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Содержание

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Preface

Australia, though a continent, is a part of the Empire of Great Britain. A few years ago it was a wild country, where no white people lived, filled with Blacks, who were man-eating savages. These are fast dying out, but in this story you will learn something about them, and of the lives of your Australian Cousins.

CHAPTER I
"LAND"

Fergus and Jean were very tired of the long voyage. They stood at the taffrail looking over the dancing waves, longing for the sight of land.

"It seems as if we would never get there, Father," said Fergus. "How long it is since we left home!"

"And how far away Scotland seems," sighed his mother, as she took little Jean on her lap and stroked her fair hair.

"But Australia is to be our home now," said Mr. Hume cheerfully. "See, there is the very first glimpse of it," and he pointed across the water to a dim line, as the look-out called "Land!"

"We are passing Port Phillip's Head," he said presently. "See the lighthouse! Soon we shall land and you will see a beautiful city."

"Beautiful!" Fergus said in surprise. "Why, I thought Melbourne was a wild sort of a place. You have told us about the time you were here long ago, before you married my mother, and you had floods in the streets and had to climb up on top of some one's porch for fear of being drowned."

"That was fifteen years ago, my son," said Mr. Hume with a smile. "Melbourne is very different now from what it was then,

and then it was not at all like it was when its first settlers saw it.

"It was in 1836 that Robert Russell came here to survey the shore near Port Phillip and find out whether boats could go up the River Yana. He felt this to be just the place for a city, planned Melbourne and laid out the streets. It seems strange to think that then the blacks owned all this land and the Wawoorong, Boonoorong, and Wautourong tribes roamed these shores, and that when Russell laid out his city there were native huts standing. The place was called Bear Grass, and in 1837 there were thirteen buildings, eight of which were turf huts. Now Melbourne is seven miles square and the principal street is a mile long. You will soon see how handsome the buildings are, for we are now making ready to land after our long journey."

Fergus and Jean Hume had come from Scotland to live in Australia. Their father had been a farmer, but he had lost all his little fortune through the rascality of a friend, and had determined to try again in the colony.

Australia is a colony of Great Britain just as Canada is, and though it is at the other side of the world, still it is British.

Mrs. Hume had a sister in Sydney and they were to visit her before going to the Gold Country, where Mr. Hume intended to try his fortune.

Fergus was a fine boy of twelve and Jean was eight, and both were much excited at the trip, while Mrs. Hume's sadness at leaving her old home was mixed with joy at the idea of seeing again the sister from whom she had been separated for years.

The landing on the Melbourne quay proved interesting for the children, and they were very much impressed with their first glimpse of the city.

"Why, Father," exclaimed Fergus, as they drove in a cab up Flinders Street, "Melbourne streets seem as busy as those of Glasgow!"

"Indeed they are, my son," said his father, smiling. "Perhaps they are busier. You see Victoria is the busiest part of this country, although the people of New South Wales will tell you that their district is far superior and Sydney a much handsomer city than Melbourne."

"If the wares one sees in the streets are any sign, Victoria must have a great variety of products," said Mrs. Hume. "The shops have all manner of things in the windows, and besides there are great drays of wood, coal and timber."

"Victoria is called the Garden of Australia," said Mr. Hume. "You will see considerable of it if we go up to Sydney by rail instead of by sea."

"Oh, Father!" cried Fergus, who loved the water, "are we going to do that?"

"I haven't decided yet which would be the better plan," Mr. Hume answered. "I had thought of going by steamer and stopping at Hobart in Tasmania, but it will take a great deal longer and you will miss the trip through Victoria, which is said to be the prettiest part of this great continent."

"I think the sooner we reach Aunt Mildred the better for all

of us," said Mrs. Hume. "The children are tired with the long voyage and winter will soon be here."

"Winter!" exclaimed Jean.

"Winter, why, Mother!" cried Fergus. "This is June!"

"Yes, I know that," said his mother. "But don't you know that in the Southern Hemisphere, winter and summer change places? In Victoria, midwinter comes in July."

"Will it be cold?" asked Jean.

"No, dear, winter here is not like our nipping Scotch frost. It is not very cold here, and it rains in winter instead of snowing."

"I don't think that is nice at all," said Fergus. "We'll have no sleighing."

"There are many things we will miss here," said his mother sadly, but his father said cheerfully,

"There are many things here we can't have at home, also. When I get to the Gold Fields you shall have all the gold you want, and that is something you never had in Scotland. Now, our fine drive is over and here we are at the hotel, where we shall have some luncheon. How have you enjoyed your first drive in an Australian city?"

"Very much," cried both of the children.

