

# Biography of Lady Mary Anne Barker

Lady Barker was born Mary Anne Stewart in Spanish Town, Jamaica, on May 29th 1831.

Hankin, Cherry, "Barker, Mary Anne - Biography", *Te Ara Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, New Zealand Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 17 January 2012, retrieved 13 April 2012, <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1b5/1>. See also: Wattie, Nelson, "Barker, Mary Anne", *The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature*, eds. Roger Robinson and Nelson Wattie, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 40.

Her mother was Susan Hewitt and her father was Walter George Stewart.

Hankin, Cherry, "Barker, Mary Anne - Biography", *Te Ara Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, New Zealand Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 17 January 2012, retrieved 13 April 2012, <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1b5/1>.

Her family was English but lived in Jamaica because her father was Island Secretary for the British government.

"Lady Barker (1831-1911)", *Christchurch City Libraries*, Christchurch City Council, retrieved 13 April 2012, [http://christchurchcitylibraries.com/Literature/People/B/Barker\\_Mary\\_Anne/](http://christchurchcitylibraries.com/Literature/People/B/Barker_Mary_Anne/). See also: Hankin, Cherry, "Barker, Mary Anne - Biography", *Te Ara Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, New Zealand Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 17 January 2012, retrieved 13 April 2012, <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1b5/1>.

Mary Anne, however, was sent to Europe to live when she was very young (before the age of four) along with her younger sister Dora.

Jones, Jenny Robin, *Writers in Residence*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2004, p. 163.

This was considered standard practice of the time, because life in Jamaica was not considered suitable for proper European children.

Ibid.

She lived in Europe for the duration of her childhood, and received her education there.

Hankin, Cherry, "Barker, Mary Anne - Biography", *Te Ara Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, New Zealand Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 17 January 2012, retrieved 13 April 2012, <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1b5/1>.

Her first residence after Jamaica was near Dublin, Ireland where she and Dora lived with their grandfather, who had been a general in the Indian Army.

Jones, Jenny Robin, *Writers in Residence*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2004, p. 164.

From a very young age Mary Anne lived a multicultural life on multiple continents. An intelligent child, by the age of sixteen Mary Anne had gone as far as she could in her education in Ireland and returned with her sister to Jamaica.

Ibid.

It was after returning to Jamaica that she met the man who would become her first husband, Captain George Barker.

Ibid. See also: Wattie, Nelson, "Barker, Mary Anne", *The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature*, eds. Roger Robinson and Nelson Wattie, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 40.

Barker, at 35, was fourteen years older than Mary Anne when they met in 1851, and they married in 1852 in the Spanish Town cathedral.

Wattie, Nelson, "Barker, Mary Anne", *The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature*, eds. Roger Robinson and Nelson Wattie, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 40. See also: Jones, Jenny Robin, *Writers in Residence*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2004, pp. 164-165.

Not long after that they moved to London where Mary Anne had their first child.

Jones, Jenny Robin, *Writers in Residence*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2004, p. 165.

Accounts suggest that Mary Anne found living in London while her soldier husband was off in various parts of the world intolerable.

Ibid.

In 1859 Barker was knighted for his successes as a soldier in India and Mary Anne became Lady Barker, shortly thereafter Barker was sent to Bengal.

Gilderdale, Betty, *The Seven Lives of Lady Barker*, Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2009, p. 53. See also: "Lady Barker (1831-1911)", *Christchurch City Libraries*, Christchurch City Council, retrieved 13 April 2012, [http://christchurchcitylibraries.com/Literature/People/B/Barker\\_Mary\\_Anne/](http://christchurchcitylibraries.com/Literature/People/B/Barker_Mary_Anne/).

There was clearly a spirit of travel and adventure in Lady Barker that did not allow her to sit at home the quiet housewife; and in 1859 she moved to Bengal to be with her husband, leaving her two children behind in

England.

Jones, Jenny Robin, *Writers in Residence*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2004, p. 165. While leaving behind her young children might seem a harsh move to the modern reader, it is important to consider Lady Barker's own upbringing and the fact that her parents sent her to another continent at a very young age. It seems likely based on her experiences that she would not have considered it unusual at all to be separated from her children. Likewise moving to a different country (or even continent) at this point in her life was not a new prospect. However, she did not leave her children for as long as she had thought. In 1861 George Barker died, and Lady Barker returned once more to England.

Jones, Jenny Robin, *Writers in Residence*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2004, p. 166. See also: Hankin, Cherry, "Barker, Mary Anne - Biography", *Te Ara Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, New Zealand Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 17 January 2012, retrieved 13 April 2012, <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1b5/1>.

Her inter-continental life resumed four years later in 1865 when she met and married Frederick Napier Broome.

Hankin, Cherry, "Barker, Mary Anne - Biography", *Te Ara Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, New Zealand Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 17 January 2012, retrieved 13 April 2012, <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1b5/1>. See also: Jones, Jenny Robin, *Writers in Residence*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2004, pp. 166-167.

Broome was eleven years younger than Lady Barker, educated and with literary interests and passions, and no stranger to intercontinental travel himself – Broome was visiting England from New Zealand where he owned a sheep station.

Jones, Jenny Robin, *Writers in Residence*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2004, pp. 166-167. See also: "Lady Barker (1831-1911)", *Christchurch City Libraries*, Christchurch City Council, retrieved 13 April 2012, [http://christchurchcitylibraries.com/Literature/People/B/Barker\\_Mary\\_Anne/](http://christchurchcitylibraries.com/Literature/People/B/Barker_Mary_Anne/).

After marrying Broome, Lady Barker moved with him to New Zealand.

"Lady Barker (1831-1911)", *Christchurch City Libraries*, Christchurch City Council, retrieved 13 April 2012, [http://christchurchcitylibraries.com/Literature/People/B/Barker\\_Mary\\_Anne/](http://christchurchcitylibraries.com/Literature/People/B/Barker_Mary_Anne/). See also: Jones, Jenny Robin, *Writers in Residence*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2004, p. 167.

New Zealand was at that time a relatively new colony, and Lady Barker once again made the decision to leave her two sons from her marriage to Captain Barker behind in England.

Jones, Jenny Robin, *Writers in Residence*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2004, p. 167.

Lady Barker and Frederick Broome's sheep station Steventon was located on the South Island of New Zealand, just outside Christchurch and it was there that they settled after the long journey from England.

Ibid. See also: "Lady Barker (1831-1911)", *Christchurch City Libraries*, Christchurch City Council, retrieved 13 April 2012, [http://christchurchcitylibraries.com/Literature/People/B/Barker\\_Mary\\_Anne/](http://christchurchcitylibraries.com/Literature/People/B/Barker_Mary_Anne/).

The new home was not an instant success for Lady Barker however, and her first child with Broome died their not long after he was born.

Jones, Jenny Robin, *Writers in Residence*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2004, p. 167. See also: Hankin, Cherry, "Barker, Mary Anne - Biography", *Te Ara Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, New Zealand Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 17 January 2012, retrieved 13 April 2012, <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1b5/1>.

Not yet writing professionally during her life in New Zealand, Lady Barker kept up a steady correspondence of letters to her sister Louisa.

Jones, Jenny Robin, *Writers in Residence*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2004, p. 169.

And her and Frederick's shared passion of literature was shown in the lending library that Lady Barker ran from their home.

Ibid.

Lady Barker and Frederick did not find success in New Zealand however, and gave up the sheep station there in 1868 to return to England.

Jones, Jenny Robin, *Writers in Residence*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2004, p. 171. See also: Sturm, Terry, ed. *The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature in English*, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 526.

The Broome's shared love of the literary surfaced again there – Frederick published a book of poems, and Lady Barker began to write of their life on the station.

Jones, Jenny Robin, *Writers in Residence*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2004, p. 171. See also: Hankin, Cherry, "Barker, Mary Anne - Biography", *Te Ara Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, New Zealand Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 17 January 2012, retrieved 13 April 2012, <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1b5/1>.

Frederick continued to publish articles and poems, and in 1870 Lady Barker published her first book *Station Life in New Zealand* to huge success.

Hankin, Cherry, "Barker, Mary Anne - Biography", *Te Ara Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, New Zealand Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 17 January 2012, retrieved 13 April 2012, <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1b5/1>. See also: Jones, Jenny Robin, *Writers in Residence*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2004, p. 172.

*Station Life in New Zealand* was based on her and Frederick's experience with the Steventon station and it is one of the best known of her twenty plus books.

Wattie, Nelson, "Barker, Mary Anne", *The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature*, eds. Roger Robinson and Nelson Wattie, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 41.

At the prompting of her son George who wanted her stories to be "true", she began writing tales for children based on her own life experience in Jamaica and around the world.

