with them were the relations of trade. Portuguese the natives could bear with. Englishmen they both feared and hated. But little cared our heroes; in fact they treated the blacks with the coolest indifference, and probably that was the best way they could have treated them.

Many a lordly antelope fell to their guns, they had days on days of good sport, and the very dangers that surrounded them, seemed only to make their life in the bush all the more enjoyable. A glorious hunt Frank had one day all to himself. It was a ride he is never likely to forget, either, for it came nigh costing him dear life itself. Out on the open plain one morning, though but a little way from the camp, he started a fine buck. It seemed positively to invite him to the chase; well, his horse was fresh, he was fresh himself, a ten miles’ run he thought would do them both good, and yonder was the deer, so off he went. Off went man and horse, and buck, but the latter seemed never to tire, and the plain over which he rode seemed interminable. Hours flew by; then Frank’s horse began to flag, for he must have ridden thirty miles in a bee line; so the buck won the day, he took to cover in a small bit of scrub, and from that he would not be moved. If he had, Frank thought, but one good hound, he could rest his horse, then start the chase, and probably turn him again towards the camp, and thus finish a day that would make the roaster of Her Majesty’s Staghounds envy him even to read of it. But no, he must mount his horse again and ride back. Back? Yes, it seemed about the easiest thing in the world to find his way back; but when, after journeying on and on all the day, without

seeing a sign or token of the camp he had left, when, faint and weary, he saw the sun dipping slowly downwards to the western horizon, then his heart sank within him, and for the first time he realised the terribleness of his situation—he was lost! Lost! and it mattered little to him now which way he rode; he allowed the bridle to hang loose on the neck of his jaded horse, his own chin to fall on his breast; a sense of weariness crept over him that almost induced sleep, and more than once he nearly slipped from the saddle. Presently it was night, and big bright stars shone over him, which he did not care even to glance at. He only felt tired, cold, sleepy.

"Coo—oo—ee!" Hark! does he dream? No, for list! once again that long unearthly yell. The horse pricks up his ears and neighs. Frank seizes the bridle, and once more listens himself, for well he knows what he hears is the night-shout of the outpost African sentinels. In ten minutes more he is beside the camp-fire. Thanks to the sagacity of that good horse.

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Chapter Eleven.

Cruising in the Dodo—The Bluebell—How oysters grow on trees—Away up the beautiful river—The Bluebell aground—Noontide on the river.

On board the Dodo once more, steaming steadily northwards; some times far out at sea, with nothing but the blue all round them: sometimes hugging the green-wooded shore: sometimes casting anchor at the mouths of mighty rivers, and sending armed boats away to seek for the slave dhows that hid all day under the hanging boughs, and stole out to sea at night. Chisholm, the oldest of our heroes, confessed he had never enjoyed a voyage so much in his life. At last, however, they cast anchor in Zanzibar, and were nothing loth to go on shore to stretch their legs. The captain accompanied them in his gig, dressed in full uniform—cocked-hat, epaulettes, and sword. He was going to visit the Consulate, and expected news of some importance.

Accompanied by a black boy, who wore no clothes worth mentioning, but could speak English and prided himself thereon, they went for a grand tour of inspection. The streets were narrow, long, and winding, and oftentimes bridged over at the top, so that the residents in one house could cross over to see their friends on the other side of the way, without the trouble of coming downstairs. There was a singular absence of windows in the houses of the gentlemen Arabs, Banians, or Hindus; every room of which, although furnished luxuriantly, is very dark and cool. In the bazaar and in the streets where the shops were, there was hardly any moving along, so great was the motley crowd, and, saving the women and the innumerable slaves, every one they met was armed to the teeth. The warrior Arabs, with their long flowing hair, dressed in embroidered robes of snowy white, with cloaks of camel's hair, gilded turbans and jewelled sword-belts, looked boldly picturesque; these mingled in the streets with—white-gowned Hindus, and long-faced, dark-coated Parsees; sailors in blue and soldiers in scarlet, and sacred solemn-looking cows with gilded horns, which many a one touched with fond reverence, as they walked quietly along. And the background of all this picture was slavery; slavery panting and perspiring as it dragged itself along in chains; slavery cowering under the lash of the driver's whip; slavery bent to the ground under loads of cowrie shells; slavery, dark unhappy slavery.

Our heroes were glad to find themselves at last out in the green and flowery country, wandering under the shade of giant trees, and inhaling the sweet perfume of orange

blossom. The first person they met on their return from shore was Captain Lyell himself. He shook hands with them all round, at which they were not a little surprised, but they could see by his face there was something in the wind.

"Come down below," he said. When he got them there he continued, "I've got good news, gentlemen, in fact, I may say glorious news; let me tell it to you all in one sentence. First, then, I'm promoted; I'm now Captain Lyell in reality, and not by courtesy alone; secondly, I'm going home—another officer has arrived to take command of the Dodo; thirdly, I've applied to the Commodore for four months' leave; fourthly, I've got it; fifthly and lastly, I've hired a pretty little river steamboat from a Scotch friend on shore here, one that takes all to pieces for the boys to carry, quite an African explore boat, and I'm ready to start with you to-morrow if you like for the interior, and if we don't get the rarest of sport, why I shan't believe that my name is plain John Lyell."

It is needless to say that after this there was another round of hand-shaking, or that the dinner that day was enlivened by some of the captain's very best and rarest of reminiscences.

The little steamer which Lyell had hired was indeed a beauty, quite a fairy boat. Getting her ready for the voyage and packing the stores, getting in all necessaries, and hiring "the boys" occupied quite a week. Then they went out on their trial trip. The day was beautiful—it was the sunny season in the Indian ocean—there was just enough wind to temper the heat and ripple the sea. The many pretty islands they visited seemed, at a distance, to float in the sky; they were emerald green, and fringed with a beach of snowy sand. They landed on some of these and shot a species of small deer and rabbits—wild rabbits such as we have at home. (I cannot account for the presence of rabbits on some islands in the channel of the Mozambique, but there they are.) In a little sandy cove of one of these islands, they took luncheon al fresco, previously enjoying the luxury of a bath, all taking a header at once and making all the noise they could to keep the sharks at bay.

The trial trip was perfectly satisfactory; so next morning early, it was up anchor and off. The Bluebird hadn't much space between decks, but they had an awning spread, and lounging on deck was delightful. They headed north, keeping two or three miles from the shore. This shore was a cloudland of green, without beach or sea border of any kind.

"Yonder," said Lyell, "is where oysters grow on trees."

There was a laugh at this; but next morning the captain verified his statement, and he took Frank with him in the little boat, and they brought off a bucketful. The explanation

is this: the roots of the mangrove trees grow among the water, to these the oysters cling, and at low water can be gathered.

Now here they are at the mouth of a great river; they can hear the thundering of the breakers on the terrible bar as they approach it, over these mountain waves their boat must go, and it is lucky for them that they have so experienced a sailor as Lyell at the helm. But beyond all is peace; the peace that reigns on the broad bosom of a great river whose waters roll slowly seaward. On each side the banks are wooded to the water's edge. The trees are mangroves, but here and there are bunches of feathery palms.

After dinner they land among a clump of these to drink cool delicious cocoa-nut milk. (This glorious nectar can only be had in perfection in lands where the cocoa palms grow. Each green nut before the fruit is formed contains about a quart of it.) In Africa, wherever you find cocoa-nut trees you find human beings, and here was a negro village, but at sight of the white faces of the travellers the natives fled screaming into the dark depths of the forest. So they had to help themselves. Onward again, and now a thick fog envelopes them, and in a few minutes the Bluebell has run aground and refuses to budge. Then it is all hands to strip and get overboard to lighten ship; all save the little engineer; he stays aboard to go all speed astern. All speed astern means no speed at all for ten minutes at least, during which time it comes on to rain in fearful torrents, and the surface of the river becomes all at once so hot, that they are glad when the Bluebell moves again, and they can get up out of it. They hadn't bargained for a warm bath. But the mist rolls off presently, and they can once more see their way. But this running aground becomes an almost every day occurrence, so that at last they quite look forward to the order to strip and plunge.

They have left the last Portuguese settlement, and the last Arab encampment, leagues and leagues behind them; they have passed the countries of many different tribes of natives. Most of these fled on their approach, but the warriors of some lined the shores, yelling maniacally, and brandishing their war spears. They have come at last to a portion of the stream where they are but little troubled with the presence of the aborigines, a few only being seen in their log canoes peacefully fishing. But where mankind does not abound in Africa birds and beasts hold sway; and one day, on rounding a point of land, they came upon a scene of such animation, as my poor pen would fail in any attempt to describe. It was noontide on the river; countless herds of zebus and zebras had come down to drink, hippopotami wallowed in the shallows, and the sky above was alive with myriads of strange and beautiful birds, that floated screaming around, or perched on the trees, deafening the ear with their noise and chatter; parrots and lories, ibises, flamingoes and storks—some of these as they circled high in the air being arrayed in

plumage of pure white and scarlet, looked strangely beautiful against the sky's azure blue.

"O!" cried Chisholm, "we mustn't let such an opportunity as this pass for a big shoot."

"Give them time to drink," said Fred; "it would be a shame to disturb them yet a little."

This was agreed to, and the Bluebird lay still for two hours, which gave ample time to watch the strange manners and customs of these curious specimens of animal life, and after this shooting began. The larger game were wilder than they imagined, and soon made themselves very scarce indeed; but the birds took hardly any heed of their presence, and even when dozens of them fluttered down dead, instead of being afraid, the majority seemed to look upon the matter as a very pretty joke, and the parrots in particular shrieked and laughed till the very welkin rang.

The scenery got more varied as they proceeded more inland; the river swept at times through vast treeless wastes, and on its banks lay alligators basking in the sunshine. This was a temptation never to be resisted. It afforded good ball practice, and I daresay it tickled the alligators up a little if it did nothing else. At other times the river was bounded by gigantic cliffs; here it narrowed, and the current was so strong that a mile an hour of headway was all that could be made, under the highest pressure of steam commensurate with safety.

They had come to the right hunting grounds at last, so thought Chisholm, Frank, and Fred. But Lyell, although always willing to lie to for a day to enjoy the wild scenery, and the shooting the jungles afforded, always counselled going on and on. Early in the morning and an hour or two before the shades of evening fell, were the times they generally chose to disembark for a ramble in the forest.

One day they crept quietly through the bush to a spot whence some noise proceeded. They expected a shot at something. Suddenly they found themselves within a stone's throw of a herd of most beautiful zebras; they had come to a pool to drink. But beyond them were quite a regiment of giraffes. They could sniff the danger from afar if the zebras could not; they swung their heads as if they were gigantic hammers, stamped with rage, and bounded off ere ever a trigger could be drawn. But our heroes were rewarded half-an-hour afterwards, by falling in with a quantity of hippopotami. These unwieldly monsters were quietly browsing on the rank herbage that the plain afforded them. Probably they never ran so quickly before as they did when fire was opened on them from the bush. Before they had began to shoot, "I say, boys," said Chisholm, "what

a charming view, a nobleman's castle on a hill, park and trees and all complete! Doesn't it look like it, though?"

