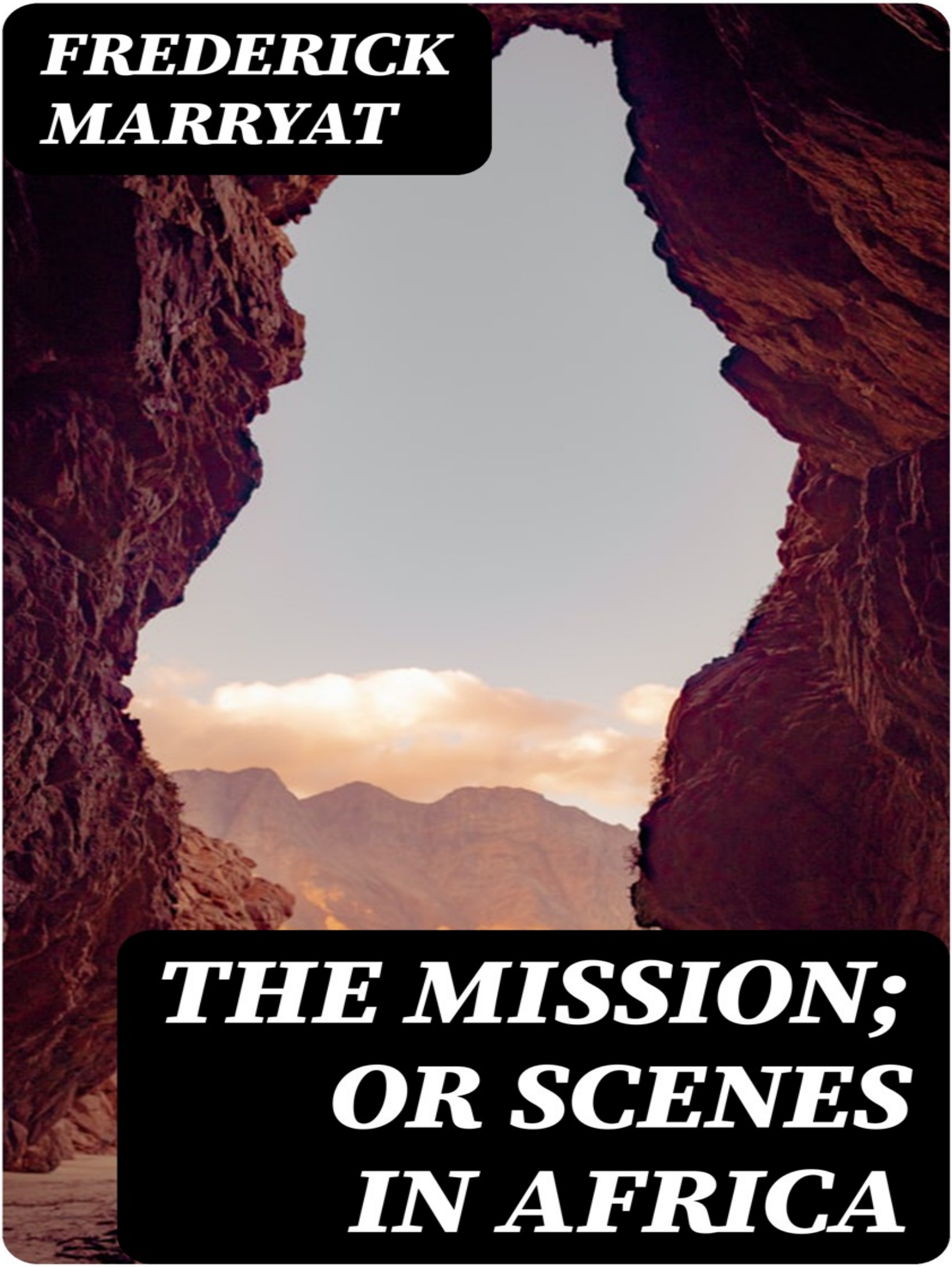
FREDERICK MARRYAT
THE MISSION; OR SCENES IN AFRICA

Frederick Marryat

The Mission; or Scenes in Africa

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Contact: DigiCat@okpublishing.info

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"The Mission; or Scenes in Africa"

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Chapter One.

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The Expedition.

It was in the autumn of the year 1828, that an elderly and infirm gentleman was slowly pacing up and down in a large dining-room. He had apparently finished his dinner, although it was not yet five o’clock, and the descending sun shone bright and warm through the windows, which were level with the ground, and from which there was a view of a spacious park, highly ornamented with old timber. He held a newspaper in one hand, and had the other behind his back, as if for support, for he was bent forward, and looked very feeble and emaciated.