"It will be some time before you take another one, for I believe after all that we shall go by boat to Sydney. I understand that the sea trip is very pleasant and it is less expensive."

"I am glad," said Fergus.

"A boat sails this afternoon and there is nothing for us to do

but have our luggage transferred from one boat to the other," said Mr. Hume, as they all went in to luncheon.

CHAPTER II
SAILING TO SYDNEY

The travellers set sail for Sydney in a calm and beautiful afternoon when earth and sea seemed at peace. The sea sparkled in the sunlight as if set in diamonds and the vessel fairly danced over the waters as it sailed out of Bass Strait into the dark waters of the blue Pacific. The afternoon passed quietly and toward evening all gathered on deck to see the sunset, for Australia is noted as the land of wonderful sunsets, and from the sea these can be viewed in all their splendour.

Gold, crimson, yellow, pink, from brilliant to soft, from light to dark, the clouds changed in countless colour schemes, bewilderingly beautiful. The whole sky was a dome of softest rose, then a flaming crimson, then pearly-tinted heliotrope; the sea, too, shone in varying shades of beauty, until all melted and blended into one exquisitely soft shade of deep-toned purple, and into this the smiling stars stole one by one, the countless stars of the southern night, and above all shone the glory of the Southern Cross.

"Oh, Father," whispered Jean, "I have never seen anything so beautiful! Is the sunset always like this in Australia?"

"This was a particularly fine one, daughter, but whenever the sun sets it is a thing worth looking at."

"How quickly it has grown dark after all that splendour," said Mrs. Hume, looking at the sky over which the clouds were passing.

"I don't like the look of the sky," said Mr. Hume. "I'm afraid there is a squall coming."

"Worse than a squall, sir," said a sailor, hurrying by. "It looks to me like a hurricane."

The air had grown suddenly warm and the sky was overhung with heavy clouds, while flashes of lightning blazed across the sky. Suddenly a great waterspout seemed to rise up like an inky-black pillar from sea to sky. The ship tossed about and pitched so badly that it was impossible to keep one's feet and Mr. Hume led his little party to the cabin.

"Oh, Father! what shall we do?" cried Jean, frightened.

"Go to sleep is the best thing to do if you can," he said, and the children were put to bed in their berths, in which they could hardly stay, so violent was the pitching of the ship.

The wind howled and roared and, as the storm kept up all night, there was little sleep in the cabin. When the morning came it was little better. Sea and sky were dull gray, save where the foam-crested waves broke in sheets of spray against the sides of the vessel, sending the foam high into the air.

"It is a cross sea," said the sailor on the look-out and the captain shook his head. "It's a bad outlook," he said. "I don't like the gray water."

"I thought Pacific meant peaceful," said Fergus, who stood

clinging to his father on deck, looking at the wonderful scene. "It doesn't seem peaceful to me," as a great wave broke over the deck and drenched him to the skin.

"Like most peaceful things, it is terrible when it is roused," said Mr. Hume. "There is a strong current running up and down this eastern shore of Australia and it often sets vessels quite out of their course. Sometimes they are washed miles out of their way, and occasionally, in the darkness, run upon one of the little islands which dot this sea."

"Is Tasmania one of them?" asked Fergus.

"We have long since passed Tasmania," said his father. "But there are many little islands between here and Sydney. There! What is that?" he exclaimed. Suddenly it seemed as if land sprang at them through the fog and they were almost upon a rocky shore. So near to it was their steamer that there was barely time to put about and it was only by the quickest action that they escaped the rocks. The steamer lurched and rolled, pitched and tossed in the gale, but she passed the rocks in safety, and as afternoon waned and night drew on, the storm grew less, until by midnight the sea was quiet. The morning of the third day broke in a golden splendour, the air was fresh and cool, the sky and the sea were as blue as a sapphire, the children glad to be out of the stuffy cabin and up on deck.

"If the weather continues like this we shall not be long in reaching Sydney," said Mr. Hume. "And I am sure we shall all be glad to get there."

"What kind of a place is Sydney?" asked Fergus.

"It is a fine city, my boy, and very different from what it was when Botany Bay was peopled with felons."

"What are felons?" asked Jean.

"Felons are people who have done wrong and must be kept in prison for punishment in the hope that they will learn to do right," answered Mr. Hume. "Botany Bay was named by the botanist Joseph Banks who was with Cook when he made his first voyage in 1770. It is an inlet near Sydney and the English sent their criminals there until 1840. Such men as behaved well when they reached the colony were allowed to leave the penal settlement upon tickets, and were called 'ticket of leave men.' They could be followed up and brought back if they misbehaved in any way. Many of them were good men who had been led into wrongdoing and were glad to have a chance to be good again. They went out into the 'bush,' cleared farms or sheep stations, and many of them grew rich. Quite a number of the good citizens of Australia to-day, could, if they would, trace their descent back to 'ticket of leave' men."