Jones, Jenny Robin, *Writers in Residence*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2004, p. 172.

This in turn led her to write *A Christmas Cake in Four Quarters*, based on her real life global travels to Jamaica, England, India, and New Zealand but told through a fictional narrative.

*A Christmas Cake in Four Quarters*, London: Warne, 1871.

Lady Barker continued to write both articles and books and by 1874 had eleven books published.

Jones, Jenny Robin, *Writers in Residence*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2004, pp. 172-173. See also: Hankin, Cherry, "Barker, Mary Anne - Biography", *Te Ara Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, New Zealand Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 17 January 2012, retrieved 13 April 2012, <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1b5/1>.

Her husband's career continued her global travels and together the Broomes moved to Natal, South Africa and then Mauritius, Western Australia where Broome was made Governor and knighted in 1884 – at which point Mary Anne who had previously still been known officially as Lady Barker changed her name to Lady Broome.

Jones, Jenny Robin, *Writers in Residence*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2004, p. 174. See also: Wattie, Nelson, "Barker, Mary Anne", *The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature*, eds. Roger Robinson and Nelson Wattie, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 41.

Despite being eleven years younger than his wife, Frederick Broome died first in 1896, and Mary Anne eventually returned from Australia to London where she died in 1911 having published over twenty books in her lifetime.

Wattie, Nelson, "Barker, Mary Anne", *The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature*, eds. Roger Robinson and Nelson Wattie, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 41. See also: Jones, Jenny Robin, *Writers in Residence*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2004, p. 174.

## As a Writer

In New Zealand Lady Barker is known as a "New Zealand writer" – largely because of her successful book *Station Life in New Zealand* and its likewise successful sequel *Station Amusements in New Zealand*.

Sturm, Terry, ed. *The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature in English*, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 78.

And it is certainly true that *Station Life in New Zealand* was a large part of the beginning of her success as a writer.

Jones, Jenny Robin, *Writers in Residence*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2004, p. 175.

However she only lived in New Zealand for three years and all of her works about the country were written and published after her return to England.

Jones, Jenny Robin, *Writers in Residence*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2004, pp. 171-172. See also: Sturm, Terry, ed. *The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature in English*, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 50.

Additionally New Zealand was a very young colony during her brief life there. Lady Barker lived and travelled in so many different countries that it is too simplistic to try to ascribe her nationality to any one of her homes in particular. The best option is to consider her an English writer both because that is where she frequently returned in between her global travels, and because England owned a great many of the colonies that she travelled and lived in. Therefore think of her instead as a "colonial" writer or a travel writer and writer of the British Empire as a whole.

Even defining her as a travel writer is problematic however, because Lady Barker's works do not follow traditional travel writing patterns – she tended to focus on the social life of the settlers and their interpersonal

relationships instead of the landscape or the setting of the country she was in.

Sturm, Terry, ed. *The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature in English*, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 50.

A biography of her, *The Seven Lives of Lady Barker*, notes that she agreed with her sons Jack and George that most travels books which ought “to have been exciting, were, in fact, boring” and that she herself preferred exciting tales.

Gilderdale, Betty, *The Seven Lives of Lady Barker*, Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2009, p. 169.

Moreover her writing, especially in the case of *A Christmas Cake in Four Quarters* is not strictly factual, but a version of the truth that she has used fictional devices for dramatic storytelling effect.

Jones, Jenny Robin, *Writers in Residence*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2004, p. 172. See also: Sturm, Terry, ed. *The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature in English*, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 50.

After all, *A Christmas Cake in Four Quarters* was largely prompted by the desire of her sons Jack and George for stories of her life and adventures, and a child is not going to sit and listen to a dry account of observations of the land.

Gilderdale, Betty, *The Seven Lives of Lady Barker*, Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2009, pp. 167-168.

Lady Barker’s body of work encompasses a variety of genres and styles, and a large spectrum of more factual works to more fictionalized works, from the strictly factual textbook *First Lessons in the Principles of Cooking* to the dramatized “travel” writing of *Station Life in New Zealand* to her books for children including *A Christmas Cake in Four Quarters*. Her works are as varied as her life and places of residence were.

## History of *A Christmas Cake in Four Quarters*

*A Christmas Cake in Four Quarters* published in 1871 was Lady Barker’s third published book.

Gilderdale, Betty, *The Seven Lives of Lady Barker*, Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2009, p. 168. See also: Jones, Jenny Robin, *Writers in Residence*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2004, p. 172.

It was written following the success of *Station Life in New Zealand* which had shown that Lady Barker had both the talent to write, and an audience that would make her career as a writer successful.

Jones, Jenny Robin, *Writers in Residence*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2004, p. 173.

At the time (the late 1860s) there were not a great deal of original books written for children, with most children’s books and stories being republished versions of classic fairy tales.

Jones, Jenny Robin, *Writers in Residence*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2004, p. 172.

Children’s literature is often considered to have an intended audience that is distinctly different from the author as an adult;

See introduction, Reimer, Mavis, ed. *Discourses of Children’s Literature in Canada*. Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008.

Lady Barker differs from this in that she wrote stories for children that she herself would be interested in reading.

Jones, Jenny Robin, *Writers in Residence*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2004, p. 172.

Lady Barker’s sons George and Jack shared their mothers desire for well-written exciting tales, and with her blossoming success as a published writer she set about to write the sort of stories they desired herself.

Jones, Jenny Robin, *Writers in Residence*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2004, p. 172. See also: Gilderdale, Betty, *The Seven Lives of Lady Barker*, Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2009, pp. 167-168.

The first result of her foray into children’s literature was the book *Stories About*.

Gilderdale, Betty, *The Seven Lives of Lady Barker*, Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2009, p. 162. See also: Jones, Jenny Robin, *Writers in Residence*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2004, p. 172.

Published in 1870, *Stories About* exemplifies Lady Barker’s innovative method of seamlessly intertwining fact with fiction – it featured tales rooted in truth, but fictionalized for children and included tales of animals that paved the way for later famous stories about animals for children such as *Black Beauty* by Anna Sewell and Beatrix Potter’s tales.

Jones, Jenny Robin, *Writers in Residence*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2004, p. 172. See also: Gilderdale, Betty, *The Seven Lives of Lady Barker*, Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2009, pp. 167-168.

Lady Barker believed that writing for children should be a combination of non-fiction and fiction, and that

it should be written simply and conversationally, a style that she continued to use in *A Christmas Cake in Four Quarters*.

Gilderdale, Betty, *The Seven Lives of Lady Barker*, Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2009, p. 168.

*A Christmas Cake in Four Quarters* is a collection of four tales linked together by a central narrative of a woman telling stories to a group of children during Christmastime. The central narrative is likely based on a combination of Lady Barker's first Christmas back in England after living in New Zealand when she was reunited with her sons Jack and George, and other previous Christmases and times when her children had asked her for stories of her adventures and travels.

Gilderdale, Betty, *The Seven Lives of Lady Barker*, Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2009, p. 167.

She even includes her sons by name and description in the central story, describing "chubby-cheeked Georgie, who was dreadfully matter-of-fact, and acted as a check on all flights of imagination" and Jack who had "tastes for what he called the 'grim and grisly'" (7-8). These descriptions were based on her actual sons' different desires in their stories, and the four tales of *A Christmas Cake in Four Quarters* are divided according to these desires.

Gilderdale, Betty, *The Seven Lives of Lady Barker*, Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2009, p. 168.

The first tale of "Christmas Day in England" is a ghostly story clearly included for those children who, like Jack, wanted the "grim and grisly" while the tales of Christmas Days in Jamaica, India, and New Zealand are far more factual and do not include supernatural elements such as ghosts, but instead focus more on cultural traditions and the people involved in them.

*A Christmas Cake in Four Quarters* was received to critical praise by reviewers of the time, and some of the tales included in later anthologies for adults.

Ibid.

The book itself is clearly written for children however, and similar to how *Stories About* can be considered a forerunner for the factual style of later animal tales, *A Christmas Cake in Four Quarters* is an example of the style that would become typical of factual pioneering stories for children. The narrative quality of the tales of Lady Barker's life, in particular the tale of "Christmas Day in Jamaica" which describes a Christmas from her childhood, are not dissimilar from later popular "factual" novels for children such as Laura Ingalls Wilder's famed *Little House in the Big Woods* and its sequels or Carol Ryrie Brink's *Caddie Woodlawn*; both of which share *A Christmas Cake in Four Quarters'* narrative style and combination of factual events told with fictional elements. All are told in a simple and straightforward language of the kind that appealed to Lady Barker and her sons, but was not in keeping with the fanciful language of fairy tales that were the mainstay of children's literature before Lady Barker's time.