After pacing for some time, he sat down in an easy chair and remained in deep thought, holding the newspaper in both his hands.

This old gentleman’s name was Sir Charles Wilmot. He had in early life gone out to India as a writer, and after remaining there for a few years, during which he had amassed a handsome fortune, was advised to leave the country for a time on account of his health. He returned to England on furlough, and had not been there more than six months when the death, without issue, of his eldest brother,

Sir Henry Wilmot, put him in possession of the entailed estates and of the baronetcy.

This decided him not to return to India for his wife and three daughters, whom he had left out there, but to write, desiring them to return home by the first ship. The reply which he received was most painful: his wife and two of his daughters had been carried off by the cholera, which had been very fatal during the previous rainy season. His remaining daughter was about to sail, in obedience to his wishes, in the *Grosvenor* East-Indiaman, under the care of Colonel and Mrs James, who were near connexions.

This was a heavy blow with which it pleased God to visit him in his prosperity, and was almost a total wreck of all his hopes and anticipations. But he was a good man and a religious one, and he bowed in humility to the dispensation, submitting with resignation to his loss, and still thankful to Heaven that it had graciously spared one of the objects of his affections to console him, and to watch his declining years.

Sir Charles Wilmot took possession of the family mansion and estate in Berkshire, in which he was still residing at the time that our history commences. By degrees he became more resigned, and waited with anxiety for the return of his only daughter, who now seemed more dear to him than ever. He employed himself in making preparations for her reception, fitting up her apartments in the Oriental style which she had been accustomed to, and devising every little improvement and invention which he thought would give pleasure to a child of ten years old.

But it pleased Heaven that Sir Charles should be more severely chastised: the *Grosvenor's* time of arrival had elapsed, and still she was not reported in the Channel; week after week of anxiety and suspense passed slowly away, and the East-India ship did not make her appearance. It was supposed that she had been captured by the enemy, but still no tidings of her capture were received. At length, however, this state of anxiety and doubt was put an end to by the dreadful intelligence that the ship had been wrecked on the east coast of Africa, and that nearly the whole of the crew and passengers had perished. Two men belonging to her had been brought home by a Danish East-Indiaman, and shortly after the first intelligence, these men arrived in London, and gave a more particular detail of what had occurred.

Sir Charles, in a state of feverish anxiety, as soon as he heard of their arrival, hastened up to town to question these men; and the result of his interrogatories fully convinced him that he was now quite bereaved and childless. This was the last blow and the most severe; it was long before he could resign himself to the unsearchable dispensations of Providence; but time and religion had at last overcome all his repining feelings,—all disposition to question the goodness or wisdom of his Heavenly Father, and he was enabled to say, with sincerity, "Not my will, but thine, be done."

But although Sir Charles was thus left childless, as years passed away, he at last found that he had those near to him for whom he felt an interest, and one in particular who promised to deserve all his regard. This was his grand-

nephew, Alexander Wilmot, who was the legal heir to the title and entailed property,—the son of a deceased nephew, who had fallen during the Peninsular war.

On this boy Sir Charles had lavished those affections which it pleased Heaven that he should not bestow upon his own issue, and Alexander Wilmot had gradually become as dear to him as if he had been his own child. Still the loss of his wife and children was ever in his memory, and as time passed on, painful feelings of hope and doubt were occasionally raised in Sir Charles's mind, from the occasional assertions of travellers, that all those did not perish who were supposed so to do when the *Grosvenor* was wrecked, and that, from the reports of the natives, some of them and of their descendants were still alive. It was a paragraph in the newspaper, containing a renewal of these assertions, which had attracted the attention of Sir Charles, and which had put him in the state of agitation and uneasiness in which we have described him at the opening of this chapter.

We left him in deep and painful thought, with the newspaper in his hands. His reveries were interrupted by the entrance of Alexander Wilmot, who resided with him, being now twenty-two years of age, and having just finished his college education. Alexander Wilmot was a tall, handsome young man, very powerful in frame, and very partial to all athletic exercises; he was the best rower and the best cricketer at Oxford, very fond of horses and hunting, and an excellent shot; in character and disposition he was generous and amiable, frank in his manner, and obliging to his inferiors. Every one liked Alexander Wilmot,

and he certainly deserved to be liked, for he never injured or spoke ill of anybody. Perhaps his most prominent fault was obstinacy; but this was more shown in an obstinate courage and perseverance to conquer what appeared almost impossible, and at the greatest risk to himself; he was of that disposition that he would hardly get out of the way of a mad bull if it crossed his path, but risk his life probably, and to no purpose; but there is no perfection in this world, and it was still less to be expected in a young man of only twenty-two years of age.

