

CHAPTER VI A HOSPITABLE COLONIST

THE captain's first care was to anchor his vessel securely. He found excellent moorage in five fathoms' depth of water, with a solid bottom of hard granite, which afforded a firm hold. There was no danger now of either being driven away or stranded at low water. After so many hours of danger, the DUNCAN found herself in a sort of creek, sheltered by a high circular point from the winds outside in the open sea.

Lord Glenarvan grasped John Mangles' hand, and simply said:
"Thank you, John."

This was all, but John felt it ample recompense. Glenarvan kept to himself the secret of his anxiety, and neither Lady Helena, nor Mary, nor Robert suspected the grave perils they had just escaped.

One important fact had to be ascertained. On what part of the coast had the tempest thrown them? How far must they go to regain the parallel. At what distance S. W. was Cape Bernouilli? This was soon determined by taking the position of the ship, and it was found that she had scarcely deviated two degrees from the route. They were in longitude 36 degrees 12 minutes, and latitude 32 degrees 67 minutes, at Cape Catastrophe, three hundred miles from Cape Bernouilli. The nearest port was Adelaide, the Capital of Southern Australia.

Could the DUNCAN be repaired there? This was the question.

The extent of the injuries must first be ascertained, and in order to do this he ordered some of the men to dive down below the stern. Their report was that one of the branches of the screw was bent, and had got jammed against the stern post, which of course prevented all possibility of rotation. This was a serious damage, so serious as to require more skilful workmen than could be found in Adelaide.

After mature reflection, Lord Glenarvan and John Mangles came to the determination to sail round the Australian coast, stopping at Cape Bernouilli, and continuing their route south as far as Melbourne, where the DUNCAN could speedily be put right. This effected, they would proceed to cruise along the eastern coast to complete their search for the BRITANNIA.

This decision was unanimously approved, and it was agreed that they should start with the first fair wind.

They had not to wait long for the same night the hurricane had ceased entirely, and there was only a manageable breeze from the S. W. Preparations for sailing were instantly commenced, and at four o'clock in the morning the crew lifted the anchors, and got under way with fresh canvas outspread, and a wind blowing right for the Australian shores.

Two hours afterward Cape Catastrophe was out of sight.

In the evening they doubled Cape Borda, and came alongside Kangaroo Island. This is the largest of the Australian islands, and a great hiding place for runaway convicts. Its appearance was enchanting. The stratified rocks on the shore were richly carpeted with verdure, and innumerable kangaroos were jumping over the woods and plains, just as at the time of its discovery in 1802. Next day, boats were sent ashore to examine the coast minutely, as they were now on the 36th parallel, and between that and the 38th Glenarvan wished to leave no part unexplored.

The boats had hard, rough work of it now, but the men never complained. Glenarvan and his inseparable companion, Paganel, and young Robert generally accompanied them. But all this painstaking exploration came to nothing. Not a trace of the shipwreck could be seen anywhere. The Australian shores revealed no more than the Patagonian. However, it was not time yet to lose hope altogether, for they had not reached the exact point indicated by the document.

On the 20th of December, they arrived off Cape Bernouilli, which terminates Lacedpede Bay, and yet not a vestige of the BRITANNIA had been discovered. Still this was not surprising, as it was two years since the occurrence of the catastrophe, and the sea might, and indeed must, have scattered and destroyed whatever fragments of the brig had remained. Besides, the natives who scent a wreck as the vultures do a dead body, would have pounced upon it and carried off the smaller DEBRIS. There was

no doubt whatever Harry Grant and his companions had been made prisoners the moment the waves threw them on the shore, and been dragged away into the interior of the continent.

But if so, what becomes of Paganel's ingenious hypothesis about the document? viz., that it had been thrown into a river and carried by a current into the sea. That was a plausible enough theory in Patagonia, but not in the part of Australia intersected by the 37th parallel.

Besides the Patagonian rivers, the Rio Colorado and the Rio Negro, flow into the sea along deserted solitudes, uninhabited and uninhabitable; while, on the contrary, the principal rivers of Australia--the Murray, the Yarrow, the Torrens, the Darling--all connected with each other, throw themselves into the ocean by well-frequented routes, and their mouths are ports of great activity. What likelihood, consequently, would there be that a fragile bottle would ever find its way along such busy thoroughfares right out into the Indian Ocean?