"I shouldn't think they would like to do that," said Fergus. "I wouldn't like any one to know that my people had done wrong."

"Everybody does wrong," said Jean sagely.

"Yes, but every one isn't found out," her brother answered. "When they are, it hurts."

"But if it's found out that they're sorry and are going to do good for ever and ever," the little girl looked puzzled, "then does

it matter?"

"Dear little childish point of view," said her mother, with a smile, and her father added,

"It would be a good thing if older people felt so."

Sydney looked beautiful enough as their ship steamed into the bay to pay them for their troublesome voyage. The harbour is one of the handsomest in the world. The city is picturesquely situated upon the bold and rocky slopes which rise from the water's edge and is defended from any possible attack by bristling forts and batteries.

"This narrow entrance to the harbour is called 'the Heads,'" said Mr. Hume to the children, who were dancing about asking a thousand questions, of which their father answered the most important. "The lighthouse is a guide to all storm-driven sailors, and also a good lookout, should any enemies of England hope to steal upon Australia unawares. I think Sydney one of the most delightfully situated cities I have ever visited. It is surrounded by parks and groves where grow bananas, orange trees, palms and all manner of tropical plants. Its climate is healthful and life here easy and pleasant."

"The buildings seem very handsome," said Mrs. Hume, as the city came into view, gleaming white and beautiful in the morning sun.

"The sandstone upon which the town is built gives fine building material," said her husband, "and while, in the older part of the city, streets are narrow and houses old-fashioned,

the newer portion compares favourably with almost any of the modern European cities.

"We are just about in now; the sailors are making ready to cast the hawser."

"Oh, Fergus! There is Mildred!" cried Mrs. Hume to her husband, pointing to a sweet-faced little woman who stood beside a large, burly-looking man upon the wharf. "It is worth almost the long journey from home just to see her again!" and she stretched out her hands to the sister whom she had not seen for ten years.

Soon they were landed and the two sisters greeted each other joyfully.

"Elsie! How glad I am to welcome you to Australia," cried Mrs. McDonald, while her sister said,

"Mildred, you don't look a day older than when you left Scotland!"

"Life is easy out here," said Mr. McDonald genially. "Come, all of you. The carriage is waiting. We are glad to have a visit from you and want it to be as long a visit as possible. We have planned all manner of things to do during your stay."

As they drove through the handsome streets, Mrs. McDonald said,

"It is nearly time we went into the country, and after you are well rested and have seen Sydney, Angus is going to take us up to the station so you can see just what life is on an Australian 'run.'"[1]

"I am sure we shall enjoy it," said Mrs. Hume. "But just now

[1] Run is the name given to a ranch in Australia.

I can think of nothing to do but getting rested. The sea motion is still in my head, and I believe that if I could go to bed and think that Jean could sleep without danger of falling out of bed, I could sleep for two or three days without waking up."

"We'll take care of the wee lassie and of this big boy, too," said Mr. McDonald kindly, laying an arm about Fergus' shoulder. "Sandy is up at the run and you will have fine times with him there, and your mother shall rest as long as she wants to.

"But you are not seeing the sights as we pass. We think Sydney about the finest thing on this side of the world. These buildings are a part of the University. The College of St. Paul's there belongs to the Church of England, and St. John's is Roman Catholic."

"It is all very handsome," said Mrs. Hume.

"How Sydney has changed since I was here," said Mr. Hume. "It is not like the same place."

"Its growth is simply wonderful," said Mr. McDonald. "We have now all manner of manufactories. Wagons are made here and sold all over Australia and New Zealand. There are fine glass and pottery works, boot and shoe factories, besides stove foundries and carriage works. Tobacco and fine liquors are manufactured here and Sydney is really the center of the British colonies in the South."

"Here we are at home," said his wife. "So your interesting lecture must cease. I am sure Elsie would rather see a good cup of tea and a comfortable bed than hear your discourse on the

beauties of Sydney when she's homesick for dear little Glasgow."

"Tea and bed will do much to do away with homesickness, and the sight of you will do more," said her sister as they alighted from the carriage and went up the steps of a handsome house surrounded by fine trees and a garden radiant with flowers.

CHAPTER III
A DRIVE

A few days' rest made the travellers as good as new and Fergus and Jean were ready for any kind of an adventure. They went about the city interested in each and everything they saw, for they were bright little children, full of spirits to the brim.