“Well, uncle, I’ve conquered him,” said Alexander, as he came into the room, very much heated with exercise.

“Conquered whom, my boy?” replied Sir Charles.

“The colt; I’ve backed him, and he is now as gentle as a lamb; but he fought hard for two hours at least.”

“Why should you run such risk, Alexander, when the horsebreaker would have broke him just as well?”

“But not so soon, uncle.”

“I did not know that you were in such want of a horse as to require such hurry; I thought you had plenty in the stable.”

“So I have, uncle, thanks to you, more than I can use; but I like the pleasure—the excitement.”

“There you state the truth, my dear Alexander; when you have lived as long as I have, you will find more pleasure in quiet and repose,” replied Sir Charles, with a heavy sigh.

“Something has disturbed you, my dear uncle,” said Alexander, going up to Sir Charles and taking his hand; “what is it, sir?”

“You are right, Alexander; something has unsettled me, has called up painful feelings and reminiscences; it is that paragraph in the newspaper.”

Alexander was now as subdued almost as his uncle; he took a chair and quietly read the paragraph.

“Do you think that there is any foundation for this, my dear sir?” said he, after he had read it.

“It is impossible to say, my dear boy; it may be so, it has often been asserted before. The French traveller Le Vaillant states that he received the same information, but was prevented from ascertaining the truth; other travellers have subsequently given similar accounts. You may easily credit the painful anxiety which is raised in my mind when I read such a statement as this. I think I see my poor Elizabeth, the wife or slave to some wild savage; her children, merciful Heaven! my grandchildren, growing up as the brutes of the field, in ignorance and idolatry. It is torture, my dear Alexander—absolute torture, and requires long prayer and meditation to restore my mind to its usual tone, and to enable me to bow to the dispensations of the Divine will.”

“Although I have long been acquainted with the general statement, my dear uncle, respecting the loss of the ship, I have never yet heard any such details as would warrant this apprehension of yours. It is generally supposed that all perished, perished indeed most miserably, except the few men who made their way to the Cape, and returned to England.”

“Such was the supposition, my dear boy, but subsequent reports have to a certain degree contradicted it, and there is reason to believe that all did not perish who were accounted

as dead. If you have nothing particularly to engage you at this moment, I will enter into a detail of what did occur, and of the proofs that the fate of a large portion, among which that of your aunt Elizabeth, was never ascertained."

"If it will not be too painful to you, my dear uncle, I will most gladly hear it."

"I will not dwell longer upon it than is necessary, Alexander; believe me the subject is too distressing, but I wish you to know it also, and then to give me your opinion. You are of course aware that it was on the coast of Caffraria, to the southward of Port Natal, that the *Grosvenor* was wrecked. She soon divided and went to pieces, but by a sudden—I know not that I can say a *fortunate*—change of wind, yet such was the will of Heaven,—the whole of the crew and passengers (with the exception of sixteen who had previously attempted to gain the shore by a hawser, and one man who was left on board in a state of intoxication) were all safely landed, even to the little children who were coming home in the vessel; among whom was my poor Elizabeth."

Alexander made no observation when Sir Charles paused for a while: the latter then continued:—

"By the time that they had all gained the shore, the day was far spent; the natives, who were of the Caffre race, and who had been busy in obtaining all the iron that they could from the mainmast, which had drifted on shore, left the beach at dark. The wretched sufferers lighted fires, and having collected some casks of beef and flour, and some live stock, they remained on the rocks daring that night. The next morning the captain proposed that they should make

their way to Cape Town, the Dutch settlement, to which they all unanimously consented; certainly a most wild proposition, and showing very little judgment."

"Could they have done otherwise, my dear uncle?"

"Most certainly; they knew that they were in a country of lawless savages, who had already come down and taken by force everything that they could lay their hands upon. The captain calculated that they would reach Cape Town in sixteen or seventeen days. How far his calculation was correct, is proved by the fact that those who did reach it at last were one hundred and seventeen days on their journey. But even admitting that the distance could have been performed in the time stated by the captain, the very idea of attempting to force their way through a country inhabited by savage people, with such a number of helpless women and children, and without any arms for their defence, was indeed an act of folly and madness, as it eventually proved."

"What then should have been their plan?"