"Yes," Fred replied, laughing; "and deer and all in it. Don't they look elegant with their short legs and their swollen mouths?"

Bang—bang—bang!

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Chapter Twelve.

An Inland Lake—Enchanting Scenery—The Encampment—Tropical Storms—Hunting the Rhinoceros—Frank Unhorsed—Lyell's Adventure with a Lion—Encounter with a Gorilla.

Some degrees south of the Equator, and nearly four hundred miles from the eastern shores of Africa, a tributary of the river up which the saucy little Bluebell was so quietly steaming, suddenly broadened out into a beautiful lake. Here about a week after the events narrated in last chapter, our friends found themselves. Not even Captain Lyell knew the name of this sheet of water. Perhaps it never had one, but Chisholm was equal to the occasion.

"Call it," he said, "Loch Row Allan, in honour of my departed friend the lion killer." (Row Allan Gordon Cumming.)

And so, Loch Row Allan it was called.

I hope my young reader has not been taught at school to believe that the interior of Africa is composed entirely of deep, dark forests, entangled bush, and dismal swamp. If he has been, and could catch but one glance at the wild and charming scenery around this inland lake; how speedily he would be undeceived. It is a bold and rugged mountain land, hills above hills towering skywards, clusters of hills, not round but façaded—peaked, and clad to two-thirds of their height with gigantic forest trees and feathery palms. There is many a bosky glen and dell encompassed by these hills, and many a dark, wide wooded strath, and it did not detract in the least from the charm of the scenery, in our heroes' view, to know that these glens and straths were the home of the elephant, the rhinoceros, and the king of the forest himself—the lordly lion. They determined to make this country their home for two or three months at the least, and with this end they built themselves and their people huts high up on the green side of a swelling hill that overlooked the lake.

The woods and the plains beyond, nature had stocked with herds of deer, the lake teemed with fish, there were patches of pine apples acres in extent, mango-trees, guava trees, oranges, citron, limes and pomolos, with bananas and plantains, and a hundred

other delicious fruits they knew not even the names of. Surely in a land like this, there was but little chance of their falling short of the means of subsistence.

But do not imagine they had not to rough it, for that they often had; nor that the sun always shone, for that it did not. Sometimes great dark clouds would roll rapidly up from the horizon, and above them the fast disappearing blue of the sky looked preternaturally deep and intense, and from out these clouds the storm would burst in all its fierce intensity, lightning such as they had never seen before, thunder that seemed to rend the very hills, and rain that soon gathered into cataracts that steamed and foamed down the mountain sides, on their way to the lakes beneath. These storms ended almost as quickly as they had begun, and probably our heroes would have minded them but very little, had it not been for the fact that, a few minutes before the rain began to fall, scorpions, centipedes, and the largest and most loathsome of spiders, came hastily trooping into the hut to seek for shelter. What instinct teaches them to do this I wonder?

Many gigantic specimens of the rhinoceros fell before the fire of their rifles. They afforded good but not always safe sport, as Frank one day found to his cost. He appeared one morning dressed "after the fashion of the country," as he termed it, with shoulders, arms, and face well greased and stained, and when he mounted his horse, every one was obliged to admit that, to say the least, he looked "a noble savage."

Frank was greatly pleased at this, and away he rode, in company with his friend Chisholm, determined, he said, to put in a good day. There was a plain not far away from the encampment which Chisholm, who liked to retain Scottish nomenclature wherever he went, used to call the moor. Here, on this particular occasion, they had the good luck to fall in with several rhinoceroses, and rare sport they had with them. They did not wish to kill, they came out to chase, and rough though the ground was, they had the best of it. Frank slung his rifle behind him, and when he got alongside any of the monsters he used his riding whip, causing them at first to increase their speed, but soon to lose temper and stand at bay, and use their terrible horns. This gave the young man a chance of showing his horsemanship off to perfection.

Several deer were brought down from the saddle, and, on the whole, Chisholm, and the noble savage Frank, made a glorious day of it, and were returning about four in the afternoon, tired and hungry, when, just on the verge of the forest, lo! and behold, a rhinoceros scratching his chin, and looking as mild as any old cow.

Frank rode up to flick him with his whip. The beast backed for a moment, but charged again fiercely and furiously, the dead wood snapped, and, when Chisholm looked up, he saw his friend and horse rolling on the ground. The next to roll on the ground was the huge beast himself, for Chisholm was handy with the rifle. Frank got up smiling, and but

little hurt, but, alas! for the poor horse, he was stabbed to the heart. The noble savage had to ride into camp ignominiously perched on the crupper of Chisholm's saddle.

But perhaps the sport which our friends enjoyed above all others was elephant shooting, either on horseback or on foot, according to the nature of the ground. Of their haunts in the forests around the camp they knew nothing at first, nor did their Zanzibar boys, and the first to lead them on their sport was young 'Mboona, the son of a king of one of the native tribes, who had become servant and guide-in-chief to the camp. His reward was to be a rifle, and well he earned it.

People who have never seen an elephant in his native fastnesses, can have no idea of the strength, the ferocity, ay, and the cunning of the animal. Our sporting party took back with them in the little Bluebell many hundreds of pounds' worth of valuable ivory, but if they did they had to pay for it with many a hard day's work, in many a wild ride, and many a hair-breadth escape.

As a rule, the elephants would run when pursued by men and dogs; then, as they passed the spot where the rifles were stationed, they fell easy victims to the hardened bullets. They were not always particular in which way they did run, however, and when they did not run right in the direction of the guns, our friends would rush out in pursuit, when all at once perhaps the herd would be turned, and come crashing back upon them and their people. They were not always angry; perhaps they were thinking more of escape than revenge; but to be run down by even a small herd of cow elephants is no joke. Their feet are terribly heavy, and they are not particular where they place them, so whenever a stampede was checked and rolled back on the pursuers, it was sauve qui peut with a vengeance.

Frank was one day rolled down thus, while on foot, and not only down, but over and over; indeed the herd seemed for a time to be playing at football with him. He was covered from top to toe with blood and earth.

"Eton style of football is all very well," Frank said afterwards, "but I never had such a doing as that before."

Chisholm had a worse doing, however. He had fired at, without killing, a gigantic bull. The brute was on him ere he could either reload or escape. He was picked up as one might seize a kitten, and dashed into a tree beyond even the elephant's reach. The dogs would not tackle this monster. Hearing the terrible screaming, Lyell rode down to attack the foe next, but the wounded animal was careering madly through the forest, and trees

that would be thought far from small in a park at home, were snapping before him with the fury and impetus of the rush. Lyell had served in the Crimea, but he confessed himself he had never been nearer to death before, except once. He had been out shooting with a party in the rough and solitary plains, that bound the Zulu land to the north and west. They had come principally for buffalo-shooting, but they soon found out that there was wilder game than these to be found; and on the very first night on which they bivouacked under the stars, they were fain to entrench themselves well, and to keep the fires alight till morning, for every now and then they could hear the peevish scream of the hyena, the shrill bark of the jackal, and the appalling roar of the lion. Next day they found the carcases of the buffaloes they had slain torn and devoured, and even their enormous bones broken and gnawed. Lions are not looked upon by the true sportsman as very brave animals, but a lion at bay, or a man-eating lion, is a terrible foe to encounter.

"One night," said Captain Lyell, "just as my biggest and strongest Caffre servant was putting the finishing touch to our laager, he was seized by an immense lion and home away, as one might say, from our very midst; borne away, shrieking for help, into the darkness of the adjoining bush. The silence that succeeded the shrieks made our blood run cold, for we knew that the poor boy was dead, and that the man-eater had commenced his revolting feast. We knew well, that having once tasted human flesh, our camp, while he lived, would not be safe from his attacks. We lost no time, you may be sure, in carrying out the execution of our plans. It was a long weary day's work, and we were about to return to camp, too exhausted by the heat and fatigue to do much more, when suddenly there arose a shout from the party nearest the laager—a shout and a roar—quickly followed by the report of rifles, then more shouting and warning cries. Then I could see the tawny monster appearing suddenly in front of us. I had no time to fire; my comrade did, but I think he missed, and with a howl that seemed to shake the earth, he sprang full upon me, seized me by the side, and bore me almost fainting away, my two hands clutched in his murderous mane. He carried me far off into the jungle, running at first, then walking, finally lying down with his burden under a tree. The terrible moment, then, had arrived, he was about to rend me in pieces, and no power on earth could save me. Overcome by fear and weakness, and by the loss of blood, I fainted, and was found hours after by my comrades in the same condition, with the lion extended by my side—dead of his wounds!"

The Bluebell made many a run to different parts of the lake, and it was during one of these excursions that Frank and Chisholm landed, for the purpose of exploring a part of a forest that grew down close to the water's edge. It was not a likely place for lions—they are fond of more light than this gloomy wood afforded—but they might, they thought, get a chance shot at an elephant. The ground was carpetted with moss, and, with the

exception of monkey ropes, so called, the stems of the sturdy creepers, there was but little undergrowth. Chisholm and Frank strolled on and on, fearing nothing.

How silent it is in that dark wood, and how still! Not a leaf moves, not a fern frond quivers, only high over head there is a gentle sighing, and when they gaze upwards they can see the sparkling of the leaves in the sunshine, but that leafy canopy seems very far away.

Chisholm lags behind for a moment, he is looking to his rifle, and sighting it for close quarters. Frank strolls on. Suddenly the silence of the forest is broken by the most terrible yells, and Chisholm rushes forward to find his poor friend in the clutches of a gorilla, with his rifle torn from his grasp, and brandished high in air by the awful beast. But Frank, clutched by the throat, is quite insensible. There is not a moment, not a second, to be lost, and Chisholm fires almost at close quarters, and the gorilla rolls dead at his feet.

It was well for both Frank and him that assistance was close at hand. Dreading some danger, Fred and Lyell had followed them into the forest, and come up just in time, for now the woods all around rang again with the screams of the enraged gorillas, who, it would almost seem, had only allowed Chisholm and Frank to penetrate so far into their domains, with the hopes of encompassing the destruction of both. But all the way back to the boat, it was a close hand-to-hand fight with these wild and terrible apes. Frank, once on board, and laid on deck, with the Bluebell well clear of the wood, and the gentle breeze blowing in his face, revival was a mere question of time; but he never forgot his first and only encounter with the savage pongo.

Wild Adventures in Wild Places by William Gordon Stables

Chapter Thirteen.

Part V—The Indian Jungle.

A Tête-à-Tête Dinner—Letters from Home—The Journey Junglewards—The Camp and Scenery around it—A Sportsman's Paradise—Lost in the Forest.