See Gilderdale, Betty, *The Seven Lives of Lady Barker*, Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2009, p. 162 for an account of contemporary children's literature of the time.

Compare the beginning of *A Christmas Cake in Four Quarters*:

*Once upon a time there was a lady who liked telling stories to children, and once upon a time – which time exists up to this very moment – there were a great many children who liked listening. This lady used to be constantly surrounded by boys and girls in a chronic state of story-hunger; but fortunately she never seemed to tire of telling all that they wanted to hear. (3)*

with the beginning of the later *Little House in the Big Woods* by Ingalls Wilder which starts with

*Once Upon a time, sixty years ago, a little girl lived in the Big Woods of Wisconsin, in a little grey house made of logs. The great dark trees of the Big Woods stood all around the house, and beyond them were other trees and beyond them were more trees. As far as a man could go to the north in a day, or a week, or a whole month, there was nothing but woods.*

*Wilder, Laura Ingalls, Little House in the Big Woods, New York: HarperCollins, 1971, p. 1.*

Likewise similar in language and style is Ryrie Brink's *Caddie Woodlawn*, which begins

*In 1864 Caddie Woodlawn was eleven, and as wild a tomboy as ever ran the woods of western Wisconsin. She was the despair of her mother and of her elder sister, Clara. But her father watched her with a shine of pride in his eyes, and her brothers accepted her as one of themselves without a question.*

*Brink, Carol Ryrie, Caddie Woodlawn, New York: Aladdin Paperbacks, 2007, p. 1.*

Each of these novels is in the style favoured by Lady Barker, they clearly tell the children from the beginning what the book is going to be about, and though each of these books is technically fiction, they narrated as if they are fact and the content of each is actually based on the life events of the author (or of the author's grandmother in the case of *Caddie Woodlawn*

See authors note, Brink, Carol Ryrie, *Caddie Woodlawn*, New York: Aladdin Paperbacks, 2007.

). While Lady Barker was not the only author of her time to employ this style of writing for children, she was certainly recognized as an important part in a shift in the way in which books were written for children.

Gilderdale, Betty, *The Seven Lives of Lady Barker*, Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2009, pp. 161-163. See also: Jones, Jenny Robin, *Writers in Residence*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2004, p. 172.

## The Four Quarters

The division of the tales of Christmas in England, Jamaica, India and New Zealand into four distinctly separate stories linked together by a central narrative allowed Lady Barker to include a number of different styles of stories together into one book; satisfying the different desires of the tastes of her sons Jack and George in their requests to her for stories as well as allowing her to revisit and describe the cultural traditions and her memories of several of the English colonies that she lived in during her life abroad.

The Christmas cake after which she names her book of stories would have been an ubiquitous part of the Christmas holidays for her readers of the time, young and old alike – Christmas cakes in one form or another have been an English tradition since the 16th century.

Hubert von Stauffer, Maria, “The Story of the Christmas Cake”, *The Christmas Archive*, retrieved 26 April 2012, <http://www.christmasarchives.com/christmascake.html>.

Modern readers from countries with an English heritage will no doubt recognize or have their own holiday memories associated with the dessert and understand Lady Barker’s use of it as a cultural link between the Christmases in four otherwise very different settings with rather different traditions. Lady Barker touches on the significance of the title as a traditional part of an English Christmas in the section of the book “Christmas Day in Jamaica”; though it is referred to there as “*the plum-pudding*” (125) this is the same as a Christmas cake, the desert in question having developed through the years from what was originally a porridge of sorts.

Ibid.

She refers to its importance as a “national dish” of England (125) and that the tradition of having one at Christmas is such that her father “considered it a dreadful, almost a wicked thing, to sit down to dinner on Christmas Day without roast beef, turkey, mince-pies, *and* a plum-pudding” (126). Therefore by calling her collection of tales *A Christmas Cake in Four Quarters* she is invoking an idea of a traditional English Christmas that would be familiar to all her readers, as well as making a reference to her own varied or “quartered” experiences with the changes necessary to traditions when spending Christmas in a different part of the world.

## The Four Quarters of the Cake: England

The first tale in *A Christmas Cake in Four Quarters*, “Christmas Day in England” begins with a description of the Christmas of the narrator of the book and of the many children with which she is spending Christmas and relating these tales to (including the Jack and George characters most certainly modelled after Lady Barker’s own sons). The English Christmas of the narration story is likely largely influenced by the Christmases spent in England after Lady Barker and Frederick’s Broome’s return from New Zealand, given the presence and ages of Jack and George. However Lady Barker had long since written journals and correspondence of her life adventures, and was no stranger to being asked for tales by children so (like the other tales in the book) it is not a straightforward account of any one particular Christmas but rather an amalgamation of her English Christmas experiences.

Gilderdale, Betty, *The Seven Lives of Lady Barker*, Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2009, p. 167.

After setting the scene from which the rest of the book is to be narrated, Lady Barker tells a ghost story set in an English castle, most certainly included for the fanciful desires of her son Jack (as requested as well by the fictional Jack in the book itself) for the ghostly and grim.

Interestingly this is the only story the narrator character tells to the children, which is not a tale of a Christmas past. The “English Christmas” of the section’s title is instead that of the narration story from which the four tales are told. However each of the later tales also contain a story within a story, though they differ in that they are not told from the perspective of the storyteller character (who is given the name “Mrs. Owen” in the book, but who is clearly the representation of Lady Barker herself); so it is only truly different in the content of the section in that the English Christmas is included throughout the book as part of the narration. Structurally however it differs from the way the other three quarters are arranged in the book as a whole. Jamaica, India, and

New Zealand are all given their tales in the chronological order that the real Lady Barker and the fictional Mrs. Owen lived in them, however the tale of the English Christmas from which all the other tales are told would have chronologically gone last. This gives the reader a sense that the narrator (and indeed, Lady Barker herself) is recalling poignant and important memories from her life, as these are the ones that have stayed with her. Particularly the artistic license that Lady Barker uses by combining events of her travels and life into the one day she describes in each tale suggests that the details she includes are ones that are of particular interest or significance to her memory that these are the ones she remembers and chooses to share with her children and the reader.

## The Four Quarters of the Cake: Jamaica

The story of “A Christmas Day in Jamaica” is the second section of the Christmas cake and begins an overarching timeline from which the three non-English Christmas are related sequentially in the order in which Lady Barker lived in the countries she describes. “A Christmas Day in Jamaica” is told from the perspective of the storyteller Mrs. Owen as a young girl, and indeed she describes it as “the first Christmas Day which I could recollect spending in Jamaica” since she and her sister had “been in England, away from our dear parents for many years, ever since we were little children in fact, both for health and education” (103), as was the case of course in Lady Barker’s own life. Aspects of the Christmas described in the story can be matched to events in Lady Barker’s own life, such as the visit of her cousin, or her comment “alas! We little knew how soon we should be scattered, never to meet again on Christmas Day” (116) both of which refer to a Christmas spent with her family in Jamaica in 1848, before world travels and deaths caused separations from the happy memories of the family gathering described in the tale.

Gilderdale, Betty, *The Seven Lives of Lady Barker*, Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2009, p. 97.

The Jamaican Christmas is unique in this collection in that it is the only tale told from Lady Barker’s youth – the English, Indian, and New Zealand Christmases all take place after she is grown and married. The Jamaican Christmas is the only story to include her parents and sister, and the cheerful and fondly told recollections of her mother, father, and sister become poignantly tinged with a sadness when read with the knowledge that she spent so little time with her family altogether in her life. Nor is everything in the tale cheerful and bright - in keeping with the narrative structure of the other stories of the book, “A Christmas Day in Jamaica” also includes a tale within a tale, of which a terribly sad tale of the drowning of small children is told (142-157). Such a sad tale is this that even the narration breaks up, in another unique aspect of the Jamaican Christmas section, to include a story told in the English setting of the connecting narration which is ostensibly written by Lady Barker’s son George – “copied word for word from the MS. of a seven years old author, with only a few corrections of the phonetic spelling” notes the text (137). This brief interlude adds an element of whimsy before the darker tale. The inclusion of such sad and serious stories as that of the deaths of young children is referential to the many deaths and hardships that Lady Barker faced in her own life up to the writing of this book, from the deaths of family members, to the loss of several of her own children, to the death of her first husband. Jamaica would in particular have a sad bearing on Lady Barker’s mind -both her childhood companion and beloved sister Dora and her father had died in Jamaica not long before the writing of *A Christmas Cake in Four Quarters*.

Gilderdale, Betty, *The Seven Lives of Lady Barker*, Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2009, pp. 96-97.