"Observe, Alexander, the ship was wrecked not a cable's length from the shore, firmly fixed upon a reef of rocks upon which she had been thrown; the water was smooth, and there was no difficulty in their communication. The savages, content with plundering whatever was washed on shore, had to the time of their quitting the rocks left them uninjured. They might have gone on board again, have procured arms to defend themselves and the means of fortifying their position against any attempt of the savages, who had no other weapons but assaguays or spears, and then might have obtained the provisions and other articles

necessary for their support. Armed as they might have been, and numerous as they were, for there were one hundred and fifty souls on board at the time of the wreck, they might have protected themselves until they had built boats or small vessels out of the timber of the wreck; for all their carpenters and blacksmiths were safely landed on shore with them. By taking this course they might have coasted along shore, and have arrived without difficulty at the Cape."

"Most certainly, sir, it would have been the most judicious plan."

"The captain must have been very deficient in judgment to have acted as he did. He had everything to his hand—the means—the men to build the boats—provisions, arms, sails, and cordage, and yet he threw all these chances away, and attempted to do what was impossible."

"He was not one of those who were saved, I believe, sir?"

"No, he is one of those who have not been heard of;—but to proceed:— The first day of their march from the site of the wreck ought to have been a warning to them to turn back. The savages robbed them of everything and threw stones at them. A Dutchman of the name of Trout, who had fled to the Caffre country for some murder he had committed in the colony, fell in with them and told them the attempt was impracticable, from the number of savage nations, the width of the rivers, the desert countries without water, and the number of wild beasts which they would encounter; but still they were not persuaded, and went on to their destruction. They were not five miles from the wreck at that time, and might have returned to it before night."

“May it not fairly be supposed that after such a dreadful shipwreck anything was considered preferable by the major portion of them, especially the passengers, to re-embarking?”

“It may be so; but still it was a feeling that was to be surmounted, and would have been, had they been counselled by a judicious leader; for he might fairly have pointed out to them,—without re-embarkation, how are you to arrive in England?”

“Very true, uncle. Pray continue.”

“From the accounts given by the seamen who returned, before they had travelled a week they were attacked by a large party of natives, to whose blows and ill-treatment as they passed along they had hitherto submitted; but as in this instance the natives appeared determined to massacre them, they resisted as well as they could, and, being nearly one hundred men in force, succeeded in driving them off, not without receiving many severe wounds. After a few days’ more travelling, their provisions were all expended, and the seamen began to murmur, and resolve to take care of themselves, and not to be encumbered with women and children. The consequence was, that forty-three of the number separated from the rest, leaving the captain and all the male and female passengers and children (my dear Elizabeth among them), to get on as they could.”

“How cruel!”

“Yes! but self-preservation is the first law of nature, and I fear it is in vain to expect that persons not under the influence of religious principles will risk their lives, or submit to much self-denial, for the sake of alleviating the miseries

of others. The reason given for this separation was, that it was impossible to procure food for so large a number, and that they would be more likely to obtain sustenance when divided. The party who thus proceeded in advance encountered the most terrible difficulties; they coasted along the sea-shore because they had no other food than the shell-fish found on the rocks; they had continually to cross rivers from a mile to two miles wide; they were kept from their slumber by the wild beasts which prowled around them, and at length they endured so much from want of water, that their sufferings were extreme. They again subdivided and separated, wandering they hardly knew where, exposed to a burning sun, without clothing and without food. One by one they sat down and were left behind to die, or to be devoured by the wild beasts before they were dead. At last they were reduced to such extremity, that they proposed to cast lots for one to be killed to support the others; they turned back on their route, that they might find the dead bodies of their companions for food. Finally, out of the whole crew, three or four, purblind and staggering from exhaustion, craving for death, arrived at the borders of the colony, where they were kindly received and gradually recovered."

"You now speak of the first party who separated from the captain and the passengers, do you not, uncle?"

"Yes."

"And what became of the captain's party?"

"No tidings were heard of them; their fate was unknown; it was long supposed that they had all perished; for if the sufferings of the seamen, inured to toil and danger, had

been so great, what chance was there for helpless women and children? But after some years, there was a report that they had been saved, and were living with the savages. Le Vaillant first mentioned it, and then it died away and was not credited; but since that, the reports of various travellers appear to give confirmation to what Le Vaillant asserted. The paragraph you have now read in the newspaper has again renewed the assertion, and the parties from whom it proceeds are by all accounts worthy of credence. You may imagine, my dear boy, what a pang it gives me when I read these reports,—when I reflect that my poor girl, who was with that party, may at this moment be alive, may have returned to a state of barbarism,—the seeds of faith long dead in her bosom,—now changed to a wild untutored savage, knowing no God."

"But, my dear uncle, allowing that my aunt is alive, she was not so young at the time of the wreck as to forget entirely what she had been taught."