In a large and beautiful room in one of the upper storeys of a Club, on the outskirts of Bombay, four gentlemen are seated at dinner one evening, not long after the events related in the last chapter. It is evidently quite a tête-à-tête affair, for they are all by themselves in a corner, at the extreme end of the spacious apartment, close to the great windows that lead on to the verandah. The balmy evening air, laden with the scent of a thousand flowers, steals in, and is put in motion by an immense punkah which hangs above them, and kept moving by a little nigger-boy, dressed in a jacket of snow apparently, who squats in a far corner like a monkey, and requires the united efforts of the three servants who wait at table to keep him awake. No matter what these men are carrying, they always stop as they pass to give Jumlah a kick, making some such remark as—"Jumlah, you asleep again, you black rascal! I kick ebery bit of skin off you presently?" Or, "Jumlah, you young dog, suppose you go asleep just one oder time, den I break ebery bone in your black body!"

The jalousies are wide open, for the day has been hot, and every breath of air is precious. Although the waiters indignantly refer to the colour of poor Jumlah's skin, they themselves are black, though dressed in cool white linen.

You have guessed already who the gentlemen are. Let us follow them out to the verandah, where they have gone to sip their fragrant coffee. Stars are twinkling in the bright sky, fireflies flit from bush to bush in the gardens beneath, the distant sound of music falls upon their ear, mingling with the far-off city's hum, the beating of tom-toms, and shrill screams and yells, which may mean anything from mirth to murder.

Conversation during dinner had been very animated indeed; but sitting out here on the cool verandah no one seemed much inclined to speak. Frank had received letters from home, Fred had received letters from Russia; and very pleasant letters, I ween, they were, for they bore reading over and over and over again. Chisholm's letters were what

he called “jolly enough,” only as soon as he had read them, and laughed over them, he just tore them up and pitched them into the basket.

“Hallo, you fellows!” cried Chisholm suddenly. “Awake from your slumbers.”

“I wasn’t asleep,” said Frank.

“No; but you were dreaming, you young rascal.”

“Do you know how I feel?” said Lyell. “I’m feeling sad at the thoughts of parting with you fellows and going back to England.”

“Then, my dear fellow, don’t go,” said matter-of-fact Chisholm O’Grahame.

“By George, then,” cried Lyell, “and I won’t. I’ll apply for more leave; and while the application is going home, and the reply coming back, I’ll run off with you boys into the jungles. I know a deal more about the country than either of you.”

“Lyell,” said Chisholm, “I knew you were a brick the very first day I clapped eyes upon you.”

They were indeed lucky to have made the acquaintance of such a man as Lyell. He had been pretty much at home in Africa; but in India he was more so; and as soon as he had made up his mind to go with our heroes, he commenced forthwith making preparations for the campaign against big beasts.

He explained everything he did to his three friends, and told them his reasons for acting as he did. Tents were bought in Bombay, and additional rifles—he was very learned on the subject of rifles and rifle-bullets—and Chisholm, being the biggest man, was furnished with a regular bone-smasher. Twenty servants were hired, and a boat was chartered to take their little expedition on to Madras. Just three days were spent in that city.

“If we stay any longer,” Chisholm said to Lyell, “my young confrères will be starting lotus-eating again. Let us be off as soon as we can.”

And so the very next day the journey up country was commenced: by train at first, for a long long way; nobody was sorry when this part of the cruise came to an end at a station near a tall forest, with a name that was worse than Welsh to every one save Captain Lyell

and a few of the attendants. By seven o'clock next morning, a start was made in the direction of the south and east.

By the evening of the third day they had left civilisation a long way behind them; they had journeyed on and on through vast tracts of jangle lands, and mighty forests clad in all the rich and varied luxuriance of a tropical summer. They had passed many a strange romantic hamlet; from the doors of the huts of grass and clay, little innocent naked children had waddled forth to stare in wonder at the cavalcade, while the simple owners offered them fruits of many kinds to eat, and water to drink. They were often tempted to get down and spend a few hours shooting, for they came to places where feathered game of many kinds abounded, especially duck and peafowl. But Lyell's counsel was always taken, and his advice was, "Let us go on as speedily as possible towards the mountain forests, and there encamp." And so, as the last rays of the setting sun shimmered down through the trees on them, they reached a spot which Lyell thought would do excellently well as a camping-ground.

"Oh, isn't this a charming sight?" said Chisholm, addressing Frank, who lounged on the howdah by his side.

They were a long way behind the others. They did not mind that, however; indeed, the elephant on which they were seated, pleased the two friends far better than any other could have done. He was slow, but wondrous sure. No fears of Jowser, as Frank baptised him, taking sudden fright and dashing suddenly off and away over the jungle, as elephants sometimes do, and ending by dashing their brains out, or tumbling over some mighty precipice with them. Jowser was somewhat more than a hundred years old—a very experienced matter-of-fact old fellow, who knew better than to hurry himself. He required but little guidance—a gentle touch with a cane on his left ear or his right, as the case might be, was quite enough for him. When he stopped short sometimes, to reach above him for a few leaves to munch, his attendant would gently goad him; but Jowser would turn up the tip of his trunk to him as much as to say, "Put a handful of rice into that. That's what Jowser wants. Jowser is hungry."

But it suited Frank and Chisholm to be a little late of an evening, because they found their friends already encamped, probably under the banian-tree, and, better than all, supper ready—a curry of such fragrance, that even a sniff at it would have made them hungry, if they had not, as they always did have, the appetite of hunters.

The master of ceremonies did allow them one day, however, among the peafowl. In a piece of jungle—which Chisholm as usual persisted in calling a moor—they found these beautiful birds in great abundance: they were early astir that morning. They had their

own beaters, who were principally Mahratta men, whom they had engaged in Bombay, and whom Lyell had armed with rifles as well as spears. “It is a mean thing,” this gallant officer said to our heroes, “to send a man into the bush unarmed; yet Englishmen constantly do it.”

Independently of these they had volunteers from among the simple Hindoo folks in whose country they were. Brave, fool-hardy in fact, but as a rule indolent, these men would work all day, for the sake of earning a morsel of tobacco.

It was a glorious day’s shooting our sportsmen, had, and it was but one of many such days they enjoyed, after their encampment at the foot of the mountains had been fairly formed. Neither of them were fond of what is called battue shooting, deeming it, as every true sportsman must, somewhat unjust to the birds; but here there were very many mouths to fill, and four guns to do all the work of filling them. So they had to make good bags.

And they did too. It was always their custom to be early astir, but they did not start on an empty stomach you may be well sure; and they were quite ready for luncheon at twelve. Then would come the hour for siesta; for during the time of day when the sun is at its highest and its hottest, it is neither pleasant nor safe to be out of the shade in India.

“Why, Lyell,” Fred Freeman said on the evening of the first day’s big shoot, “you have brought us to a perfect paradise, and a sportsman’s paradise too.”

A sportsman’s paradise? Yes, surely the contents of those lordly bags testified to that. And what was it that was wanting in that bag, I wonder? Nothing you could wish to see. Here were pigeons by the dozen, and peafowls and jungle-fowls, to shoot which they had threaded the dark mazes of the forest. Here were ducks and geese, ay, and snipe and teal, which they had waded neck-deep in paddy fields to find, to say nothing of big fat bustards, and grouse and red-legged partridge, that had fallen to their guns while crossing the moor; and last, but certainly not least, a hare or two as well.

Now, when I say that there were growing around them, everywhere, the most luscious fruits that can be imagined; when I say that the earth yielded its turmeric (the basis of curry powder), and its deliciously esculent roots; that spices of all kinds could be had for the gathering, that the cocoa-nut palms held high aloft their tempting fruits, and that the river abounded with fish, will you wonder when I tell you that our friends lived like fighting-cocks. Would they not have been fools if they hadn’t?

Chisholm and Frank occupied one sleeping tent, Fred Freeman and Captain Lyell another. Very comfortably too those tents were furnished, and each canvas bed had its own mosquito curtain. One night, however, Frank found it impossible to sleep, so he got up quietly, dressed, and went out. What a heavenly night! Never, except in the far-off sea of ice, had he seen stars so bright and large. There was light enough almost to read by. He could see everything around him—the men lying asleep at the foot of the snow-white dining tent, the elephants and the picketed horses, and, farther away, jungle and plain, forest and hills, all bathed in starlight. Frank could hear, high over the loud hum of insect life, the distant yelp of the jackal, the gibber of the striped hyaena, and the unearthly yell of the jungle cat.

"If there is nothing more terrible than that about," he said to himself, "I shall go for a walk, just a little way. Jooma," he continued, addressing the sentinel, "I'm going to the banks of the river."

"Take care, sahib, take care," was the sentinel's warning.

When two whole hours passed away, and there were no signs of Frank's return, Jooma became alarmed, and roused Chisholm, and Chisholm aroused the whole camp. Frank must be found, and that right speedily; but where were they to seek him? While they were deliberating which way to go, the report of a rifle fell on their ears, coming from the forest behind the camp. Meanwhile clouds had banked up and obscured a great portion of the sky.

"Now, hurry men, hurry, get your torches and come, there isn't a moment to be lost if you would save my friend."

In ten minutes more they were on his track: by bent grass by a single footprint, by a broken twig, and a hundred little signs that the eye of a European would never have noticed, these men followed the trail by torchlight, till far into the deepest and darkest part of the great forest. But now a pause ensued. The trackers were puzzled. The truth is, that it was just at this spot that the disagreeable truth flashed upon poor Frank that he was lost. He had felt sure he could easily retrace his steps, but trying to do so only led to a series of useless wanderings up and down and round and round, often coming back again to the same spot, though he knew it not, until the starlight forsook him, and he found himself at last in the terrible position presently to be described.

The trackers are at fault, and no wonder, yet not three hundred yards away Frank lies at the bottom of a pit, into which he had stumbled, and pulled after him the large withered branch of a mango-tree, and his rifle had gone off as he fell. He hears his friends firing

to attract his attention, he cannot reach his rifle to reply. But there adown the wind at last comes a thrice-welcome shout, “Coo-ee-ee!” He tries to answer, but the branch lies across his chest, and he can hardly breathe. “Coo-ee-ee! Coo-ee-ee!” They hear his muffled tones at last; they look no more for track nor trail. Forward they dash, holding the torches high over head. “Coo-oo-ee!” A gigantic leopard rises from his lair, but with a startled yell disappears in a moment in the darkness. Was that a huge python coiled round the tree? If it was he had no time to strike, so quickly do they speed along. “Coo-ee-ee!” They are close at hand now, and now they are at the very mouth of the pit, and Frank can talk to them and tell them how he is trapped.

Chisholm was so glad to see his friend once more safe and alive, that he forgot entirely that he had resolved to scold him properly for his rashness and folly. But Frank never afterwards cared to have any allusion made to his night ramble, and resented almost warmly Fred Freeman’s attempt to dub him the “somnambulist.”

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Chapter Fourteen.

Adventure with a Python—Moondah's House—"The Tiger! The Tiger!"—Panthers—Hunting with the Cheetah—The Panther and the Boar.

"Do you really think there are pythons or boa constrictors in the forest?" asked Frank next day at dinner.

"I haven't a doubt of it," replied Lyell. "At the same time I cannot quite swallow all the tracker says about the enormity of the serpent he saw when following up your trail in the woods."

"No," said Chisholm, "fifty feet of snake is rather more than most men can swallow; but had you seen the tracker's eyes when he saw the tiger, you'd have been willing to admit that they were big enough to accommodate a very large amount of boa constrictor."