The truthful though dark subject matter is also in keeping with her belief that children both desired and were capable reading stories that were truthful, even if these truths were not light-hearted in content.

See Gilderdale, Betty, *The Seven Lives of Lady Barker*, Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2009, p. 168 for Lady Barker’s opinion of children’s literature.

## The Four Quarters of the Cake: India

Strictly speaking, India would not have been the next country chronologically in which Lady Barker spent a Christmas after Jamaica, having returned to England after marrying Captain Barker before deciding to accompany him on his military postings overseas. However it makes sense in the context of the structure of including four tales of different cultures and locations to describe it next as she had already given a tale to an English Christmas. Moreover as the narrator in the book she had promised the children of the tale stories of her Christmases abroad in faraway lands, and in particular New Zealand, Jamaica, and India (9-10).

Furthermore, India in particular had a significant, if tragic, part in Lady Barker’s personal history as the

location of the death of her first husband Captain George Barker. This is reflected in the distinctly dark story of the uprising of some of the native Indians against the English in one of the tales within the tale in this quarter (195-223). As with the other Christmases of the book however she couches her sense of bereavement and loss in these darker and more melancholy tales with a more cheerful and frivolous tale at the end – in this case the story of the near mishap of the sailor who did not know the proper signals for “all quiet” and nearly got himself attacked by his own crew (226-235).

Lady Barker’s style of including the serious and sombre alongside the cheerful and silly is perhaps why the book was so well received by the public and critics alike of her time,

Gilderdale, Betty, *The Seven Lives of Lady Barker*, Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2009, pp. 168-169.

and why it appealed to both adults (and was included in several adult anthologies

Gilderdale, Betty, *The Seven Lives of Lady Barker*, Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2009, p. 168.

) as well as the children for whom it was written. Additionally at a time when the English Empire was so globally expanded, *A Christmas Cake in Four Quarters* would have provided to those back in England who did not have the will and drive to travel the globe that Lady Barker had, a sense of how their countrymen abroad lived and celebrated Christmas, and how, as she writes herself in “Christmas Day in India” “if it was not made up of the usual pleasant routine of the English festival, it had, at all events, its own share of adventure and excitement.” (235).

## The Four Quarters of the Cake: New Zealand

The final tale in *A Christmas Cake in Four Quarters* is devoted to “Christmas Day in New Zealand” and is the most recent Christmas that Lady Barker experienced abroad prior to her return to England and the writing of this book. It seems likely then that this section would have been the clearest and most accurately remembered in her mind, given that not even three years had passed between her return to England and the writing of this book. Moreover New Zealand would have been fresh in her mind, having only recently written and published *Station Life in New Zealand* to great success the year before.

Gilderdale, Betty, *The Seven Lives of Lady Barker*, Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2009, p. 161.

Indeed, given the tale of the sheep farmers in this section of the book it is easy to imagine it fitting in either *Station Life in New Zealand* or the follow up to it *Station Amusements in New Zealand*. Though similar to the narrative liberties taken with events in the other sections of the book, it is likely that Lady Barker combined events from more than one Christmas and other times of the year in this section rather than describing with complete accuracy one particular New Zealand Christmas.

Gilderdale, Betty, *The Seven Lives of Lady Barker*, Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2009, pp. 126-127.

This quarter of the book also is distinctly different from the other two stories of Christmas abroad in that it is undoubtedly the most light-hearted and does not include a tale within the tale that is dark and touched with sadness, loss, and death as do “Christmas Day in Jamaica” and “Christmas Day in India” – though this certainly could have gone the other way, had the story of the sheep farmers’ mishap with rat poison ended differently (301)! The reason for the overall more cheerful tone of this section may be due to the fact that with the exception of the loss of a newborn child at the beginning of her life in New Zealand

Jones, Jenny Robin, *Writers in Residence*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2004, p. 167.

(a sad and tragic event to be sure, but not one that was a new experience to Lady Barker) she did not have the extreme loss associated with it that she did with Jamaica (where her sister and father died) or India (where she lost George Barker). Additionally her time in New Zealand was melancholy for her because she was separated once again from her sons Jack and George, the memory of which would have been tempered at the time of writing *A Christmas Cake in Four Quarters* by her happiness at being reunited with them.

Whichever the cause for the tone in this section of the book, it was the favourite of critics, perhaps because of its less sombre content.

Gilderdale, Betty, *The Seven Lives of Lady Barker*, Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2009, p. 168.

Certainly New Zealand critical histories of the book such as the passage on Lady Barker in *The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature in English* are focusing on this tale when they refer to *A Christmas Cake in Four Quarters* as tempering the difficulties of settlers with humour and excitement.

Sturm, Terry, ed. *The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature in English*, Auckland: Oxford University

Press, 1998, p. 529.

In a sense, in the way that Lady Barker couches the darker tales inside “Christmas Day in Jamaica” and “Christmas Day in India” by following them with more light-hearted and silly stories, “Christmas Day in New Zealand” is a more cheerful tale to follow the darker two, and ends the book without the sense of loss provided by the other two tales. Unlike the other quarters of the book, “A Christmas Day in New Zealand” does not return to the English Christmas of the linking narrative at its end, but is the finish to the book as a whole, ending *A Christmas Cake in Four Quarters* with a melancholy description of the “lonely valley of the Malvern Hills” (304), an interesting choice in that it further gives a very different and less cheerful and more adult style to this section of the book. New Zealand of course was not the last place overseas that Lady Barker would spend a Christmas, and while there isn’t a direct sequel to *A Christmas Cake in Four Quarters*, readers can look to her later books for further details of other aspects of her life around the world.

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*Ribbon Stories*, Macmillan, London, 1872.  
*Station Amusements in New Zealand*, Wm Hunt, London, 1873.  
*Holiday Stories for Boys and Girls*, Routledge, London, 1873.  
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*First Lessons in the Principles of Cooking*, Macmillan, London, 1874.  
*Boys*, Routledge, London, 1874.  
*This Troublesome World*, Hatchards, London, 1874.  
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# Christmas in New Zealand—The Shepherd's Story.—p. 295

*A Christmas Cake In Four Quarters*

By Lady Barker Author of "Stories About:—" "Ribbon Stories," Etc.)

## A New Edition. *With Illustrations*

London and New York. Frederick Warne and Co. 1887

### List of Illustrations.

### Contents.

## Part I. *Christmas Day in England.*

### A Christmas Cake In Four Quarters.

#### Chapter I. Christmas Day in England.

ONCE upon a time there was a lady who liked telling stories to children, and once upon a time—which time exists up to this very moment—there were a great many children who liked listening. This lady used to be constantly surrounded by boys and girls in a chronic state of story-hunger; but fortunately she never seemed to tire of telling all that they wanted to hear. Indeed, to say the exact truth, I think she enjoyed these story-feasts quite as much as the children did, so everybody was pleased and lived happily ever after.

Now, if there was one time of year more than another when the demand for stories grew fast and furious, it was Christmas-time; for then the boys were all at home, and they generally brought other boys with them, whose appetite for the marvellous was quite as keen as their own, and the girls were just as bad.

No sooner had the breakfast-things been cleared away than, before the merry party dispersed, first one little voice, and then another, might be heard crying, as a parting entreaty, "You'll tell us a good long story to-night, won't you?" So whilst the children were out skating, or having a paper-chase on the common, or building a snow castle, this lady used to go to her desk and look out her old journals and note-books, in order to refresh her recollections of all those long-ago days. The children never knew how sad it sometimes made her

A reference to the feelings of Lady Barker, who, though she did tell stories to her children, and write books about her life, had lost many loved ones and lived through a great deal of sorrow.

to touch the spring on the magic door of Memory, causing it to fly open and let the now solitary woman wander at will through the empty corridors and deserted rooms of the silent Past. Yet it often happened that a little hand would steal into hers, or a delicious soft cheek be pressed against her own, when some sudden random question would revive too vividly a recollection which had once been happy, but now was sad.

Such a heap of children as she had around her on this particular Christmas Eve about which I am going to tell you! When I came into the school-room and saw her—or rather guessed she was there, for she could scarcely be seen for children—I exclaimed, "Why, you look just like the old woman in the shoe," and a half-smothered voice answered, "I really must whip them all round and send them to bed." No one took this in earnest except Baby Violet, who had an eminently practical way of regarding things; this young person waved her hand at me, and said, solemnly, "No, no, go 'way!" that being the chief extent of her vocabulary.

Violet was the ruler of the circle; what Mr. Aytoun calls "a queen by right of nature, she."