"We are to take a drive this afternoon," said Mrs. McDonald one morning. "Your Uncle Angus is going to show you Wuurna-wee-weetch, which means 'home of the swallow.' It is the largest squatter station anywhere about here, and it is as handsome as any noble estate at home."

"That will be jolly, Aunt Mildred," said Fergus, who loved driving.

When luncheon was over they all seated themselves in Mr. McDonald's comfortable road-cart, and his fine span of horses pranced along the Sydney streets.

"We are passing St. Andrew's Cathedral now," said Mrs. McDonald. "And there is St. Mary's Cathedral, which is equally fine. There is the Governor's Mansion, the Museum, the Art Gallery, and now we are entering Hyde Park. Isn't it beautiful? The water works of Sydney are excellent and the water supply never fails. It comes sixty-three miles from the Nepean River and is stored in a huge reservoir. Even in the hottest weather there is

enough water to keep our parks green and beautiful."

"You are very enthusiastic over your adopted country," said her sister, teasingly.

"Indeed I am. I have learned to love Australia, the rural life better than the urban. You wait until we go up to the 'run' and see if the charm of the Bush country life doesn't hold you." Mrs. McDonald smiled. "Now we are entering the grounds of Wuurna-wee-weetch. Tell me, is the Duke of Argyle's place finer?"

They drove over the estate, which was surpassingly beautiful.

"I have heard so much of the Australian Bush and how wild and bare it is," said Fergus, "that I had no idea that there was anything here so fine as this."

"What magnificent trees," said his mother.

"Those are the eucalyptus, the gum trees for which Australia is famous," said Mr. McDonald. "The eucalyptus grows to an enormous height, many of the trees are 150 feet high and eleven feet around the trunk. In some places they grow to be twenty feet in diameter. They are not good shade trees because the leaves, which are shaped like little lances, grow straight up and down, that is, with one edge toward the sun. But in spite of that, the tree is one of the most useful in the world. There are nearly 150 varieties of eucalyptus, and most of these are found in Australia. The lumber is used for all kinds of building purposes. Many of the trees contain a hard substance, 'manna,' from which we get a kind of sugar called *melitose*. Others give us *kino*, a resin

used in medicine. The bark yields tannin, and from one variety with 'stringy bark' we get a fibre used for making rope, the manufacture of paper and for thatching roofs. From the leaves an oil is distilled which is much used in medicine, being particularly good to dress wounds and for the treatment of fevers."

"It seems to me that these trees furnish almost everything you need," said Mr. Hume.

"If you include the birds who nest in them and the animals who climb in the branches," replied his brother-in-law, "I fancy the Blacks did not need to look beyond the eucalyptus for a living. The wood built their huts, and the bark thatched them. From the fibre they made mats for their floors and hats to keep off the sun, and clothes, which consisted of waist cloth and sandals. The leaves gave them medicine for the fever and salve for their wounds. The cockatoos nesting in the branches furnished them delicious food, while of the feathers the gins[2] made boas for their necks and wonderful Easter bonnets. It really would seem as if the gum trees were all they really needed. They have another use not to be slighted, for they take up the moisture rapidly and dry the soil in rainy seasons, thus reducing the malaria always found in such climates as these."

"They are certainly useful," said Mrs. Hume. "Is this the station to which we are going?" as they drove through a fine gateway.

"Yes," said Mrs. McDonald. "Wuurna-wee-weetch is quite

[2] Black women.

up to date in every way. The house cost £30,000 to build and the ranch has every modern improvement. The grazing land hereabouts is perfectly adapted to sheep raising. It is so rich that you may dig ten feet down and still find rich black dirt. The owner of this ranch has been most successful. He has recently put in new wool sheds, sheep pens, washing ponds, and the like, and you may, if you wish, see the whole process of sheep raising, shearing, pressing, packing and transporting the wool. You will see it at our station on a smaller scale." They drove for an hour about the magnificent place, and over all the estate was an air of wealth and prosperity.

The gardens were blooming with gay, tropical flowers, and the songs of the birds were in the air, as they flitted hither and yon through the branches of the magnificent trees.

"What is that noise, Aunt Mildred?" asked Jean as they drove through a beautiful grove of pines which scented the air deliciously. "It sounds like a far away church bell."

"It is the bell bird, dear, one of the curiosities of Australia," replied her Aunt. "Long, long before there was a church bell of any kind in Australia, this little, lonely bird made its curious bell-like note. There are some pretty verses by one of our poets about it."

"Can you say them to us, Aunty?"

"I will try, – they are really beautiful," she said.