"It puts me in mind of an adventure I once had in South Africa," said Lyell. "One doesn't like speaking much of one's self, but I think, on the occasion I refer to, I exhibited a fair amount of firmness and presence of mind in a moment of deadly peril to one of my men. I had been out for a fortnight's shoot, beyond and to the nor'ard of the Natal provinces. There were four of us—our doctor, our purser, marine officer, and myself. Our sport was good, and the fun we had fairish. We were seated at lunch one day in an open glade in the forest, when suddenly we were startled by hearing the most terrific yells; and on looking up beheld one of our Caffres speeding towards us, pursued by an enormous python. There was no time for escape, had escape been honourable, which it was not. I seized the rifle and bayonet from one of our attendant marines, and next moment the python was impaled. Oh, don't think for a moment that that would have killed him! In half a second he had almost wriggled clear; but in doing so he turned the rifle round so that the muzzle pointed almost down his throat. It was a terrible moment—thank Heaven that rifle was loaded, and that I had the presence of mind to pull the trigger! It was a case of 'all hands stand clear' now. The python's head was shattered, but the convulsions of his body, ere death closed the scene, were fearful to witness. I don't want to see the like again. His body measured five-and-thirty feet; the gape of his jaws measured over a yard. I can understand a monster like this swallowing a goat or even a deer itself."

A day or two after this the camp was struck, and a move made nearer to the mountains, the tents being erected close to the river as before, but still on elevated ground. Here they were, then, in the very centre of what might be called the home of the wild beasts, and both sport and adventure might reasonably be expected in any quantity. Herds of elephants roamed in the deep forests, tigers and wild pigs were in the thickets; bears, too, would be found, and birds everywhere. They formed no particular plan of attack upon the denizens of this wilderness; they were bold hunters every one of them; they carried their lives in their hands, but they omitted no precaution to defend and protect them. They always went abroad prepared for anything.

Chisholm called the spot where the camp was now fixed—and where it remained until the commencement of the south-west monsoon warned them it was time for departure—his Highland home. It was indeed a Highland home, and the scenery all around was charming. And yet a walk of some eight or nine miles brought them to what might be called the lowlands. Here were great stretches of open country, interspersed with lakes and streams, immense green fields of rice or paddy and maize, with groves of cocoa-nut palms, and gardens where grew the orange-tree and the citron, and where the giant mango-trees hid completely from view the primitive huts of the villagers.

Moondah was head-man of one of these villages, and our heroes, while returning home after a day's promiscuous shooting, used to stop to refresh themselves at his house. Moondah was a kind of a feudal lord among his people. He had built himself a house on the outskirts of his village, just under the shadow of a vast precipice. Indeed, it was quite a castle compared to the frail huts of mud and wood in which the villagers dwelt. Moondah's castle was built of solid stone and lime, the walls were of great thickness, and the roof was flat and surrounded by embattlements; and it was very pleasant to sit here for half an hour, while the sun was declining in the west, and sip the fragrant coffee, which nobody could make so well as Moondah, and which he always presented to them with his own hands. The five miles that intervened between his house and their encampment, seemed a trifle to them after that.

It was, strange to say, at this head-man's house, and not in the jungle, that they formed their first acquaintance with a tiger. Close by the walls ran a rapid stream, by no means large at the time of which I write, but in the rainy season it mast have been swollen into quite a broad and mighty river. The day had been unusually warm, and the sport very exciting. Moondah was extremely pleased to see them; perhaps the contents of Jowser's howdah, which had been left at Moondah's garden gate, had something to do with his delight, for they seldom called upon him without leaving a souvenir of some kind. Moondah was in no wise particular, so long as it was not buffalo or cow's flesh; but pigs

and deer pleased him much, and neither wild-cat, jackal, nor iguana lizards, came wrong to him.

“Well, Moondah?” said Lyell.

“Salaam Sahib,” replied Moondah, leading the way up-stairs to his darkest and coolest room. “I dessay you tired after your ’xertions; you squat dere on de skins, and munch de fruit my little boy bring you. I fetch de coffee quick enough, you see. Hallo! what is de matter now?”

This was addressed to the above-mentioned little boy, who had just rushed in with the fruit-tray, which he dropped at his master’s feet.

“Hooli! hooli!” was all the boy could gasp. “The tiger! the tiger!”

“What!” cried Lyell, starting up, “a tiger in the very village?”

But it was easily explained: a dead bullock lay in a bit of bush only a stone’s throw up the stream, and on this the beast had doubtless come to regale himself. He was there now; and it was resolved to wait quietly on the top of Moondah’s house, and watch.

It was a long watch. Daylight faded away, twilight faded into darkness; the stars shone out; a great red round moon rose slowly up from behind the trees, paling as it went, till at last it shone out high above them, bright, and white, and clear. But still no tiger made his appearance. At last though, there was a crackling noise amongst the bushes, then a stealthy footstep, and out into the open stalked the majestic beast. He stood for a moment as if to listen, then moved onwards to the river to drink. He presented a splendid shot. Seeing Lyell’s rifle at the shoulder, Chisholm, who was of a chivalrous nature, withheld his fire. But Lyell only wounded the brute in the leg. He was staggered, and emitted a roaring cough that seemed to shake Moondah’s house to its very foundation. Now it was Chisholm’s chance; he had knelt, and ere the crack of his rifle had ceased to reverberate among the rocks the tiger was stretched lifeless on the river’s brink.

One day Moondah came to the camp. It was evident he had something on his mind, for he never came without good news of some kind.

“Twenty mile from here,” he began, “lives a man who married two or tree of my sister.”

“Well done,” said Lyell, laughing.

“But that is nothing,” continued Moondah; “in the scrub around his village are antelope plenty; and my brodder he keep cheetah. There are also panther in the scrub; and dere are,”—here Moondah’s eyes sparkled, and his mouth seemed to water—“dere are wild pigs in de woods.”

“Oh, bother the pigs!” said Lyell. “Let us go to the village and see the cheetahs hunting. Let us go for two or three days, and make a regular big shoot of it.”

Accordingly, next day they set out, and Moondah and his merrie men went too. The camp was not broken up, but elephants were taken—Jowser among others—and horses, with plenty of ammunition and plenty of the good things of this life, both to eat and to drink. Their road led through jungle, scrub, and moorland, and just skirted the great forests. At noonday they stopped for luncheon, and the usual siesta. Chisholm and Frank strolled off together, while it was getting ready; they walked with caution, as usual, for there was cover enough about for anything. They soon discovered that there was some one not far off who did not belong to their party at all, and that he too was going in for a siesta. An immense tiger! Stretched on the grass by the river side, what a lovely picture he made. Chivalrous Chisholm O’Grahame! he would not have fired at the beast thus for the world. He admired him fully a minute in silence, then—

“Pitch a cartridge at him,” he whispered to Frank.

The result may easily be guessed.

“Wough, woa, oa!” roared the beast, springing up. Chisholm gave him both barrels. He was quiet enough after that. But had Chisholm only wounded the creature, it might have interfered materially with the continuation of my story, for Frank had no arms.

That evening found them encamped near the village of Chowdrah. They were duly introduced to Moondah’s much-married brother-in-law, and to the cheetahs. Frank was a little afraid of these animals at first, especially when one of them made a kind of a playful spring at him and brought him down, but this the much-married man assured Frank was all in fun. Next minute the same cheetah sat down by Frank’s side, and purred to him, like a monster cat. In shape of body they were not unlike a mastiff, long-tailed, spotted, loose in the loins and leggy; they had none of the grace and beauty of the panther.

Next day and for several days our heroes enjoyed the sport of antelope hunting, and the enjoyment was very real. They did not always find, but when they did it was interesting

to watch the movements of the now-unhooded cheetah. How lightly and cautiously he springs to the ground, flopping at once behind a bit of cover; how slowly but carefully he crawls towards the herd. Ah! but they see him now, and off they bound. Frank strikes spurs into his charger, and, wild horseman that he is, follows the chase. Chisholm and Lyell and Fred are not very far behind.

But that bounding antelope and that fleet-footed cheetah distanced them all. They were never once in at the death. Moondah and his men used to go wild with joy when the antelopes were brought in. They could do nothing but clap their hands and sing, "Hoolay-kara! Hoolay-kara!" till they were tired.

Frank so set his heart upon those cheetahs, that he determined to beg for a young one. Ay, and he got one too; but for the life of him he could not make up his mind whether to term it "kitten" or "puppy."

Greatly to the joy of Moondah they managed to kill not a few wild pigs.

In a bit of scrub or bush about an acre in extent they were told one day that a panther was hid. This was a chance not to be missed. Stake nets were planted at the side next to the hill where doubtless the beast's cave lay, the guns were well positioned, and the beaters began their work. Mr Panther, however, did not see the fun of going into that net. Disturbed at last, he quitted cover by making a wild rush at the beaters themselves; two were rolled over, and one severely lacerated in the leg. Fred was the nearest gun, and he wounded the panther in the shoulder, without stopping his way however. Well, a wounded panther must attack whatever with life in it happens to come his way. In this instance it was an old grey boar, who was coming round a corner, wondering to himself what all the row meant. The panther repented his rashness next minute, when the boar's tusks were fleshed in his neck. It was a curious battle, brought to a speedy termination by Chisholm's bone-crusher. His monster bullet whizzed through the panther's body, and pierced the breast of the huge boar, and they fell as they fought.

"Now," said Lyell, "I do call that a good shot. Bravo! Chisholm."

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Chapter Fifteen.

Elephant Hunting—The Elephant and Tiger—The Tusker's Charge—The Runaway Elephant—The Man-eating Tigress.

Those of my readers who have followed me so far in my history of the wanderings and adventures of our heroes cannot but have observed that in the character of Frank Willoughby there was a certain amount of what, to give it the right name, must be called foolhardiness. But poor Frank's last adventure in the Indian jungle taught him a lesson which he is not likely to forget while life lasts.

Elephant shooting seemed at first, to Frank and Fred at least, very cruel and unnecessary sport. Elephants are so sagacious and wise.

"Just think, for instance," said Frank, "of shooting a noble beast like poor old Jowser!"

"Ah, but," Lyell explained, "it isn't every elephant you'll find equal to Jowser. Moondah there will tell you of the immense destruction elephants cause to the maize and rice crops."

"Yes, yes, dat is so," said Moondah; "if they are not kill, and plenty kill too, they soon conquer all de country worse dan de Breetish."

Well, apart from the apparent cruelty of killing the elephant, which Sir Samuel Baker calls the "lord of all created animals," there is no sport in the world so exciting and dangerous as this, and none that requires greater hardihood or daring. No wonder then that our heroes spent over a month at it, meeting of course with many other wild adventures, but seeking none other. Moondah it was who organised for them their army of beaters and trackers, and the scenery through which these men led them, was oftentimes grand and beautiful in the extreme; not that they had much time during the chase to admire the loveliness of nature, it was while riding homewards to their temporary camp in the cool of the evening, or stretched beneath the trees when dinner was over, that they could thoroughly enjoy quietly gazing on all things around them. This was indeed the dolce far niente.