Reference to the contemporary poet William Edmonstoune Aytoun, whose poem "The Island of the Scots"

Lady Barker quoted elsewhere in reference to her feelings about living abroad: "The deep, unutterable woe which none save exiles feel." (Betty Gilderdale, *The Seven Lives of Lady Barker*, Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2009, p. 68).

It was quite impossible that she could have understood any of these stories, for she was only about two years old; but she considered it the correct thing to assist at their recital, and sat with great gravity and decorum on her Aunt's knee as long as she could keep awake. At last the lovely eyelids used to close over the bright dark eyes, and the long eyelashes droop on the round peachy cheek, whilst the firelight danced and glanced over the little curly head, bringing out wonderful flashes of gold from among its tangled mass of auburn curls. What a picture she would have made! and how good all the other children were to her! As for the boys, they were regular thralls to the little lady, who believed that their devoted service was amply repaid by a bewitching smile, and the word "Boy!" lisped out in a tone of approval. She was always enthroned in the place of honour on the story-teller's lap; whilst at her feet sat Hope, with his golden curls shining like cocoon silk as they hung down his back and rested on his little blue tunic Hope used to be rather a serious child, with deep grey eyes and a passion for adventures, to the recital of which he listened with breathless interest Then there was chubby-cheeked Georgie, who was dreadfully matter-of-fact, and acted as a check on all flights of imagination, asking perpetually at the marvellous parts, "Is it quite *puffectly* true?"

Reference to Lady Barker's son George, who preferred stories that were completely true rather than fanciful and made-up (Betty Gilderdale, *The Seven Lives of Lady Barker*, Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2009, p. 168).

That is the way these stories come to be all about true things. Georgie would not let them pass without this voucher.

On one arm of the chair perched Frank, one of the most perfect little gentlemen of my acquaintance; and on the other side sat Gerald, surnamed the Archbishop, on account of the tone in which he used to say "Amen" at prayers. It was very difficult to find any place for Jack where he could sprawl without inconveniencing the rest of the company, for if he had been a centipede his legs could hardly have appeared more numerous. His tastes were for what he called the "grim and grisly;"

Reference to Lady Barker's older son Jack who preferred stories that were darker and ghostly (Betty Gilderdale, *The Seven Lives of Lady Barker*, Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2009, p. 168).

whilst Cathy demanded incessant tales of pink or blue ghosts, considering that if they were all arrayed in spectral white they would look both ghastly and monotonous. Cathy might have sat for the portrait of the Fair One with the Golden Locks;

A painting from 1855 by Henry Harrison Martin of a beautiful young girl with blond hair (Christies: Fine Art Auctions, <http://www.christies.com/lotfinder/LotDetailsPrintable.aspx?intObjectID=4524385>, accessed May 2012).

whilst in contrast to her flaxen mane was Irish Nora's dark curly little head, never still for a second, her deep grey eyes sparkling with fun or filling with tears, as the stories changed from gay to grave and back again.

These stories used to be told in the school-room. I never could make out why that room was so called, for certainly no lessons were ever done there. It always looked cheerful and sunny, with great shelves round its walls for toys, and games, and models of boats; a large clear space in the middle for unlimited romping; whilst in the bay window stood a table and chair for Nurse. She was sitting there on this particular evening, her shaded lamp being the only one in the room; whilst the others were gathered round the fire, Jack's legs being very much in everybody's way. The room was like a bower, with its wreaths and garlands of holly and ivy. Each door and window was framed in glistening green; the bright prints shone out still brighter from their background of glossy leaves. A laurel wreath crowned the portrait of a beloved hero, near and dear to many in the room; whilst over its frame hung, worked in scarlet berries, Dickens's beautiful motto,

This quote is from from Charles Dickens's book *The Haunted Man and the Ghost's Bargain*.

"Lord, keep my memory green."The firelight flickered brightly about the room, lighting up its dark corners; and the storytelling party looked so warm and cosy that I came in and sat myself down with the children at Mrs. Owen's feet on the great bear-skin hearth-rug.

She had been telling them something about Christmas days in other lands when I joined the small party, and the boys were in full clamour for accounts of how the Great Birthday

Another way of saying Christmas, as in the birthday of Christ.

was kept in New Zealand and in Jamaica; whilst amid the impetuous demands could be heard sweet little Georgie's entreaty, "Tell us what you did when you went t'India!"

Mrs. Owen, for that was the name of the chief constructor of stories upon this occasion, promised to tell them about tropical Christmases, one by one, on the three following evenings, but said she thought it much too late to begin them that evening, when they were all so dreadfully tired from skating.

Here a chorus of voices arose, declaring that they were not a bit tired or sleepy, and that, at all events, they

must have a ghost story. So whilst the poor Scherazade of these imperious little sultans and sultanas

Reference to *One Thousand and One Nights*, a collection of Middle Eastern stories told through the central framework of the storyteller woman Scherazade.

was racking her brains for a story about ghosts which would be sufficiently horrible to be interesting, and yet not ghastly enough to frighten the children out of their wits, I began to talk to the boys about their day's amusement, in order to leave her thoughts free to search in the cupboards of her memory for a suitable tale.

All the children agreed that skating was the "jolliest fun" in the whole world. Frank and Jack avowed their fixed intention of going to live at the North Pole when they grew up, so as to ensure enough of their beloved amusement, whilst Cathy wisely said she thought Holland would be very well; but this did not sound adventurous or difficult enough for the boys, who stuck to the idea of their Arctic home. A difference of opinion soon arose, however, as to where they should live, Frank preferring to live in a ship which was to be firmly fixed among the icebergs, like the *Resolute*;

Reference to the HMS *Resolute*, a ship that became stuck in the ice of the Arctic during a voyage there. (Machine History.com, <http://www.machine-history.com/node/745>, last accessed June 2012).

whilst Jack wished to do the thing thoroughly, and live in a hut with the Esquimaux.

Another word for Eskimo, the older version of the indigenous people of the Arctic who are more commonly referred to in modern day as "Inuits" (University of Alaska: Alaska Native Language Center, "Inuit or Eskimo: Which name to use? <http://www.uaf.edu/anlc/resources/inuit-eskimo/>, last accessed June 2012).

As I dreaded lest a battle should ensue upon this subject, I hastened to change the conversation, and tell of my experiences of that day's skating. I was soon corrected by reminders that I had not been skating at all, and had only ventured on the ice in a sleigh. However, I offered to tell the children of the dreadful fright whilst in my chair.

I had been down during the afternoon to the lake, which was more than a mile long, and about half a mile wide; and I walked up and down its shores for some time, looking on at the gay crowd skimming over its smooth, well-swept surface. I admired a young Russian lady and her brother, wrapped up to their very noses in furs, who had been skating all day, as if they did not possess mortal ankles apt to ache after an hour or two on the ice. They skimmed along like swallows on the wing, so swift and easy were their movements. If they fell, their fall was not the dull thud with which others came crashing down on the ice, but a light dip, as the swallows stoop for a fly; and then, before you could realize that they had stopped, up and off again they flew with graceful gliding movement. One end of the lake was set aside for small boys to slide on, and there I went to see Georgie who reminded me of a tiny brown bear in his

## "He slid away merrily with the rest of them."—p. 13

shaggy great-coat, with his little red paws stuffed into his pockets. He slid away merrily with the best of them, his small round knob of a nose shining like a cherry, and his bright eyes twinkling again with fun and happiness. Every now and then he, or some other boy, would come down with a bump on the ice, which you felt certain *must* break either it or their bones. But no such thing happened; the monkey was up and on his feet again, sliding away as if he were made of india-rubber,

Another name for natural rubber (*Merriam Webster Dictionary*, online edition, last accessed July 2012).

instead of ordinary flesh and blood. Some boys were playing hockey on the ice, and very nervous work it must have been, with the danger of blows from a heavy stick added to the perils of an uncertain footing.

Then there were ladies, venturing for the first time on the frozen surface, with spick and span new skates fastened on dainty little boots worn with the gayest of stockings. These toilettes were rather too smart to be workman-like, but it was well that all the arrangements about the *chaussure*

Both "toilettes" and "chaussure" are references to the footwear of the ladies ("chaussure" meaning footwear) (*Merriam Webster Dictionary*, online edition, last accessed July 2012) as described in the text on page 14 as "natty boots and new skates".

were so pretty, for the public saw a good deal *of* it, as every moment a shrill scream prefaced the appearance of these natty boots and new skates sticking straight up in the air!