"That is possible; but then her condition must be still more painful, or rather I should say must have been, for probably she is dead long before this, or if not dead, she must be a woman advanced in life; indeed, as you may observe in the account given by the traveller in the paragraph you have read, it speaks only of the *descendants* of those who were lost in the *Grosvenor*. The idea of my grandchildren having returned to a state of barbarism is painful enough; I wish it were possible that I could discover the truth, for it is the uncertainty which so much distresses me. I have but a few years to live, Alexander; I am a very old man, as you know, and may be summoned to-morrow or

to-night, for we know not what a day may bring forth. If I were only certain that my child had died, miserable as her death must have been, it would be happiness, to the idea that she was one of those whose descendants they speak of. If you knew how for the last thirty years this has preyed upon my mind, you would comprehend my anxiety on this account; but God's will be done. Do not let me detain you longer, Alexander; I should prefer being alone."

Alexander, at this intimation, took the proffered hand of his grand-uncle in a reverential and feeling manner, and, without saying any more, quitted the room.

Chapter Two.

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The conversation which he had had with his grand-uncle made a very forcible impression upon Alexander Wilmot; it occasioned him to pass a very sleepless night, and he remained till nearly four o'clock turning it over in his mind. The loss of the *Grosvenor* Indiaman had occurred long before he was born; he was acquainted with the outline of what had taken place, and had been told, when a child, that a relation of his family had perished; but although the narrative had, at the time, made some impression upon his young mind, he had seldom, if ever, heard it spoken of since, and may have been said to have almost forgotten it. He was therefore not a little surprised when he found how great an influence it had upon his grand-uncle, who had never mentioned it to him before; indeed it had escaped

Alexander’s memory that it was his grand-uncle’s only surviving daughter who had been lost in the vessel.

Alexander Wilmot was warmly attached to the old gentleman; indeed, he would have been very ungrateful if he had not been, for it was impossible that any one could have been treated with more kindness and liberality than he was by Sir Charles. It was but the week before, that he had expressed a wish to travel on the continent, and Sir Charles had immediately given his consent that he should remain abroad, if he pleased, for two years. When he approved, however, of Alexander’s plans, he had made a remark as to his own age and infirmity, and the probable chance that they might not meet again in this world; and this remark of his grand-uncle left such an impression upon Alexander, that he almost repented having made the request, and had been ever since in a state of indecision as to whether he should avail himself of his grand-uncle’s kindness and disregard of self, shown towards him in thus having granted his permission.

The conversation with Sir Charles had brought up a new idea in his mind; he had witnessed the anxiety and longing which his good old relation had shown about the fate of his daughter; he had heard from his own lips how long the ignorance of her fate had preyed upon his mind, and that to be satisfied on this point was the one thing wanting to enable the old man to die happy,—to permit him to say with sincerity, “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace.” Why, then, should he not go to discover the truth? It would not, perhaps, occupy him so long as the two years of travelling on the continent, which had been consented to by

his grand-uncle, and, instead of travelling for his own pleasure, he might be the means of satisfying the mind and quieting the anxiety of one who had been so kind to him. Indeed, he should actually prefer a journey into the interior of Africa to a mere sojourn of some time on the continent; the very peril and danger, the anticipation of distress and hardship, were pleasing to his high and courageous mind, and before he fell asleep Alexander had made up his mind that he would propose the expedition, and if he could obtain his uncle's permission would proceed upon it forthwith. Having come to this resolution, he fell fast asleep and dreamed away, till eight o'clock in the morning, that he was hunting elephants and having hand-to-hand conflicts with every variety of beast with which he had peopled Africa in his fancy. When he was called up in the morning, he found his determination of the night before rather strengthened than otherwise, and accordingly, after breakfast was over, he opened the subject.

"My dear sir," said he to Sir Charles, "you were kind enough to give me your permission to travel on the continent for two years."

"I did do so, Alexander; it is natural at your age that you should wish to see the world, and you have my full permission. When do you think of starting?"

"That depends upon circumstances, sir, and I must be altogether guided by you; to tell you the truth, I do not think that one sees much of the world by following in the beaten track made by so many of our countrymen."

"There I agree with you; in the present high state of civilisation there will be found little or no difference in the

manners and customs of people; in the courts, none; very little in the best society, in which you will of course mix; and not so very much as people may imagine among the mass of population; but the scenery of the countries and the remains of ancient times are still interesting, and will afford pleasure; it must be your own reflections and comments upon what you see which must make it profitable; most people, however, travel from the love of change, added to the love of excitement."