Our heroes one day had an opportunity of witnessing a curious encounter, between an elephant and a tiger. They themselves were within fifty yards of the herd when it took place, and under cover; the elephants were quietly browsing on the plain, and evidently not suspecting that danger lurked on either hand. One young calf had strayed some little distance from the parent.

“So capital a chance as this,” said a tiger to himself, “is seldom to be found; I would be a fool to miss it.”

There was a scream from an elephant in the rear, and a wild rush from one in the van. The tiger seemed quite unable to check his speed in time, and next moment he was crushed to atoms under the terrible feet of the furious tusker. There was a crash and a scream, and a cloud of dust. Then the elephant could be seen gathering himself up from where he had literally fallen upon his foe.

Fred Freeman used to chaff Chisholm O’Grahame about the immensity of his rifle.

“I wouldn’t carry such a tool as that for the world,” Fred said one day.

“No,” said Chisholm, laughing, “for, my dear boy, you couldn’t. Besides, its kicking would kill you.”

Now, early next morning a rogue elephant was to be tracked, and if possible bagged. He was a wily old rascal this, who seldom cared to go with the other herds; he doubtless thought he fared better when all by himself. He was a murderous old rascal too; for on two separate occasions he had attacked men, and more than one death could be laid at his door. It was not the first time that some or other of our heroes had gone out against this Goliath. But though he had been wounded several times, he did not seem to mind it; it evidently did not spoil his appetite, for on this particular morning they tracked him for miles through a bamboo brake, and at last could hear him on ahead, browsing on the branches as he marched.

“Now give me this shot,” cried Fred, “all to myself.”

“Have a care, then,” said Lyell.

“Never fear for me,” said Fred, and next minute he had crept into the bush and was out of sight; and his companions with a portion of the people sat down near a pool, left by some recent rain, to wait. Presently the ring of a rifle was heard, then a shout, then back rushed Fred, faster far than he had gone away, and far less buoyant too, for behind him was the monster tusker, eyes aflame and ears erect, bent on revenge—bent on doing

some one to death. Yes, but the pen has never yet been dipped in ink that can describe the fury of an angry tusker's charge.

Lyell fired quickly. Lyell missed. Now Chisholm's mighty rifle made the welkin ring, and down rolled the elephant on his head, raising a sheet of water that drenched every one of the party as a green sea would have done on ship-board.

"I took a temple shot at him," said Fred.

Lyell roared with laughter. "Yes," he said, "and you hit him through the nose. Ha! ha! ha! that accounts for the beggar charging with trunk in air, instead of curled close." (As they almost invariably do.)

"What do you think of my rifle now?" said Chisholm, quietly.

Fred smiled, but said nothing.

Tiger-shooting from howdahs they found excellent sport—just a little slow for Frank though, who would rather have been on horseback. But one day he had a ride he little expected; he was all by himself in Jowser's howdah. The grass was long and rough, but there were bushes about. From one of these an enormous tiger tried to steal away. Chisholm, handy though he was in times of danger, wounded but didn't kill. Next moment the beast had settled on Jowser. "Come, come, none o' that," roared Jowser, setting off at the gallop. The tiger fell next moment, with a bullet from Frank's Express through his head. But Jowser was off; fairly off. Who would have thought it of Jowser? Two hours of that wild ride, ere Jowser brought up to rub his rump against a tree, and for a week after Frank felt as if he had no more bones than a jelly-fish.

A tigress had been fired at by a party of horsemen, and wounded; but man and horse went down before that fearful charge. Next moment she had seized the rider, and borne him away into the bush. It was her first taste of human blood; but not the last, for long after this she was known and feared by the natives as the most daring man-eater ever known. She would even enter villages by night and carry people away.

Poor Frank! he seemed destined, although the youngest of the three, to have all the hard knocks and blows. He was one night asleep beneath a banian-tree when the man-eater entered, and attempted to seize a man. Frank, with unloaded rifle, rushed to the rescue. Well it was for him that Fred Freeman was close at hand: that man-eating tigress drank no more blood. But Frank, how frightfully still he lay! Was he dead? All but, reader.

This was, indeed, a sad ending to their adventures in India; but life cannot be all sunshine. When camp was broken up a week after, and our heroes turned their faces once more seaward—Frank on a litter—one sorrowing heart at least was left behind. It beat in the breast of honest Moondah.

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Chapter Sixteen.

Part VI—Australia.

Convalescent at last—A Run to Australia—Set out for the Interior—The Scenery—A Queer Mistake—Frank's Cousins.

Poor Frank Willoughby—for two long weeks his spirit hovered 'twixt life and death. It was a happy hour for his friends when he was pronounced out of danger; and for Frank himself, when he was told that he had nothing now to do in the world but just to get well again. For many weeks longer he had to lie on his back, however. But he was in that weak, dreamy kind of a state, that he did not mind the confinement. Every morning Chisholm brought him all the news, and read to him for hours. But how shall I describe the joy he felt the first day he went out for exercise? This getting well after a long illness in a foreign land is a pleasure that few ever know; but the joys of convalescence are sufficient reward to the invalid for all he has previously suffered.

Frank was borne about in a palanquin. He wondered whether he would ever again bestride a fiery steed, and go bounding along over the plains, as had been his wont. But he grew so rapidly strong and well, after he began to walk, that he ceased to wonder at anything; and when he and his friends embarked on board a saucy clipper bound for distant Australia, he felt nearly as strong as ever he was in his life.

Frank had cousins in Australia. They farmed sheep or something, Frank was not quite sure it mightn't be kangaroos; but they were good people, and had ornithorynchus soup and cockatoo pie for dinner as often as not, with cold black swan on the sideboard. So one of the boys had written him to say. Frank had the letter in his portfolio, and showed it to Lyell, and there was a deal of laughing over it. If I had that letter now I would just print it in extenso, to save myself the trouble of writing this chapter. Such a glowing account of Australian life was surely never penned before; and, if it could only be credited, what a life of wild adventure Frank's cousins must have led! Here were wonderful stories about emigrants and convicts, and settlers and savages, serpents and snakes, mixed up with emus, and kangaroos, and cockatoos, and any amount of other oos. And here were tales about bushrangers, and bush-riding, and buck-jumpers, and bullock-hunters; and the allusions to woomeras, and spears, and boomerangs, were as numerous as though they had been sprinkled in from a pepper-box.

Frank was himself again long ere the clipper reached Sydney, but he felt doubly himself when, a few days afterwards, mounted on a goodly horse, with valise strapped on the saddle, he and his friends, with guides and guards, left the smoke of Sydney far behind them, and cantered merrily away bushwards.

It was a long journey to the station or village where Frank's cousins lived. It took them quite a week to get there. They travelled principally in the morning, and again at eventide, resting in the shade near their hobbled horses, during the time the sun was high.

They had not gone far from the capital ere they plunged into a deep, dark, silent forest—silent save for the strangely monotonous song of the cicala, and so for miles, and so for many leagues. Our heroes felt they would have given anything to listen, sometimes, to the cry of a bird, or even the howl of a wild beast. The inns at which they stayed at nights were rough in the extreme, but they soon got worse, then they gave them up, and preferred camping out, and whenever of an evening they reached some open glade, there they took up their abode. But forests grew less dense at last, and the scenery most charming. The blue gum-trees, with stripes of pendent bark, that Fred and Frank used to admire and marvel at, gave place to lighter timber. By night the whole air was alive with strange sounds and strange sights, especially when the camp was near the water. The snoring sound of the bull-frog, the cry of the flying fox and opossum, mingled with the cooing of wild birds.

But now they were nearing the home of Frank's cousins. They inquired one day at an inn if the Thompsons lived near.

"Certainly," said the man. "Jack," calling to an old black, "show these gentlemen where the Thompsons live."

"I'll go and prepare dem," said Jack.

And off he went. He was back again in half an hour, and then led the way through the wood.

"What sort of people are they?" asked Frank of Jack, the guide.

"Oh! ever so nice, beautiful people, b-be-beautiful?"

“The old gentleman is my uncle,” continued Frank.

“Oh!” said the guide, “he is a beautiful old man. Bea-utiful!”

Now there were two families named Thompson, one white and the other black; the family old Jack took them to was the black; but judge of the amusement of Frank’s friends when old Jack, standing stick in hand on the right of the group, introduced them to the Thompsons at home. Of course Chisholm, on the spot, demanded an introduction to Frank’s prettiest cousin, who was nursing a pickaninny (a baby), and Fred must go up and shake hands with the old man and call him uncle, and Lyell, not to be outdone in politeness, squatted down beside the old “jin,” his wife, and got into conversation right pleasantly. Poor Frank hardly knew what to do, but when Jack said the old couple liked grogs, he sent for some, and Jack shared it with the Thompsons, and there was such laughing and merriment, and talking and fun, that it isn’t any wonder that after they had left, Lyell laughingly declared he never remembered spending such a pleasant time in his life.

Frank found the right Thompsons next day, and nicer nor braver boys never lived.

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Chapter Seventeen.

The Corobory—Native Arms—Quiet Life in the Australian Bush—Chisholm and Eros—A Day with the Kangaroo Hounds.

A corobory is a war dance by native savages. Our heroes had the pleasure of gazing at more than one, before they finally left Australia in search of new adventures. But very terrible those savages look, dancing madly round the fire in the depths of the gloomy forest, and wildly brandishing their war weapons, their boomerangs, their woomeras, their waddies, and their spears, while the flickering flames light up their naked painted bodies, and their yells and cries re-echo through the woods.

Very expert are these New Hollanders with the use of the few weapons they carry. They can hurl their spears with terrible effect for a hundred yards or more, with the assistance of the woomera, a piece of wood which is retained in the hand, and acts as a lever. The boomerang is apparently a magical instrument. Its actions, when thrown by the hand of a native, are marvellous; the thing does his bidding as if it were one of the fabled genii under the control of a magician.

The uncle and cousins of Frank were right glad to see him and his friends. They did not know how kind to be to them.

“You see,” said Mr Thompson, “you find us all in the rough.”

“But I’ll be bound all in the right as well,” said Lyell.

“Well, well, well,” he said to Frank, “who would have thought of seeing you out here, and do you know, my boy, I would hardly have known you, you are wonderfully changed.”

“Well,” replied Frank, laughing heartily at his uncle’s pleasantry, “seeing that I was only a year and a half old when you left England, you cannot wonder there is a little change.”

“How do you like your welcome?” Frank asked of Chisholm on the morning of the second day.

“It’s a Highland welcome, Frank; a Highland welcome.”

Chisholm thought he could not say more than that.

Old Mr Thompson was greatly amused at the mistake of Jack, the native guide, and their adventure with the other Thompsons, but he added he really believed Jack had done it on purpose, for the humour of the Australian native is of a very strange order, but none the less genuine for all that.

The house where our heroes now found themselves billeted was somewhat after the bungalow stamp—a widely-spread comfortable house, all on one flat, but it was altogether pleasant to live in. The gardens around it formed one of its principal charms; so cool they were, so green, so shady and scented.