I had noticed one poor lady especially, who was attempting to walk on skates, just as she would do without them. I felt very sorry for her, but it was impossible to help laughing at her evident wretchedness. She must have made a vow to cross the ice. or else she would have turned back at once, for her difficulties began before she had gone any distance. She had two supporters, her husband and her brother, I believe, but they were quite as unsteady as she was. The anxious, terrified faces of all three skaters were enough to upset any one's gravity. Still they valiantly proceeded for about four yards, when suddenly the respectable middle-aged gentleman, who we imagined to be her husband, suddenly dipped forward, for no reason that the spectators could discover, and ran along on his hands and skates for a little way. This mode of progression tore his nice warm woollen gloves

all to pieces, and he looked very cross and angry when some friendly stranger picked him up by his coat-collar and set him on his feet, where he swayed back and forwards like a pendulum. All this time the lady found standing still so difficult that she attempted to strike boldly out. The effect of this was to send her flat on her back, where she lay shrieking and kicking, whilst her relatives made useless efforts to pick her up. I am sure they must have hurt her dreadfully with their skates, for I saw her receive several involuntary kicks from them; and I believe she would have been still in the same position if the young Russian lady had not come swiftly and gracefully, with long swinging skate-steps, to her rescue. The poor prostrate lady clung to the little fur gauntlet which was extended to her, until I thought its owner must have been pulled over, but the stranger was once more raised to her feet, where she tried hard to balance herself. She looked very cold and miserable, and held tightly on to her two protectors, although she had surely found out by this time that they were worse than useless.

After two or three minutes spent in trying to recover her breath, and in receiving most perplexing and contradictory advice from everyone, she made another attempt to get on. I heard a very encouraging chorus of "That's it!" as she set forth once more; but that evidently was *not* it, for suddenly she relinquished her convulsive grasp of her husband's hand—he immediately began to sway preparatory to falling again on his hands and knees—flung her arms round her brother's neck, who naturally staggered under the sudden embrace, and, with a series of piercing screams, she fairly knocked him down and fell over him. I was glad to see that, at all events, she was uppermost, and therefore not so likely to be hurt; when her husband came, head first, floundering down on the heap, wildly digging his sharp skates into those he meant to help. The spectators laughed dreadfully, but it really was very dangerous, and the polite old head-gardener of the beautiful demesne

A demesne was a name for a part of land of a greater estate (*Merriam Webster Dictionary*, online edition, last accessed July 2012).

where the lake lay, came up with a Windsor chair,

A style of wooden chair that the gardener would have been offering to give the lady something to balance on the ice with.

which he suggested the poor lady should push before her. Oh, how she thanked him! she grasped her chair and pulled herself up by it whilst he steadied it; then she tidied her hat, and, shoving her chair before her, like a baby learning to walk, set forth with a smiling face. But, alas! her troubles were not over; for as the game of hockey swept past her, a dexterous blow from a mischievous boy-player sent her chair spinning away like a top, twirling round as it went, and the poor lady sat plump down on the ice, where I left her, ruefully gazing at her vanishing support. The gardener and her friends were cautiously approaching her, so I hope they picked her up. Later in the day I saw her very smiling and radiant on the bank, declaring she had enjoyed her first attempt at skating very much. Her husband did not appear so happy; I suspect he was very black and blue. The poor man happened to have a hooked nose, so some one whispered to me—"Did he not look just like a parrot who was going to have a fit and tumble off its perch, when he swayed about in that way before coming down head foremost?"

I laughed and walked off to another part of the lake, to watch the pretty daughter of our Rector practising by herself on a clear space sheltered by a miniature island from the ever-increasing crowd. Agnes Murray would have done as a study for a portrait of the Goddess of Winter, if there be such a divinity in Pagan lore. I am afraid, however, those old dwellers in sunny lands would not have appreciated the low temperature necessary for Miss Murray's favourite sport, but to our Northern eyes she seemed beautiful. Fresh and blooming as a flower, with the child-look still lingering in her laughing eyes, she skated like a sunbeam glancing over the mirror-smooth floor. I joined her mother on the bank, and we stood silently admiring—with that admiration which is at once love and a prayer—the joyous girl-form as it flitted about, bending first to one side and then to the other, as the swing of her lithe shapely body sent her skimming on. Suddenly there dashed round the wooded corner of the island a devouring monster in the shape of a handsome young Australian, whom we had remarked early in the day for his bronzed, healthy face, long brown beard, and general air of being quite at home—not with a vulgar at-home-ishness, but with the simple absence of *mauvaise honte*

In French this means shame or bashfulness (*Merriam Webster Dictionary*, online edition, last accessed July 2012).

peculiar to dwellers-in regions where everyone is sure of being a welcome guest. Mrs. Murray and I shrieked; our feelings were akin to those of two hens who have hatched ducklings, and see a watery danger threatening their beloved foster children. Our warning cry was too late, neither of the skaters could stop themselves—though I shall always think that young Australian only made-believe to try—and poor dear Agnes dashed right into his outstretched arms, flinging both her own around him, whilst her rosy glowing face disappeared altogether in his great beard.

It was a very pretty but a very improper sight, and I began to fear that matters might become further complicated by a tumble; however, the Victorian was as firm as a rock on his skates, and he soon contrived to

regain his balance and restore Agnes to hers; but I particularly noticed that he found it necessary to keep his strong arm round her little waist all the time he was making the most earnest apologies, to which Agnes was much too frightened to listen. At last he released her, and, raising his Scotch cap, turned lightly round and sped away. Agnes flew rather than skated up to us on the bank, and cried breathlessly—

"Oh, Mamma! I could not help it"

"I don't suppose you could, my dear," said Mrs. Murray; "but you had better come off the ice now, and rest a little"—an order which poor Agnes obeyed rather ruefully, for it seemed hard that she should be thus punished for her little mishap.

The children were highly amused at the recital of the various adventures, but still they would not let me off the account of my own particular trouble; so I had to give it at full length, and describe how I was wandering rather disconsolately alone on the shore of the lake—for all my charges were on the ice, very hot and very happy—when a friend, who I knew skated beautifully, came up, pushing a low arm-chair mounted on skates before him. He invited me to take a drive, and I was quickly wrapped up in a beautiful rug made of ostrich skins sewn together—only the long tail-feathers being absent—and gliding away as swiftly as anyone. This, indeed, seemed to be skating made easy, and was just suited to my courage and strength, when I observed, rather with horror, that my guide was pushing me towards a part of the lake where the ice was known to be thinner and less safe, and where a large board with the word DANGEROUS on it warned people off.

"Oh! Mr. Paul," I cried, "don't go there"

"It's all right," was Mr. Paul's answer, "if we go very quickly;" and we sped on swiftly. The wind was in our faces, and, at the rate we were going, my breath was fairly taken away. Just as we had reached the middle of the dangerous part, I remembered with horror to have heard that the lake was deepest there; and as the thought of its cold dark waters flashed across me, I heard a sudden loud report on the ice, like a pistol going off behind my chair, which at the same moment was violently twirled round in a pirouette, and I found myself—in a confused heap of wraps—on the ice. I gave everything up for lost, and expected to feel the icy waters every moment; but as I remained quite dry and warm, I took courage to raise my head from my rugs and peep out. There I saw that wicked Mr. Paul laughing immoderately, and coming towards me, trying to recover his gravity sufficiently to apologize. The ice was not broken at all, and the noise I had heard was caused *by* dropping some gimlets out of his pocket, and they had made this ringing crack which frightened me so much. He had been startled himself and jerked my chair, which he let go suddenly to pick up his gimlets, causing a twirl and sending me spinning half-a-dozen yards off. I crawled ignominiously to the island and re-embarked from the other side; we reached the shore in safety; but I may truly say I was nearly frightened out of my life.

All the children were by this time so clamorous for the ghost story, that I was compelled to assume the position of a listener; and while Mrs. Owen nestled Violet more comfortably on her lap, so that the little woman might go to sleep at her ease, the others drew still closer around, their eager faces all turned upwards towards the lady's bent head and their bright eyes gazing earnestly upon her kind face.

"Is it really and truly a ghost story?" they asked.

"Yes, dears; that is to say, it was told me by one of the ladies to whom it happened, and it may fairly be called a ghost story, inasmuch as the ghosts which it describes frightened everybody out of their wits, which is exactly what real ghosts are supposed to do."

Frank and Jack were just on the point of arguing the question as to whether this preamble promised a "proper ghost story," when Mrs. Owen raised her hand for silence; and this is the story she told us as we sat round the fire that darkening Christmas Eve.