"I grant it, sir, and I do not mean to say but that I should receive much pleasure from a continental tour; perhaps I may add that I should derive more profit if I were to delay it till I am a little older and a little wiser; do you not think so?"

"I certainly do, Alexander. What then? do you propose remaining in England for the present?—if so, I am sure it is on my account, and I am very grateful to you for your sacrifice."

"If you wish it, sir, I will undoubtedly remain in England; at all events, if I do not go elsewhere. I have abandoned my continental tour for the present; but I have another proposal to make, which I hope will meet with your approbation."

"Why, my dear Alexander, on what expedition would you now proceed? Do you wish to visit the United States or South America?"

"No, sir; I wish to make a voyage of still more interest—I wish to go to Africa,—that is, to embark for the Cape of Good Hope, and from thence proceed to the northward, to ascertain, if possible, what now is a source of sad disquiet to you, the actual fate of those who were wrecked in the

Grosvenor, and have not since been heard of with any degree of certainty.”

Sir Charles was for a time silent. He pressed his hands to his forehead; at last he removed them, and said,—“I cannot, much as I wish it, no,—I cannot consent, my dear boy; the danger will be too great. You must not risk your life. It is very kind of you—very kind; but no, it must not be.”

“Indeed, sir, I think, on reflection, you will alter your mind. As for danger—what danger can there be when missionaries are permitted to form their stations, and reside uninjured among the very savages who were so hostile when the *Grosvenor* was lost? The country, which was then a desert, is now inhabited by Europeans, within 200 miles of the very spot where the *Grosvenor* was wrecked. The continual emigration since the Cape has fallen under British government, and the zeal of those who have braved all dangers to make known the Word of God to the heathen and idolater, have in forty years made such an alteration, that I see no more danger in the mission which I propose than I do in a visit to Naples; and as for time, I have every reason to expect that I shall be back sooner than in the two years which you have proposed for my stay on the continent.”

“But if some accident were to happen to you, I should never forgive myself for having given my consent, and the few days that are left to me would be rendered miserable.”

“My dear sir, we are in the hands of God; and (short-sighted as we are) in running away from danger, as often run into it. What we call an accident, the fall of a brick or a stone, the upsetting of a vehicle, anything however trivial or seemingly improbable, may summon us away when we least

expect it: ‘In the midst of life we are in death,’ and that death I may meet by staying in this country, which I might have avoided by going on this expedition. Difficulties may arise, and some danger there may be, I admit; but when prepared to encounter both, we are more safe than when, in fancied security, we are taken unawares. Do not, I entreat you, sir, refuse me this favour; I have considered well, and shall be most unhappy if I am not permitted to obtain the information for you which you have so much at heart. Let my travels be of some advantage to you as well as to myself. Do not refuse, I entreat you.”

“You are a good boy, Alexander, and your kindness makes me still more unwilling to part with you. I hardly know what to say. Let us drop the subject for the present; we will talk of it to-morrow or next day. I must have time for reflection.”

Alexander Wilmot did not fail to renew his entreaties on the following day, but could not gain Sir Charles’s consent. He was not, however, discouraged. He had taken from the library all the works he could find relative to Southern Africa, and continually enforcing his arguments by quotations from various authors, all tending to prove that he might travel through the country without much risk, if he took proper precautions, his grand-uncle’s objections grew daily more feeble, and at last Sir Charles gave his unwilling consent. In the mean time, the books which Alexander had read had produced a great effect upon him. When he first proposed the mission, it was more from a feeling of gratitude towards his old relative than any other, but now he was most anxious to go on his own account. The narratives of

combats with wild beasts, the quantity and variety of game to be found, and the continual excitement which would be kept up, inflamed his imagination and his love of field-sports, and he earnestly requested to be permitted to depart immediately, pointing out to Sir Charles that the sooner he went away the sooner he would be back again. This last argument was not without its weight, and Alexander was allowed to make every preparation for his journey. Inquiries were made, and a passage secured on board of a free-trader, which was to touch at the Cape, and in six weeks from the time that the subject had been brought up, Alexander Wilmot took leave of his grand-uncle.

“May God bless you, sir, and keep you well till my return,” said Alexander, pressing his hand.

“May the Lord protect you, my dear boy, and allow you to return and close my eyes,” replied Sir Charles, with much emotion.

Before night Alexander Wilmot was in London, from thence he hastened down to Portsmouth to embark. The next day, the *Surprise* weighed anchor and ran through the Needles, and before the night closed in was well down the Channel, standing before the wind, with studding-sails below and aloft.

Chapter Three.