"'Tis the bell bird sweetly singing,

The sad, strange, small-voiced bird,
His low sweet carol ringing,
While scarce a sound is heard,
Save topmost sprays aflutter,
And withered leaflets fall,
And the wistful oaks that utter
Their eerie, drearie, call.

"What may be the bell bird saying,
In that silvery, tuneful note?
Like a holy hermit's praying
His devotions seem to float
From a cavern dark and lonely,
Where, apart from worldly men,
He repeats one dear word only,
Fondly o'er and o'er again."

"Is not that pretty?" said Mrs. Hume, as her sister's musical voice ceased. "I did not know you had such poets in Australia."

"Indeed we have a literature of our own," said Mrs. McDonald, "and very beautiful things are written by Australians. You have much to learn about this great island continent of ours."

"Now we must turn toward home," said Mr. McDonald, and his wife said, "Drive back past Tarnpin, it is so beautiful about there. Tarnpin, or Flowing Water, is a favourite spot hereabouts. The Blacks have a quaint story about its origin, and I will tell it to you as old Tepal, a black chief, told it to me.

"It was the day time, and all the animals died of thirst. So

many died that the Magpie, the Lark, and the Crane talked together, and tried to find water to drink.

"'It is very strange,' said the Magpie, 'that the Turkey Buzzard is never hungry.'

"'He must, then, have water to drink,' said the wise Crane.

"'He flies away every morning, very early,' said the Lark.

"'Let us rise before the sun and watch him,' said the Magpie, and they agreed.

"Next morning the Turkey Buzzard rose early and crept from his wuurie.[3] He looked this way and that and saw no one. Then he flew away. He knew not that two bright eyes peeped at him through the leaves of the great gum tree. He did not hear the 'peep, peep' with which the Lark awoke his friends. The Lark, the Magpie and the Crane flew high to the sky. They flew so high that they looked as specks on the sun. The Turkey Buzzard saw them but thought they were small, dark clouds. He flew to a flat stone and lifted it up. And the water gushed from a spring in the rock and he drank and was satisfied. Then he put back the stone and flew away.

"The three friends laughed and were glad. Quickly they flew to the stone, singing, 'We have caught him!' and drank of the fresh water. They bathed in the pool and flapped their wings until the waters rose and became a lake of clear water. Then they spread their wings and flew over the earth, and the waters dropped from their wings and fell to the thirsty earth. They made there water

[3] Hut.

holes, and ever since there have been drinking places all over the land."

"My but that's a jolly story," said Fergus, the irrepressible. "Did you really know the Blacks, Aunt Mildred? Are there any around here?"

"None very near," said his aunt. "Indeed, they are mostly dying out. People who have lived here a long time used to know them and say they were a kindly people. They were very fond of children and I do not think they were cruel or quarrelsome unless roused to anger. They have nearly all buried themselves in the Bush, but you will be likely to see some of them at our station. There used to be a number around the 'run,' and when we first came out we had some rather curious experiences with them. We do not see many now, their experiences with white people were not always pleasant, I am sorry to say."

"I hope we shall see some of them," said Fergus.

"I like black people," said little Jean.

"What does she know of Blacks?" asked her aunt, smiling, and her mother replied,

"Some people from the States came to our farm one fall for the shooting and they had a black nurse for the baby. Jean took a great fancy to her, and we simply couldn't keep her from toddling after Dinah. She was a faithful soul, so good and kind."

"Those who have lived here for many years say that if you once make a friend of a Black he will do anything for you," said Mr. McDonald. "I never had any trouble with them around my

station, though other squatters did."

"I think it's all in the way you treat them," said his wife. "Of course the Blacks near the 'run' are not the wild Blacks from the interior, the man-eating kind, but a gentler race."

"Well, I hope we shall see some of them," said Fergus. "But I shouldn't care for cannibals."

CHAPTER IV
ON THE WAY TO THE "RUN"

It was a bright morning when they left Sydney to go to the station, taking the train early in the day, for there was a railway ride of several hours before them, as well as a long drive.

"Now you are going to see something of Australian life," said Mr. McDonald. "Life in Sydney or Melbourne is very little different from that in Liverpool or Glasgow. On the big stations it is much the same as on the country places at home, but my station is typical of Australia."

"Is it in the Bush, Uncle?" asked Fergus.

"Hear the laddie talking like an old squatter," laughed Mr. McDonald. "Yes and no. You see the Australians who live in the cities consider all the rest of the continent the Bush, but to those who live in the grazing and farming districts the country inland is the Bush or the 'Back Country.' Our run is beautifully situated just on the edge of the Dividing Range, and we are lucky enough to have a river running through one side, so that the run is seldom dry."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.