## Chapter II. Christmas Day in England (*continued*).

A GHOST story ought not to begin with a wedding, and yet this must do so, for nothing extraordinary would have happened if Mr. Delaware had not married Lady Gertrude Lawrence one fine autumn morning long ago, and directly after the gay breakfast started for one of his own places in the north. They had made their plans so well that by the time the grouse were ready to be driven, a sufficient number of weeks had passed over the heads of both bride and bridegroom to allow them the sanction of public opinion in summoning their friends and relatives to assist in slaughtering the poor birds; and as Delaware Castle had been famous in the good old times for the hospitality of its interior arrangements, and the abundance of fur and feathered game outside its grey stone walls, everybody came joyfully at its master's invitation.

There was a great bustle of preparations upstairs and downstairs, and beautiful Lady Gertrude thought she was quite oppressed with the cares of such a large establishment, and the worries of married life, when the fat old housekeeper asked to see her ladyship twice in the same day, though it was merely to inform the young bride what arrangements she—Mrs. Mathers—had made for the reception of the guests. The weighty question of the respective merits of the chintz-room and the tapestry-room occupied quite half-an-hour. Lady Gertrude

pleaded hard that her invalid mother might have the first-named room, with its bright out-look on the park, and the distant oak-woods all dappled with golden and russet tints, but Mrs. Mathers could not entertain the idea for a moment. The tapestry-room had the grandest furniture and the loftiest walls, and into that the bride's mother must be put. It never would do to show any want of respect to the sick Countess on this, her first visit to her daughter's new home; so when Lady Gertrude sighed, and said, "I'll think about it, Mrs. Mathers," that stately personage knew her arguments had prevailed, and went on to discuss, or rather to state, who were to occupy the pink and blue rooms, the fuchsia rooms, the bird-rooms, and so on.

All this time Mr. Delaware was equally busy downstairs in his gun-room, laying in a-stock of cartridges sufficient to have defended the castle against a troop of Uhlans

The Uhlans were Prussian cavalry (*Merriam Webster Dictionary*, online edition, last accessed July 2012). for a month, and seeing to the polishing and cleaning-up of weapons enough to shoot all the grouse in Northumberland. He made light of his wife's cares when she complained to him how heavily they weighed on her, and said, "Nonsense, Gerty; I'll tire them out so thoroughly after the birds, that they won't care where you put them to sleep or what you give them to eat."

But this seemed very heartless to Lady Gertrude, and, with a dim perception that dear Percy did not understand these things, she went off into her conservatory. Of course when the eventful Monday morning arrived, and the guests began to drop in by fours, and even fives, all through the bright brisk day, everything was in perfect order; and, like the fairy tale of the "White Cat,"

A fairy tale written by Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy (1650-1705) which included servants that were invisible. (Heidi Anne Heiner, *SurLaLune Fairy Tales*, <http://www.surlalunefairytales.com/authors/aulnoy/1892/whitecat.html>, last accessed June 2012).

the visitors seemed to be waited on by invisible attendants, so smoothly did the wheels of daily life run over the well-laid rails. Lady Gertrude felt as if she had done it all herself, whereas there would have been no difference in the comfort or beauty of the domestic arrangements if she had spent her time scampering her pony over the moors. The head keeper's consultations with Mr. Delaware ended by that functionary securing his own way in everything, and reducing his master unconsciously to the most abject submission.

It must have been about the second evening after the house was thoroughly well filled from attic to basement, that Mr. Delaware sauntered up to his wife after dinner, and said—

"Oh, by the way, Gerty, you used to be always bothering me about the old stories and things belonging to this place when we first came here, and I told you then, if you remember, that Aunt Isabel was the right person to go to for what you wanted to know. Here she is; now I advise you to find out all about it from her. There's nothing she likes better than talking of all the nonsense she picked up from the old servants here in my poor father's time."

Lady Gertrude's face brightened as she rose and said—

"Aunt Isabel only came just before dinner, and I've hardly had a moment to speak to her; take me to her now, and we'll soon 'make friends,' as the children say."

Aunt Isabel did not look at all as if she liked to feast her mind upon ghostly tales, for her appearance was deliriously comfortable; she was rather short and fat, with a trim neat figure, and the sweetest face in the world; a complexion like tissue paper, so clear and delicate, and large soft dark eyes. When you add to this description abundance of beautiful bright silvery hair, you can fancy what a picturesque old lady she must have been. Very softhearted and yet sensible; generous to lavishness, and yet no one could impose upon her easily. We must not forget her dress in our sketch; it was a wonder and a delight to all her own sex, for it was always sufficiently in the fashion not to be remarked for any great peculiarities, and yet she contrived to preserve an artistic individuality all her own. Such was the aunt who received her new niece with the brightest smile on her gentle lips and in her kind eyes, as Lady Gertrude came up to her corner of the sofa, holding her husband's arm.

"Here's Gertrude come to hear some of your old stories, Aunt Isabel," said Mr. Delaware: "she's a dreadful child for ghosts, and you won't have any peace until you have told her every word you know about the Castle's history."

"Very well, my dear, I'll talk to her as long as she likes to listen, and I think it's very proper she should know all about her new home. It's a great pity the stories belonging to a place like this are so soon forgotten, now-a-days, for many of them were very pretty. I know many tales of devotion, and courage, and loyalty which are bound up in the word-of-mouth history of this old house, but you young people don't care a pin for them; you prefer a horrid sensational novel or a nasty French play. I'm sure their scenes are much more improbable than any of my legends, and yet you believe every word as your eyes gallop over the pages; whereas if I were to tell you of one of your ancestors getting out of that window to go for help to the king's army in the time of the troubles, I believe, Percy, that you would send directly for a two-foot rule to measure the height, and then tell me, 'It couldn't be done for the money, Aunt Isabel.'"

Lady Gertrude hastened to soothe the dear old family chronicler by assurances that her ears were open, and

her mind a sheet of blank paper to receive all that she could possibly tell her about the Castle, and the two ladies made a solemn appointment to meet in Lady Gertrude's dressing-room and have an old-time chat that very night after everyone had gone to their rooms. The younger lady was quite as impatient for the arrival of the tryst as she had been only a few weeks before for the time when Percy could come for a walk or a ride with her, and the hours had just such leaden feet to her impatient mind.

At last the down-stairs good-nights were kissed and said, Lady Gertrude's maid was dismissed, and the two ladies ensconced themselves in armchairs drawn close to a wood-fire. Lady Gertrude turned down the lamp on pretence of shading her eyes, but really to suit the gloom of what she hoped would prove horrible old legends. Aunt Isabel smiled at all these preparations, and said—

"My dear child, I am afraid you will be sadly disappointed at my stories; there are several very interesting historical ones connected with the old Castle, but I have a shrewd suspicion that you want to hear about something dreadful, and I really don't know anything very bad."

It was a sight to see the way Lady Gertrude's face fell as the cheery old lady said these words. It resembled a child's in its expression of rueful disappointment. Here was she prepared to sup full of horrors, and now to be put off with such a dry mouthful as historical reminiscences! She nearly cried, and Aunt Isabel could not help laughing outright as her niece answered, with clasped hands and earnest face—

"Oh, Aunt Isabel, don't you know *one* little ghost story? Surely there must be a ghost about the Castle; there always is one in old places—only don't let it ring bells or clank chains, please; anything else does not signify."

"Well, Gertrude, the only ghost I ever heard of here, does not indulge in either of those amusements. You see, she always leaves a hundred years or so between her visits, and she only appears when a new queen comes to reign over us at Delaware, so perhaps she has already paid her visit whilst you were fast asleep, and you have probably lost your chance of seeing your solitary ghost."

Lady Gertrude's face brightened considerably as she heard of the traditionary appearance of a friendly ghost, for she had really begun to think that there was no such thing at Delaware. Her spirits rose with her improved prospects, and Aunt Isabel made her quite happy by telling her how, a thousand years or so ago—it is no use being particular to a century in a ghost story—the daughter of a neighbouring border-chieftain had been turned out of her father's castle by her brothers, on the death of the head of the house.

The story did not say why the lady was sent adrift in so summary a way, but it could not have been for the usual reason of a love affair with a handsome squire of low degree, for the dame in question was what we should call in these days strong-minded. Handsome she must have been, and stately, but of a certain age, much given to prophesy, without being at all particular as to hurting other people's feelings. The probabilities are, that she made herself extremely disagreeable at home; but whatever her faults may have been, it was a strong measure to turn the poor spinster out into the dark and cold of a winter's evening. The exposure affected her health and appearance to such a degree, that although she found a shelter from the weather in Delaware Castle before twenty-four hours had passed over her head she was never the same person again. Instead of being voluble, she was silent; her bustling activity gave place to slow and stately movements, which formerly were only assumed on the occasion of high festivals, but now were her only gait. Doubtless the poor lady dated her rheumatism from that night's houseless misery, but she never dreamt of acknowledging her sufferings, and took refuge in these deliberate, slow steps, to conceal her altered health. Almost the first request she made when she came to herself, under the influence of Delaware hospitality, was to be furnished with suitable attire, for her own garments were sadly dragged and torn during her wanderings.