Paganel himself saw the impossibility of it, and confessed to the Major, who raised a discussion on the subject, that his hypothesis would be altogether illogical in Australia. It was evident that the degrees given related to the place where the BRITANNIA was actually shipwrecked and not the place of captivity, and that the bottle therefore had been thrown into the sea on the western coast of the continent.

However, as Glenarvan justly remarked, this did not alter the fact of Captain Grant's captivity in the least degree,

though there was no reason now for prosecuting the search for him along the 37th parallel, more than any other.

It followed, consequently, that if no traces of the BRITANNIA were discovered at Cape Bernouilli, the only thing to be done was to return to Europe. Lord Glenarvan would have been unsuccessful, but he would have done his duty courageously and conscientiously.

But the young Grants did not feel disheartened. They had long since said to themselves that the question of their father's deliverance was about to be finally settled. Irrevocably, indeed, they might consider it, for as Paganel had judiciously demonstrated, if the wreck had occurred on the eastern side, the survivors would have found their way back to their own country long since.

"Hope on! Hope on, Mary!" said Lady Helena to the young girl, as they neared the shore; "God's hand will still lead us."

"Yes, Miss Mary," said Captain John. "Man's extremity is God's opportunity. When one way is hedged up another is sure to open."

"God grant it," replied Mary.

Land was quite close now. The cape ran out two miles into the sea, and terminated in a gentle slope, and the boat glided easily into a sort of natural creek between coral banks in a state

of formation, which in course of time would be a belt of coral reefs round the southern point of the Australian coast. Even now they were quite sufficiently formidable to destroy the keel of a ship, and the BRITANNIA might likely enough have been dashed to pieces on them.

The passengers landed without the least difficulty on an absolutely desert shore. Cliffs composed of beds of strata made a coast line sixty to eighty feet high, which it would have been difficult to scale without ladders or cramp-irons. John Mangles happened to discover a natural breach about half a mile south. Part of the cliff had been partially beaten down, no doubt, by the sea in some equinoctial gale. Through this opening the whole party passed and reached the top of the cliff by a pretty steep path. Robert climbed like a young cat, and was the first on the summit, to the despair of Paganel, who was quite ashamed to see his long legs, forty years old, out-distanced by a young urchin of twelve. However, he was far ahead of the Major, who gave himself no concern on the subject.

They were all soon assembled on the lofty crags, and from this elevation could command a view of the whole plain below. It appeared entirely uncultivated, and covered with shrubs and bushes. Glenarvan thought it resembled some glens in the lowlands of Scotland, and Paganel fancied it like some barren parts of Brittany. But along the coast the country appeared to be inhabited, and significant signs

of industry revealed the presence of civilized men, not savages.

"A mill!" exclaimed Robert.

And, sure enough, in the distance the long sails of a mill appeared, apparently about three miles off.

"It certainly is a windmill," said Paganel, after examining the object in question through his telescope.

"Let us go to it, then," said Glenarvan.

Away they started, and, after walking about half an hour, the country began to assume a new aspect, suddenly changing its sterility for cultivation. Instead of bushes, quick-set hedges met the eye, inclosing recent clearings. Several bullocks and about half a dozen horses were feeding in meadows, surrounded by acacias supplied from the vast plantations of Kangaroo Island. Gradually fields covered with cereals came in sight, whole acres covered with bristling ears of corn, hay-ricks in the shape of large bee-hives, blooming orchards, a fine garden worthy of Horace, in which the useful and agreeable were blended; then came sheds; commons wisely distributed, and last of all, a plain comfortable dwelling-house, crowned by a joyous-sounding mill, and fanned and shaded by its long sails as they kept constantly moving round.

Just at that moment a pleasant-faced man, about fifty years of age, came out of the house, warned, by the loud barking of four dogs, of the arrival of strangers. He was followed by five handsome strapping lads, his sons, and their mother, a fine tall woman. There was no mistaking the little group. This was a perfect type of the Irish colonist--a man who, weary of the miseries of his country, had come, with his family, to seek fortune and happiness beyond the seas.

Before Glenarvan and his party had time to reach the house and present themselves in due form, they heard the cordial words:

"Strangers! welcome to the house of Paddy O'Moore!"