Frank and Lyell and Fred went everywhere about the great farm; a farm so big, so wide, and wild, that it not only took days and days to ride across; but when they went out of a morning, with their horses and kangaroo hounds, they never knew what might turn up before they returned. It might be a warragh hunt (the wild dog of the interior), or a scamper after the emu or kangaroo, or they might settle down to hours and hours of quiet fishing, or try to shoot the ornithorynchus paradoxus. Then there were wild-fowl in abundance, quails and snipe and pigeons, and all were just tame enough to afford what might be called decent sport.

I have not mentioned Chisholm as taking much part in these sporting adventures, and must I tell you why? "Well, he was very fond of a game of whist, and also of smoking under the honeysuckles and the green mimosa trees; and Frank's uncle was such a genuine old fellow, and Frank's aunt such a delightful, and kindly, thoroughly English lady. Oh! but I feel that I am only beating about the bush, so I must confess the truth at once, though for Chisholm's sake I'd rather have concealed it. One of Frank's cousins there was a young and charming girl; and—and—and Chisholm had fallen over head and ears in love. It is with much reluctance I tell it; and it is strange, too, that one by one my heroes, my mighty hunters, whose hearts, like their sinewy arms, ought to have been hearts of oak or steel, should fall into the power of the saucy little god Eros. But it is the truth, and there is no getting away from it. As soon, however, as Chisholm knew and felt he was conquered at last, he confessed the same to his companions.

"But I'm not going to make any engagement, you know," he added. "I've never been in love before, so I don't know much about it; but if I'm not cured by the time we get back to old England, why then I'll return to this lovely place just to see if Edith will know me again."

Sly Chisholm! He felt sure that he would not be forgotten.

Many, many miles from the farm where lived the Thompsons, on a certain day there was to be a grand meet, and thitherwards went our heroes with Frank's cousins, starting on the day before. What a difference, they thought, from an English meet, where after an early breakfast one can mount his horse and ride leisurely away, along well-paved roads and green lanes to the appointed rendezvous, and after a scamper of hours return to a comfortable dinner. Here there were no roads; their way lay across the plains, through the deep dark forest, over lofty mountains, and through rivers; and it was very late ere they arrived at their camping-ground. Then their saddles were their pillows, a blanket the bed, and the star-spangled dome of heaven their roof-tree.

But they were none the less fresh next morning, and were early astir; it would be a delightful day, they felt sure of that, for the sun was already up, and there was hardly a cloud in all the mild blue sky. Neither too hot nor too cold: it was quite a hunter's morning. The scenery, too, through which they rode all day was ever varying, but ever beautiful. Frank said when the day was done, and they once more stretched their tired limbs around the camp-fire, that he had never enjoyed himself so much in his life.

"What, not down in Wales?" said Fred, quietly.

"Circumstances alter cases," said Frank.

The hunters on this occasion mustered strongly, there being a field of little under fifty, principally settlers and settlers' sons. They brought their own dogs—strong-built hounds, just suited for the wild work they have to accomplish. More and more exciting grew the chase as the day wore on; and it ended in such a finale as can only be witnessed in one country in the world, and that is Australia. Kangaroos, wild horses, bullocks, emus, hounds and men, mixed in apparently inextricable confusion.

Now it was all very well for Frank to boast about the grand day he had enjoyed. He had been lucky: his horse and he seemed made for each other. He was in at the death. Fred was not; but Fred's horse was. Chisholm and his horse were both there; but, alas for glory! Chisholm's horse's heels were all in the air, and Chisholm himself—why, he was down under somewhere.

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Chapter Eighteen.

Part VII—The Pampas.

Swallowed up in the Forest—Buenos Ayres—Away to the Wilds—A Colony of Highlanders—Frank to the fore.

There is no word in the world your true British sailor better knows the meaning of than that little noun duty. Lyell's time was up; he must hurry back to Sydney, and thence to England, by very quickest boat; and so he did, and his last words to our heroes were these:—

"Don't think of returning without having a look at the Pampas; to be sure you might go straight to San Francisco and away home by train and steamer. That would be going round the world in one sense—a landsman's not a sailor's sense. Whenever I meet a man who says he has been round the world, I just pull him up sharp by asking him some such question as, 'Did you ever drink tea in Pay-San-Du?' That usually settles him. By-bye. We'll meet again."

And away went merry-hearted Lyell, leaving sadder hearts behind him. Yes, but sad only for a time. There was a deal to be seen in Australia yet, and Chisholm was not sorry to spend a few months longer in this queer country, where everything seems topsy-turvy. But their last day in the kind and hospitable home of the Thompsons came round, and all too soon to one at least; and so adieus were spoken and whispered, hands were pressed, ay, and foolish tears were shed by pretty eyes, and handkerchiefs waved; then the great forest seemed to swallow them up.

The great green and gloomy forest has swallowed our heroes up; but, hey presto! what is this we see? A blue, blue sea in which a brave ship has just dropped anchor—a bluer sky that makes the eyes ache to behold; other ships at anchor and boats coming and going from a distant town, only the spires and steeples of which can be seen with the naked eye. On the deck of this ship stand Chisholm, Fred, and Frank, and beside them a smart naval officer in blue and gold and white.

Yes, you have guessed right. Lyell was the first to greet them when the anchor rattled down into the shallow waters off Buenos Ayres. He had been appointed to a South American station, and here he was, looking as happy and jolly and red as ever.

"And at present," said Lyell, "I am my own master; so for six weeks I'm at your service."

There was little encouragement for stopping in this city of straight streets and tame houses, and heat and dust, so they jumped at Lyell's suggestion to get on land as soon as possible. Lyell knew some folks, he said, that would "show them a thing or two."

A long journey first in a comfortless train, through a country as level and lonesome as mid-ocean itself. Hot! it was indeed hot, and they were glad when the sun went down; for the carriages in which they rode were over-upholstered, and the paint stood up in soft boiling blisters on the wood-work.

Now the journey is changed to one by river. Not much of a boat, to be sure; but then it is comparatively cool, and the scenery is sylvan and delightful. On once more next day, this time by diligence. This conveyance had none of the comfort of the Hyde Park canoe-landau. It was just what Lyell called it in pardonable slang, "a rubbly old concern—a sort of breed betwixt an orange-box, a leathern portmanteau, and a venerable clothes-basket. They paid a hawser out from its bows, and bent the nags on to that." Frank thought of his elephant ride.

But the country grew more hilly and romantic as they proceeded, and the inns, sad to say, worse and worse. Their beds were inhabited—strangely so; our heroes did not turn in to study natural history, or they might have done so. Indeed they had to rough it. The country grew wilder still; they had left the diligence with nearly broken bones; bought hones, hired guides, and now they found themselves on the very boundaries of a savage land. Ha! the fort at last, where Lyell's friends lived. Their welcome was a regal one. Half a dozen Scotchmen lived here, four of them married and with grown-up families—quite a little colony.

They shook hands with Lyell a dozen times. "Oh, man!" they cried, "but you're welcome." Then they killed the fatted calf.

These good people were farmers; their houses all rough, but well furnished; their flocks and herds numerous as the sands by the sea-shore. A wild, lonely kind of a life they led with their wives and their little ones, but they were content. There were fish in the streams and deer in the forest. You had but to tickle the earth with a toasting-fork, and it smilingly yielded up pommes de terre which would grace the table of a prince.

Every soul in the colony was a McSomebody or other; so no wonder Chisholm was in his glory, no wonder—

"The nicht drive on wi' sangs and clatter."
When our heroes heard their principal host call out, "Send auld Lawrie McMillan here (his real name was Lorenzo Maximilian) to give us a tune," they had expected to see some tall old Highlander stride in with the bagpipes, not an ancient, wiry Spaniard, guitar-armed. Is it any wonder Chisholm burst out laughing when this venerable ghost began to sing—

"Come under my plaidie, the night's gaun to fa'."
Well, getting such a welcome as this in the midst of a wilderness was enough to make our heroes forget all former hardships. The dinner was a banquet. There were many dishes that were new to them; but had Frank, who was fastidious as regards eating, known that lagarto soup was made from the iguana lizard, a perfect dragon; that curried potro was horse, and that peludo-pie was made of armadillo, I don't think he would have sent his plate twice for either.

Frank trod on the tail of an iguana next day. The dragon, seven feet long, and fearful to behold, turned and snapped. Frank, armed with a stick, would not fly, but fought. The Scotchmen were delighted. They tossed their bonnets in the air, and shouted "Saint George for merrie England!" Never mind, they might laugh as they pleased; but Frank killed the dragon.

Saint George, as Chisholm now dubbed him, quite won the affection of the llama hunters next day; he was the only one of our heroes who kept alongside the Indians in their furious gallop at the heels of the fleet pacos.

(The lama pacos, hunted for its wool, chiefly used in rope and cloth-making.)

All day long Frank was well to the fore, and how he was wishing he could throw the lassoo or bolas.

Sweet Lizzie McDonald was the prettiest girl in the fort; she was the wildest huntress as well. She and her brothers "rigged out," as Lyell called it, young Frank in native dress; and he rode by her side to the hills next day, presumably in the capacity of cavalier, but really as pupil. And Frank was an apt pupil; he didn't think the time long.

“Lucky dog you,” said Lyell, “if I wasn’t a sailor, I’d throw myself at Lizzie’s feet. I wouldn’t mind being lassooed by a girl like her. Heigho!”

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Chapter Nineteen.

Chasing Wild Horses—Ostrich-Stalking—A Moonlight Ride—A Deed of Blood—Los Indios!—The Fight—Victory and Pursuit.

Knowing, as we do, how good a horseman Frank was, it is almost needless to say that before he was one month in this country he was as handy with bolas or lassoo as one of the natives. The former he preferred: it quitted his hands like stone from a sling, next moment the llama or guanaco was down; there was no dragging, no cruelty.

The battue he did not like. But chasing wild horses was quite another thing. This was a manly and a useful sport; the very hunted horses themselves seemed to like it, and used to stand in herds on heights sniffing the air, as much as to say, "catch me if you can, but I don't mean to be caught napping." Nor were they; and a chase of this kind was sometimes most exciting. The poor colts that were lassooed were broken in speedily enough, it must be allowed, but in a manner that was cruel in the extreme; but brutality to animals is the order of the day in the Pampas. The bullocks are treated horribly; so, too, are their dogs, and every animal that comes under the native's domination. The estancia, where our heroes dwelt, was about two hundred yards square; there was a fort at one end of it, surrounded by a strong wall covered with a ditch filled with water—the whole of the little village being near the river. In case of trouble with the Indians, all the colony could take refuge here, and draw up the bridge. The servants were Gauchos. On the arrival of Mr McDonald and his kinsmen, there had at first been many broils with Los Indios. These treacherous Indians are a flat-faced copper-hued race, with most forbidding countenances; and lying and thieving seem really to be part and parcel of their education. At all events, they are adepts at both.