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A melancholy feeling clouded the features of Alexander Wilmot as, on the following morning, the vessel, under a heavy press of sail, was fast leaving the shores of his native

country. He remained on the poop of the vessel with his eyes fixed upon the land, which every moment became more indistinct. His thoughts may easily be imagined. Shall I ever see that land again? Shall I ever return, or shall my bones remain in Africa, perhaps not even buried, but bleaching in the desert? And if I do return, shall I find my old relation still alive, or called away, loaded as he is with years, to the silent tomb? We are in the hands of a gracious God. His will be done.

Alexander turned away, as the land had at last become no longer visible, and found a young man of about his own age standing close to him, and apparently as much lost in reverie as he had been. As in turning round Alexander brushed against him, he thought it right to apologise for the unintentional act, and this occasioned a conversation.

“I believe, sir,” said the other party, who was a tall, spare, slight-built man, with a dark complexion, “that we were both indulging in similar thoughts as we took leave of our native shores. Every Englishman does the same, and indeed every true lover of his country, let the country be what it will. We find the feeling as strong in the savage as in the enlightened; it is universal. Indeed, we may fairly say that it extends lower down to the brute species, from their love of localities.”

“Very true, sir,” replied Alexander; “but with brutes, as you say, it is merely the love of locality; with men, I trust, the feeling is more generous and noble.”

“So it ought to be, or else why are we so much more nobly endowed? This is not your first voyage, I presume?” continued the stranger.

“Indeed, it is,” said Alexander; “I never was out of England, or on board of a vessel, before yesterday.”

“I should have imagined otherwise,” remarked his companion: “the other passengers are all suffering from sea-sickness, while you and I only are on the deck. I presumed, therefore, that you had been afloat before.”

“I did feel very giddy yesterday evening,” observed Alexander, “but this morning I have no unpleasant sensation whatever. I believe that some people do not suffer at sea.”

“A very few; but it appears that you are one of those most fortunate, for by experience I know how painful and distressing the sickness is for some time. Breakfast will soon be ready; do you think that you can eat any?”

“Yes, a little—not much; a cup of tea or coffee,” replied Alexander; “but I cannot say that I have my usual appetite. What bird is that which skims along the water?”

“It is the *procellarius*, as we naturalists call it, but in English, the stormy petrel; its presence denotes rough weather coming.”

“Then I wish it had not made its appearance,” said Alexander, laughing; “for with rough weather, there will of course be more motion in the vessel, and I feel the motion too much already.”

“I think if you eat your breakfast (although without appetite), and keep on deck, you may get over any further indisposition,” replied the stranger.

“Have we many passengers on board?”

“No; nine or ten, which is considered a small number, at least by the captain, who was complaining of his ill-luck. They are mostly females and children. There is a Cape

gentleman who has long resided in the colony, and is now returning there. I have had some conversation with him, and he appears a very intelligent person. But here is the steward coming aft, to let us know that breakfast is ready.”

The person who had thus conversed with Alexander Wilmot was a Mr Swinton, who, as he had accidentally observed, was a naturalist; he was a person of some independent property, whose ardour for science had induced him to engage in no profession, being perfectly satisfied with his income, which was sufficient for his wants and to enable him to follow up his favourite study. He was now on his passage to the Cape of Good Hope, with no other object than to examine the natural productions of that country, and to prosecute his researches in science there, to a greater extent than had hitherto been practicable.

Before they had arrived at Madeira, at which island the ship remained three days to take in wine and fresh provisions, a great intimacy had been established between Alexander and Mr Swinton, although as yet neither knew the cause of the other’s voyage to the Cape; they were both too delicate to make the inquiry, and waited till the other should of his own accord impart his reasons.

We have mentioned that there were other passengers, one of whom was a gentleman who resided in Cape Town, and who held a lucrative situation under the government. He was an elderly gentleman, of about sixty years of age, of a very benign and prepossessing appearance; and it so happened that Alexander found out, on looking over his letters of introduction when at anchor at Madeira, that he possessed one to this gentleman. This of course he

presented at once, although they were already on intimate terms; and this introduction made Mr Fairburn (for such was his name) take an immediate interest in his welfare, and also warranted his putting the question, as to what were Alexander's views and intentions in visiting the Cape: for Mr Fairburn knew from the letter that he was heir to Sir Charles Wilmot, and therefore that he was not likely to be going out as a speculator or emigrant.

It hardly need be said that Alexander made no hesitation in confiding to one who could so materially assist him in the object of his voyage.