"You are Irish," said Glenarvan, "if I am not mistaken," warmly grasping the outstretched hand of the colonist.

"I was," replied Paddy O'Moore, "but now I am Australian. Come in, gentlemen, whoever you may be, this house is yours."

It was impossible not to accept an invitation given with such grace. Lady Helena and Mary Grant were led in by Mrs. O'Moore, while the gentlemen were assisted by his sturdy sons to disencumber themselves of their fire-arms.

An immense hall, light and airy, occupied the ground floor of

the house, which was built of strong planks laid horizontally. A few wooden benches fastened against the gaily-colored walls, about ten stools, two oak chests on tin mugs, a large long table where twenty guests could sit comfortably, composed the furniture, which looked in perfect keeping with the solid house and robust inmates.

The noonday meal was spread; the soup tureen was smoking between roast beef and a leg of mutton, surrounded by large plates of olives, grapes, and oranges. The necessary was there and there was no lack of the superfluous. The host and hostess were so pleasant, and the big table, with its abundant fare, looked so inviting, that it would have been ungracious not to have seated themselves. The farm servants, on equal footing with their master, were already in their places to take their share of the meal. Paddy O'Moore pointed to the seats reserved for the strangers, and said to Glenarvan:

"I was waiting for you."

"Waiting for us!" replied Glenarvan in a tone of surprise.

"I am always waiting for those who come," said the Irishman; and then, in a solemn voice, while the family and domestics reverently stood, he repeated the BENEDICITE.

Dinner followed immediately, during which an animated conversation

was kept up on all sides. From Scotch to Irish is but a handsbreadth. The Tweed, several fathoms wide, digs a deeper trench between Scotland and England than the twenty leagues of Irish Channel, which separates Old Caledonia from the Emerald Isle. Paddy O'Moore related his history. It was that of all emigrants driven by misfortune from their own country. Many come to seek fortunes who only find trouble and sorrow, and then they throw the blame on chance, and forget the true cause is their own idleness and vice and want of commonsense. Whoever is sober and industrious, honest and economical, gets on.

Such a one had been and was Paddy O'Moore. He left Dundalk, where he was starving, and came with his family to Australia, landed at Adelaide, where, refusing employment as a miner, he got engaged on a farm, and two months afterward commenced clearing ground on his own account.

The whole territory of South Australia is divided into lots, each containing eighty acres, and these are granted to colonists by the government. Any industrious man, by proper cultivation, can not only get a living out of his lot, but lay by pounds 80 a year.

Paddy O'Moore knew this. He profited by his own former experience, and laid by every penny he could till he had saved enough to purchase new lots. His family prospered, and his farm also. The Irish peasant became a landed proprietor, and though his little

estate had only been under cultivation for two years, he had five hundred acres cleared by his own hands, and five hundred head of cattle. He was his own master, after having been a serf in Europe, and as independent as one can be in the freest country in the world.

His guests congratulated him heartily as he ended his narration; and Paddy O'Moore no doubt expected confidence for confidence, but he waited in vain. However, he was one of those discreet people who can say, "I tell you who I am, but I don't ask who you are." Glenarvan's great object was to get information about the BRITANNIA, and like a man who goes right to the point, he began at once to interrogate O'Moore as to whether he had heard of the shipwreck.

The reply of the Irishman was not favorable; he had never heard the vessel mentioned. For two years, at least, no ship had been wrecked on that coast, neither above nor below the Cape. Now, the date of the catastrophe was within two years. He could, therefore, declare positively that the survivors of the wreck had not been thrown on that part of the western shore. Now, my Lord," he added, "may I ask what interest you have in making the inquiry?"

This pointed question elicited in reply the whole history of the expedition. Glenarvan related the discovery of the document, and the various attempts that had been made to follow up the precise indications given of the whereabouts of the unfortunate captives;

and he concluded his account by expressing his doubt whether they should ever find the Captain after all.

His dispirited tone made a painful impression on the minds of his auditors. Robert and Mary could not keep back their tears, and Paganel had not a word of hope or comfort to give them.

John Mangles was grieved to the heart, though he, too, was beginning to yield to the feeling of hopelessness which had crept over the rest, when suddenly the whole party were electrified by hearing a voice exclaim: "My Lord, praise and thank God! if Captain Grant is alive, he is on this Australian continent."