Chisholm wanted one day to go ostrich-stalking, or rhea-hunting you might better term it. These curious birds are as fleet as the wind, you cannot ride them down in the open; but you can approach them near enough with mules, to get a shot when fires are lit here and there on the plain, and the creatures get confused. It had been a long day's sport; and the moon had arisen, and was flooding all the beautiful country with its soft and mellow light, ere the party had got within two leagues of the estancia. But they knew the welcome that there awaited them, and so on they rode, slowly but cheerfully, singing as they went. There would have been less music at their hearts, had they seen the

expression of mingled hate and cunning on the faces of those fiends behind the cactus bush. What were they lurking there for? Why did they not come boldly forth?

Lizzie and her sister met them at the garden gate. They had been watching for the cavalcade for fully an hour, and were rejoiced when their song fell upon their listening ears. Everyone was extremely happy and lively that evening; and it was quite ten o'clock before any one thought of retiring. Silence at last fell on the estancia. Higher and higher rose the moon, flooding the land with light; there isn't a sound to be heard, save the buzz of insect, the call of wild drake, or the mournful cry of the owl.

And the night wore on.

It must have been considerably past midnight when suddenly from down the glade where the horses were grazing, there arose a shriek so piercing, so full of wild imploring grief, that it found a response in every heart in the estancia sleeping or awake. While they listened it was repeated only once, but this time it died away in a moan, that told the terrible tale that a deed of blood had been done.

"Los Indios? Los Indios?" That was the shout from the Gaucho camp.

"To arms, men, to arms!" roared patriarchal old McDonald, rushing sword in hand into our heroes' bed-chamber.

There was bustle and hurry now, but no confusion. The women were got into the fort first, the men covering their retreat, and hardly was this effected ere there was a headlong rush of a dark cloud that swept upwards from the river's brink.

"Fire, men!" cried McDonald. "Give it 'em."

There was a rattling volley, and the cloud fell back with shouts and groans. In five minutes more every man was inside, and the drawbridge was up.

Foiled in their attempt to seize and occupy the estancia by a surprise, the Indians, who were over a hundred strong, would hardly dare to attack the fort before morning. Nor did they seem to want to, but twice they made attempts to creep towards the houses, intent on plunder, but such a contingency as this had been well considered while building the fort, and those who now made the attempt bitterly repented their rashness the very next moment.

The men in the fort were thirty in all; their rifles were twenty. Twenty rifles against a hundred spears, the odds were not so overwhelming; but those Indians are terribly cunning in their mode of warfare, as our heroes soon found out, for small balls of burning grass, thrown sling-fashion, attached to a stone and rope of skin, soon began to fall thick and fast into the garrison.

McDonald made up his mind he would wait no longer. The drawbridge was suddenly lowered, and out rushed the defenders. The surprise was sudden, the rout complete.

“To horse, to horse!” cried McDonald, who seemed to be everywhere in the fight. Then followed a wild stampede of the Indians, numbers of them bit the sod, and the rest scattered and disappeared. They seemed indeed to melt away.

When the victors returned it was so nearly day that no one would think of retiring, so breakfast was got ready.

This night’s adventure did not interfere in the least with the sport our heroes enjoyed, during the remainder of their stay. But the Indians never showed face again.

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Chapter Twenty.

Part VIII—The Backwoods.

Rounding Cape Horn—Storm and Tempest—San Francisco—Guides for the Backwoods—The Group around the Camp-fire—A Wild Hunter's Story.

Two months after the adventures related in last chapter, our wandering trio of friends found themselves bivouacked in one of the forests of the far West, just as the shades of evening were beginning to deepen into night. They had bade adieu to kind-hearted Captain Lyell at Monte Video, finding a passage in an American ship to San Francisco. Heavy weather had been experienced while rounding the Horn, weather that put them in mind of the old days up north in the ice-fields: strong head-winds snow-laden, against which they could scarcely stand, far less walk; tempestuous grey seas, foam-fringed, that often broke aboard of them with sullen roar, or went hurrying astern with an angry growl, like a wild beast disappointed in its prey. But the good barque had borne herself well. And when at length her head was fairly north, clouds, and gloom, and storm fled away; the sun shone down on a sea of rippling blue; reefs were shaken out, stu'n'sails set alow and aloft; and in a few weeks they were safely at anchor not far off that busy world's mart, that mighty mushroom city called San Francisco. Here they had lazed for a whole week, then wended their way towards the wilderness. Yet am I loth to call it a wilderness, this beautiful tract of country in which they now found themselves. Savage and wild it was; its woods more often rang with the war-whoop of the Indian, or the roar of the grizzly bear, than echoed to the sound of the white roan's rifle; savage in all conscience. But no one who has not wandered in its great and interminable forests, roamed over its mountains, or embarked on its thousand and one rivers and lakes, could imagine that such sublime scenery could exist anywhere out of a poet's dream or an artist's fancy.

Now, although as the historian of their adventures, I am quite willing to admit that our heroes were, after nearly three years of wandering and hair-breadth 'scapes, and adventures in almost every land the sun shines upon, both good travellers and sportsmen in the true sense of the word, still, I think, it was lucky for them they met with two experienced hunters, who consented to guide them on their expedition to the northern backwoods of America. They met them, as they had met Lyell, at a table d'hôte, in the Palace Hotel in San Francisco; and in a few days a friendship was cemented

between them, which none of the party had ever reason to repent of, because they were men of the world.

And here we have the five of them, mostly intent on the preparation of the evening meal. Lyell is cook to-night; and he evidently cooks from no badly-stored larder. Yonder hangs a lordly deer; wild-fowl they have in prolusion; and in a short time they will, doubtless, enjoy their al fresco dinner as only sportsmen can.

Dugald McArthur, one of their pioneers, is standing with his arms folded, and his brawny shoulders leant against a tree, while honest John Travers is carefully examining the mechanism of Chisholm O'Grahame's bone-crusher. Chisholm himself is gazing dreamily at the log-fire, and so, too, is Frank. But Dugald is the first to break the silence. He bends down, and lays a hand on Chisholm's shoulder.

"I say," he remarks, "you wouldn't think to look at me that there was much the matter with me, would you?" Chisholm smiled by way of reply.

"But there is, though," continued Dugald. "I'm suffering from a disease the doctors call nostalgia, and I oftentimes dream o' the bonnie hills and glens of dear auld Scotland."

(Nostalgia, home-sickness; an irresistible longing to return to one's native land, which sometimes becomes with the Swiss a fatal disease.)

"Well, you don't look very bad, I must say," said Chisholm. "But if going back will cure you, why not go with us?"

"It is just what Jack and I mean to," said Dugald. "Now wait a wee until we have eaten supper, and sit down to toast our toes, and John and I will tell you what brought us out."

"Now," said Dugald, when the time had come, "it is ten long years, and begun again, since Jack there and I came to the conclusion that civilisation was a grand mistake, that broad Scotland wasn't big enough to hold us, and so turned our eyes to the West, to seek for adventures and fortune. What determined our choice? Why this, we both fell in love with the same lass. John and I always rowed in the same boat. We were both orphans, and had been at school and college together; and had, on coming to age, both put our monies into the same grand scheme. The grand scheme was a bubble; and, like all bubbles, it burst. While we were still rich and fortunate, neither Jack nor I could ever tell which of the two of us was most regarded by the beautiful, accomplished, but heartless Maggie Rae. As soon as we became poor, however, Maggie didn't leave us much longer in doubt; she ended our suspense by marrying the wealthy old laird of

Drumliedykes. That was a sad blow for me; and, I believe, for Jack too, though it wasn't his nature to say very much. But I took to moping. I used to wander about the woods and lonely glens, longing for peace, even if it were in the grave."

"I met Jack one evening as I was returning from one of these rambles; and I suppose I looked very lugubrious. I addressed him in the words of our national poet—

"'Oppress'd with grief, oppress'd with care,
A burden more than I can bear,
I sit me down and sigh:
O life! thou art a galling load,
Along a rough and weary road,
To wretches such as I.'"
But Jack pulled me up sharp.

"'Havers,'" (Scottish for absurd nonsense) said Jack, in a bold, manly voice. "I tell you, Dugald, man was never made to sit on a stane and greet (weep); man was made to work. You envy the rich? Bah! Carriages were made for the sick and the auld. A young man should feel the legs beneath him, should feel the soul within him. Let us be up and doin', Dugald; there's no pleasure on earth, man, can equal his, wha can look up to God, fra honest wark.

"Well, gentlemen, after this I was just as anxious to get away from England as Jack was, so we made our preparations; and in a month's time we had crossed the wide Atlantic, and journeyed as near to the Rocky Mountains as cars would take us. I don't think we had either of us any very definite notion of what we should do, or what adventures we should meet with. We were not unprepared, however, for anything. We had not gone abroad with our fingers in our mouths, so to speak; but we had read books on travel, and taken the best advice on everything. We had good horses, good waggons, good guns and compasses, and a fair supply of the necessaries of life, to say nothing of a trusty guide. So we just set a stout heart to a stiff brae (hill), and began the march. 'To the west' was our watchword; and there was in all our wanderings, ever in our hearts, the reflection of a sweet dream, which we firmly believed would one day become a reality, namely, that we would fall in with some land of gold, make riches in time, and then return to our own country.

"For many months after we had once crossed the prairie-lands, and the terrible alkali flats, we followed the course of a broad-bosomed river, so that our compasses were of but little use to us, for one day this stream would take us right away up north, the next day west or south-west. It certainly was in no great hurry to reach its destination; but

neither were we, so it just suited us. We were contented, nay, more, we were perfectly happy; we slept at night as hunters sleep, and we awoke at early dawn fresh as the forest birds that flitted joyously around us, and quite prepared for another day's work. It was work sometimes, too, and no mistake; work that many a British ploughman would have considered toil, for we had our waggons to fetch along, and that sometimes entailed long journeys round, to avoid a forest too dense, or river banks too rocky.

"For months we never came across the trail of a living soul, so that we were not afraid to picket our horses, leaving them plenty to eat and drink, and go off pleasuring for days at a time in our birch canoes, after the deer and wild-fowl by the river, or the swans by night. We knew, or we could generally guess, where their haunts were. Erecting a bit of canvas in the stern sheets, by way of cover, we would light a bundle of hay, and throw it overboard, then drop slowly down stream before it. If they were anywhere about, they were sure to be out soon; and as they came sailing towards us, wondering what was up, one or two of them was sure to pay for his curiosity with the forfeiture of his life."

Wild Adventures in Wild Places by William Gordon Stables

Chapter Twenty One.

Dugald continues his story—A fearful storm—Attacked by wolves—Lost in the forest—Indians—The surrender—The escape—The mine of gold.

"But it wasn't always plain sailing with us either on these expeditions," said Dugald, continuing the narrative of his adventures; "sometimes storms would arise, ay, and such storms too! One I shall never forget; our horses were picketed down stream, but on high ground; so as soon as the blue sky got overcast, and while yet the thunder was muttering ominously in the distance, we made up our minds to get down towards them as speedily as possible, not knowing how they would fare.