The other passengers were three young ladies bound to their friends in India, and a lady returning with her two marriageable daughters to rejoin her husband, who was a colonel in the Bengal army. They were all pleasant people, the young ladies very lively, and on the whole the cabin of the *Surprise* contained a very agreeable party; and soon after they left Madeira, they had fine weather, smooth water, and everything that could make a voyage endurable.

The awnings were spread, chairs brought up, and the major portion of the day was spent upon the quarter-deck and poop of the vessel, which for many days had been running down before the trade-winds, intending to make Rio, and there lay in a supply of fresh provisions for the remainder of her voyage.

One morning, as Alexander and Mr Fairburn were sitting together, Alexander observed—"You have passed many years at the Cape, Mr Fairburn, have you not?"

"Yes; I was taken prisoner when returning from India, and remained a year in Cape Town during the time that it was in

the hands of the Dutch; I was about to be sent home as a prisoner to Holland, and was embarked on board of one of the vessels in Saldanha Bay, when they were attacked by the English. Afterwards, when the English captured the Cape, from my long residence in, and knowledge of, the country, I was offered a situation, which I accepted: the colony was restored to the Dutch, and I came home. On its second capture I was again appointed, and have been there almost ever since."

"Then you are well acquainted with the history of the colony?"

"I am, certainly, and if you wish it, shall be happy to give you a short account of it."

"It will give me the greatest pleasure, for I must acknowledge that I know but little, and *that* I have gleaned from the travels which I have run through very hastily."

"I think it was in the year 1652 that the Dutch decided upon making a settlement at the Cape. The aborigines, or natives, who inhabited that part of the country about Cape Town, were the Hottentots, a mild, inoffensive people, living wholly upon the produce of their cattle; they were not agriculturists, but possessed large herds of cattle, sheep, and goats, which ranged the extensive pastures of the country. The history of the founding of one colony is, I fear, the history of most, if not all—commencing in doing all that is possible to obtain the good-will of the people until a firm footing has been obtained in the land, and then treating them with barbarity and injustice.

"The Hottentots, won over by kindness and presents, thought it of little consequence that strangers should

possess a small portion of their extensive territory, and willingly consented that the settlement should be made. They, for the first time in their lives, tasted what proved the cause of their ruin and subsequent slavery—tobacco and strong liquors. These two poisons, offered gratuitously, till the poor Hottentots had acquired a passion for them, then became an object of barter—a pipe of tobacco or a glass of brandy was the price of an ox; and thus daily were the colonists becoming enriched, and the Hottentots poor.

“The colony rapidly increased, until it was so strong, that the governor made no ceremony of seizing upon such land as the government wished to retain or to give away; and the Hottentots soon discovered that not only their cattle, but the means of feeding them, were taken from them. Eventually, they were stripped of everything except their passion for tobacco and spirits, which they could not get rid of. Unwilling to leave the land of their fore-fathers, and seeing no other way of procuring the means of intoxication which they coveted, they sold themselves and their services to the white colonists, content to take care of those herds which had once been their own, and to lead them out to pasture on the very lands which had once been their birthright.”

“Did they then become slaves?” inquired Alexander.

“No; although much worse treated, they never were slaves, and I wish to point that out; but they became a sort of feudal property of the Dutch, compelled to hire themselves out, and to work for them upon nominal wages, which they seldom or never received, and liable to every species of harsh treatment and cruelty, for which they could

obtain no redress. Yet still they were not bought and sold as were the slaves which were subsequently introduced into the colony from the east coast of Africa and Madagascar. The position of the slaves was, in my opinion, infinitely superior, merely from the self-interest of the owner, who would not kill or risk the life of a creature for whom he had paid two or three hundred rixdollars; whereas, the Dutch boors, or planters, thought little of the life of a Hottentot. If the cattle were to be watched where lions were plentiful, it was not a slave who had charge of them, but a Hottentot, as he had cost nothing, and the planter could procure another. In short, the life of a Hottentot was considered as of no value, and there is no denying that they were shot by their masters or employers upon the most trifling offence."

"How dreadful! but did the Dutch government suffer this?"

"They could not well help it, and therefore were compelled to wink at it; the criminals were beyond its reach. But now I will proceed to give you some further insight, by describing the Dutch boors, or planters, who usurped and stood in the shoes of the poor Hottentots.

"The Dutch government seized upon all the land belonging to the Hottentots, and gave it away in grants to their own countrymen, who now became herdsmen, and possessed of a large quantity of cattle; they also cultivated the ground to a certain extent round about their habitations. As the colony increased, so did the demand for land, until the whole of the country that was worth having was disposed of as far as to the country of the Caffres, a fine warlike race, of whom we will speak hereafter. It must not,