"Well was it for us we had lashed our frail canoes together, for there was one portion of the great river which it was dangerous to descend, even in fine weather, so rapid was the current. When we reached this place the storm was at its very worst, and we found ourselves suddenly whirling along in the midst of a raging cataract, a boiling surging cataract. The thunder seemed rending the forest, and the very rocks around us; the rain was terrible, and I had never seen such lightning before; forked and sheet I had been used to, but here great balls of fire fell from heaven, splitting, and hissing as they reached the waves. It was indeed a fearful storm. When we reached camp at long last, we expected to find that our horses had broken loose in the extremity of their terror, but we were greatly mistaken; here they were safe enough, and although there was evidence in the state of the ground that they had been at first alarmed, they were quiet now; ay, even cowed in their joy to see us, they fawned upon us almost as a dog would have done.

"But this forest life of ours was not so very pleasant when summer ended, and winter began to give token of his speedy approach. However, we determined to make the best of it. We built ourselves a hut of logs, and a rude stable for our horses, then we had to lay aside for a time our guns and fishing-rods, and instead of hunting, take to farming, and make hay while yet the sun shone. As long as the horses could be turned out lariated, they could find provisions for themselves, but when the snow fell, as fall it did ere long, we had to find fodder for them indoors.

"We did not forget our own larder, you may be sure, and right thankful were we that we had not forgotten to take with us a traveller's cooking stove, with a store of oil by way of

fuel. Not that we expected an Arctic winter by any means. Our guide, a sturdy bearded man of some fifty summers, had trapped in these wilds for more than twenty years, and could remember many a winter passing without the grass being even once covered with snow. But travellers should always be provided against even probabilities, and as it turned out it was well we were. We enjoyed Christmas in our rude log hut almost if not quite as well as if at home, and it would have done your heart good to have heard the merry songs we sang, or to have listened to the strange stories of our guide. No traveller's tales were these, they were painted from the life and natural. The wolves used to come howling round our doors now of nights. A fall of snow, that came on about the beginning of the new year, seemed to make the creatures hungry. They came after the bones that were thrown out, at least that was how they pretended to account for their visit, but we knew well they would not hesitate a moment to attack the horses if they could only find a chance.

"There were trees all round our humble abode, and wearisome enough it was sometimes to awake on stormy nights and listen to the wild wind roaring through their branches, mingling with the awesome cry of the forest wolves. On just such a night Jack and I once started from our beds, and sat up and listened. There was the dread of some impending danger lying like a lump of lead at my heart, and Jack afterwards confessed that he too was awakened by the same kind of feeling. Almost in the same breath we called aloud to our guide. There was no answer, but a rush of cold wind that swept through the cabin told us that the door was open. We sprang at once from our couches and hurried on some clothing, then seizing our pistols we sallied out; just as a cry for help fell upon our ear, a cry that was drowned the next moment in the horrid 'hubbering' sound that wolves make while worrying a victim. 'Come on, Jack,' I cried; 'they are killing poor Walter.'

"Jack and I were both in the melée next moment. The merciful moon shone out, and we could see our guide on his feet covered with blood, but defending himself bravely with a brawny fist and a broken lantern. Not far off was our burly camp-dog engaged with three of the hungry-eyed monsters. Jack and I soon turned the odds to deadly game, but Walter was badly wounded, and it took weeks to get him well. It seems he had taken his lantern and gone out to see if the horses were secure, when he was at once attacked by the wolves. Winter brought us visitors from the far north, the grizzly bear and his cousin the cinnamon bear. They used to hide in the darkest and deepest nooks of the forest by day, or in rocky dens by the mountain sides, and come prowling out by night, oftentimes making the woods shake with their terrible roaring.

“A better guide or trapper than Walter couldn’t have been; he was good for forest, hill, or plain, and yet he lost himself one day not half-a-mile from our hut-door. He had gone for a short walk in the forest; and, according to his own account, his head all of a sudden got turned round, as it were. This is a kind of madness not at all uncommon in the prairie or wilderness. And now to honest Walter west seemed east, and south seemed north. He had no compass with him; and it is questionable whether he would have believed it if he had had one. It is a good thing in cases of this kind, that a man usually marches round and round in a circle. We found our guide next day lying exhausted at the foot of a pine tree, not five miles from our wigwam; or, rather, his good and trusty Newfoundland dog found him; but how the wolves had spared him was to us a mystery. He had never once stopped walking till he fell where we found him.

“The time flew by, gentlemen; winter had almost passed, although snow still lay deep in woodland and glade, and we were fain to wear our snow-shoes when going abroad; still the winds blew more softly, and budlets began to peep out on the larch trees, which are ever the first to welcome the balmy breath of returning spring.

“One morning, greatly to our annoyance, we found the rude stable-door open, and our horses gone. But their tracks were fresh on the snow, and so we felt sure we soon should find them.

“The trail led us to the uplands, and we were not sorry for this, as by mounting an eminence or hill we would be enabled to see the country for miles on miles around us. When we did at long last reach a hill-top, a sight we saw not two miles off was quite enough to curdle the blood of such inexperienced woodsmen as we were then.

“Indians! a score and more of them, with their horses picketed, and ours among the rest. It was evident from their armour, their rifles and spears, and their dress, that they were on the war-path.

“Gentlemen, I have but little heart to look back upon what immediately followed our discovery. Some day I may tell you all our wild adventures among the backwoods savages. Suffice it for me here to say, that after days and nights of fierce fighting, our foes were driven off by fresh bands of Indians. This was a tribe our guide Walter well knew; and, on his advice, we surrendered to them. They spared our lives; but they made us prisoners, because they found us of use to them. For five long years we remained the slaves of this warlike tribe; but the dawn came after the long darkness. We escaped on three of their horses—we chose the best, you may be sure. It was on the evening of a great feast, in commemoration of a successful raid they had made into the white man’s territory, returning with cattle, and, sad to say, with scalps.

“Fire-water was abundant that night, and horrible revelry and dancing. But sleep stole over the camp at last; and then we felt our time had come. We had left them leagues on leagues ere morning light. But we took little rest till we were far, far away in the southern and western states.

“This did not quite tire Jack and me of adventure and travel. No; we just worked for a year, and then, once more accoutring ourselves, we made tracks for the mountain-forests. The gold fever had broken out, and we had caught it, only we determined to go prospecting all by our two selves. And a good thing we did. We built ourselves a house. Jack called it ‘the little hut among the bushes.’ Some of the bushes, gentlemen, were three hundred feet in height. We found gold, too. Fact is, we had a small mine all to ourselves. As soon as we made a pile, we used to go south, disguised as poor trappers, to sell our skins and fill our powder-flasks; but, in reality, to bank our gold.

“We’ve made all we want. The mine itself is sold, and well sold; and as soon as we have shown you a bit of life in the backwoods, we shan’t be sorry to return to our dear auld Hielan’ hills once more.”

The huntsman finished speaking, and soon after our heroes turned in for the night, and the silence was unbroken—the silence of the dark primeval forest.

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Chapter Twenty Two.

Merrie England—A Week at Willoughby Place—Our Heroes Part—A Pleasant Re-union, on which the Curtain drops.

It was a lovely evening towards the close of an autumn day, many months after the events related in the last chapter, that you might have seen a carriage and pair, drawn up at the gate of the down station of the quiet little village of Twintleton. There was but one person on the platform, a tall, elderly gentleman, who was pacing up and down with evident impatience. When I tell you that the proud crest of the Willoughbys was emblazoned on the panels of the carriage, you will guess that the gentleman himself was none other than Frank's father.

"She's long overdue, isn't she, porter?" he said at last.

"Only five minutes, sir," was the reply.

"Five minutes!" muttered Mr Willoughby, "why, I seem to have waited here for a whole hour."

In a first-class compartment of this late train—still at some considerable distance—sat three gentlemen. Brown were they in complexion as the waters of a mountain burn, and just as vivacious.

"Now, Frank," said one, "I do wonder what your father will think of you when he sees you."

"We've hardened him off properly," said the other, laughing. Frank smiled, his thoughts just then wandered away down to a certain shire in Wales. He was wondering what his betrothed—what Eenie would think of him, and whether she herself would be much changed.

Half an hour afterwards all three were rattling off in the carriage, to the home of the Willoughbys. Need I say that that evening the fatted calf was killed, or that Frank was the hero there for weeks.

Heigho! but time will fly. I have kept my trio well in hand through all their years of wandering in wild places, but now at last the wizard power of pen must fail, our friends must scatter. It was very pleasant for a time roaming over the lovely fields and moors, gun in hand, dogs ahead, in the bright, bracing September days. The dinners in the evening at Willoughby Place were pleasant, too, and yet after one of the best of these, all of a sudden, during a lull in the conversation—

"Father," said Frank, "I'm off to-morrow, like a bird, away down to Penmawhr Castle."

"You young dog," replied his father, laughing; "I've been expecting to hear this every day for the last week."

"Filial affection prevented me," said Frank, "from making up my mind before."

"Oh! that just reminds me," said Chisholm O'Grahame, "that I sail for Australia next week."

"And, oh!" cried Fred Freeman, "that puts me in mind. I'm off about the same time to the Russian Steppes."

"What!" exclaimed Mr Willoughby, "all bent on the same errand? Well, well, boys will be boys. But, I will miss you all sadly."

"I say, though," said Frank, "there is one thing I do look forward to, and that is, when Fred and Chisholm return—I, of course, am going no distance—we may have a grand re-union, here at old Willoughby Place."

"Yes," said his father, "If we are all spared I'm sure I'll be delighted; and there is one thing you mustn't forget, that is, if you can find them; namely, to bring with you the companions of your adventures in the backwoods."

"Oh! never fear, sir," Frank replied; "we'll ferret them out—ay, and Lyell as well."

"That will be delightful," said Mr Willoughby, rubbing his hands in joyous anticipation of the hoped-for event.

"And," he continued enthusiastically, "up on the hill, near the ruins of the ancient home of our fathers, on the night of the re-union, I'll kindle such a bonfire as never blazed on the heights before."

One short week after this conversation took place my three heroes were—

”—Severed far and wide
By mountain, stream, and sea.”
And this just reminds me that my tale is wonderfully near its close, for, dear me! you know an author who has lost his heroes is just like a bird who has lost its eggs, there is not a bit of good in trying to sing any more. Besides, they have all gone in different directions, and I can’t be in three places at once; and even if I could, my presence would doubtless be deemed an intrusion, for I’ll warrant they are all happy enough.

But did the re-union ever take place, and did the bonfire blaze fierce on the hill-top? Both events came off, reader, I’m glad to tell you. And here they all are with happy beaming faces, seated around the table in the banquetting hall of the home of the Willoughbys: Fred, and Frank, and Chisholm O’Grahame, each with their wives by their side. Ay, and brave Captain Lyell, too, though he has got no wife by his side—his lot is to be a rover, his home is on the deep. And here is brawny Dugald McArthur and honest John Travers, the bold hunters of the backwoods.

And here is precisely the place to drop the curtain. Let it descend then, and slowly hide the happy scene.

Yet one word. My chief reward in having written these “Wild Adventures,” rests in a thought and in a hope. The thought is, that I may have sometimes interested and amused you; the hope, that we may—for stranger things have happened—meet again another day.