The Baron of Delaware was no niggard, and his dame and her daughters had chests of brave kirtles and wimples and feminine finery stowed away safely. From these hoards, Dame Alicia was arranged in apparel suitable to her rank and upbringing, and she was clad in borrowed plumes during the short remainder of her life. Never was a loan so richly repaid; everything prospered about Delaware from that time forth; all went well, from the alliances of its fair daughters and stalwart sons, down to the increase of the flocks and herds. No unscrupulous neighbour troubled its home; no greedy or needy sovereign pounced upon its hoarded wealth. Dame Alicia blessed it from the weathercock on the tower down to the lowest dungeon; she could not have been a bad old woman, to be so grateful for what, after all, was an act of the commonest charity in taking her in, but grateful she certainly appeared. It was not her way to speak much, unless, indeed, when her temper used to get the better of her; but she never ceased praying for her benefactors.

One unpleasant peculiarity she possessed, and that was of silently gliding out of her room, whenever she heard any of the family passing, and appearing in the hall with upraised hand, signing the holy sign

The cross over the chest, commonly used by Catholics and Anglicans. The "Latin invocation of all good gifts" that follows in the text here is therefore likely a prayer.

, and murmuring a Latin invocation of all good gifts. Many a time and oft has she startled the burly old Baron, by suddenly, confronting him as he was crossing the corridors, with perhaps rather an unsteady step, and standing before him, signing the cross and muttering rapid prayers. The old gentleman did not quite like this

mode of showing gratitude, and indeed it must have been somewhat trying to his nerves. As for the housemaids, they would not have gone through that hall, except when the bright sunlight was streaming into it through the open door, for all the wealth of the Castle. They came in for blessings too, which the silly wenches dreaded as much as if they had been the most bitter maledictions; and in spite of Dame Alicia's earnest and unceasing prayers for the welfare of all under the roof which had succoured her in her utmost need, it was a relief to everyone when the poor, ill-used' old woman made a most edifying end, and was laid in a vault in the old chapel, with every holy rite and observance.

The room which she had occupied during her stay in the Castle, was the one that is now called the armoury, but was then used as an entrance hall. When the poor lady had been borne in there, three years before, by the Baron's strong arms, it was only a sort of withdrawing chamber, and on its rush-strewn floor she had then been laid whilst a pallet was hastily prepared by the women of the household. For three days and three nights the patient had raved and tossed and moaned, but that sickness seemed to have purged her violent temper out of her, for she never alluded to her kinsmen's ill-treatment; and when she recovered a measure of health and strength, she prayed to be allowed to live and die in the spot where she had so painfully struggled back to existence. In this chamber, called now the Dame's room, she died peacefully, with kind faces and tender pitiful hearts around her at the last.

The day before her death, she whispered to the Baron, "Nor scaith nor harm from fire or water shall ever touch these walls."

"Well you know," said Aunt Isabel, "how often the comparatively modern additions to the Castle have been burned, and yet the fire never reaches that old part! Certainly, the thickness of the stone walls may have something to do with it; but we, in these parts, firmly believe that Dame Alicia's benison is your true fire-annihilator.

"So you see, Gerty," concluded Aunt Isabel, "that your only ghost is a lucky ghost, and has nothing to do with chains and bells. Are you satisfied, child? What makes you look so serious?"

"I am thinking, Aunt Isabel, that we *ought* really to be more grateful to poor Dame Alicia than we seem to be; I wish there was a portrait of her in the gallery."

"Oh! there is a picture painted by that clever young Thornhill; but it hangs in the large breakfast room, which you so seldom use. I told him the legend a few years ago, and he thought, much as you do, that the barons of Delaware were not half thankful enough to the old lady for her constant benisons, so he got Alice Leigh to put on a costume which was really not very unlike the dress Dame Alicia might have worn, and she sat to him for a portrait. It is a very good picture at all events, and well painted. I helped Alice with her dress; we hunted up the most wonderful stores and copied the old engravings as closely as we could. The costume is in a coffer somewhere still, I have no doubt Alice wore it at a fancy ball here in your father-in-law's time."

Lady Gertrude was silent for a moment or two, and then said, "But what is it about her haunting the place? Is she ever seen now?"

"Well, people declare that she has been seen, and quite lately too. When poor dear Mary Delaware came home as a bride, there was a great uproar, I remember, because some person crossing that old armoury one moonlight night about nine or ten o'clock—long before the proper time for ghosts to come out and walk—vowed that they heard, as well as saw, the door of the Dame's room open, and a tall, stately figure come forth, with uplifted right hand and solemn prayerful face; and for weeks afterwards the maids used to scurry-across the armoury, as if all the old suits of armour had goblin knights inside them and were at their heels. Your father-in-law had the position of some of the effigies changed, in order to let more light into the hall; Sir Guy was moved from his old place in front of a window, and he now stands just before the Dame's door."

"Is there room to pass, Aunt Isabel? I mean, can you get in and out of that old room?"

"I daresay you can, dear, but I never tried. Why do you want to know?"

Lady Gertrude had been standing thoughtfully before the fire, holding first one foot and then the other up to its comforting blaze, but she now turned away with a sudden bright smile, and knelt down by the old lady, putting her arms round her neck and whispering—

"Because I have an idea, dear Auntie, but I must see what Percy thinks of it before I tell you what it is."

"That is a pretty way of letting me know you don't want to hear any more about Dame Alicia to-night. Well, I am quite willing to cease storytelling for the present, and I think you have let me off rather easily, for it is not much past twelve, I fancy—so, good night, dear."

## Chapter III. Christmas Day in England (*continued*).

ALL the next day the fair Chatelaine of Delaware

Chatelaine meaning "lady of the manner" (*Merriam Webster Dictionary*, online edition, last accessed July

2012).

moved about among her guests with an air of intense pre-occupation; but even a child could have seen that her thoughts were not sad, for every now and then a bright smile lighted up her face. She avoided the noisy groups as much as possible, and spent a good deal of her time in her own morning-room, giving as a faint excuse, when leaving the breakfast table, that she had letters to write. Mr. Delaware mischievously reminded her that all her principal correspondents were at that moment in the castle; but his wife did not venture to run the risk of a cross-examination, and contented herself with giving him a look of mingled entreaty and reproach as she closed the door of the breakfast-room.

By dinner-time Lady Gertrude had evidently solved the problem which had puzzled her all the morning, for her eyes were as bright as little Nora's here; whilst her glowing cheeks and joyous manner gave an air of triumphant happiness to her whole bearing. Aunt Isabel watched her new niece with affectionate admiration, and said more than once to herself, "I had no idea the child was so pretty. Ah! well, happiness is a great beautifier, and she certainly seems to have everything in the world to make her happy."

When bed-time came, Lady Gertrude pounced upon Aunt Isabel, bore her off to her dressing-room, and installed her in an arm-chair, before which Gerty knelt down and exclaimed, laughing at the old lady's breathless bewilderment at this sudden raid upon her trim little person, "Oh! Aunt Isabel, it's my idea!"

"Bless the child," gasped Aunt Isabel, "is it her idea to smother me outright? Why, there's my cap over one eye like a tipsy cook; and as for my poor lace shawl, I believe a bit of it is hanging on every balustrade all the way upstairs."

"Never mind, Auntie, you shall have two lace shawls, if only you will help me to dress up as Dame Alicia! They were talking about getting up some *tableaux*

*Tabeleaux*, from the French "tableau vivant" meaning "living picture" (*Merriam Webster Dictionary*, online edition, last accessed July 2012), was a reinactment of a literary or historical scene done by dressing in costume and posing completely silent and still. Here the lady of the story compares her ghostly practical joke to a historical tableau.

next week, but this would be better than anything, wouldn't it?"

"Well, my dear, if you don't mind frightening your guests out of their lives, and shattering the nerves of all the new servants, I daresay you might play them a trick; but for my part I'm rather afraid of practical jokes; they generally end by hurting some one."

"Oh! Aunt Isabel, this isn't a practical joke in the very least; it's only an historical *tableau*. I'm sure Dame Alicia would like to know she is remembered, and that we are very grateful to her for all her kindness to us. Besides which, Percy says I may do just what I like."

"Poor dear Percy! he does, does he? that seems very weak-minded on his part."

"Oh no, Aunt Isabel, it's quite right, I assure you—why, I do everything I can to please him, so of course he gives me a little amusement now and then."

Aunt Isabel smiled, and stroked her niece's soft hair, for in those days hair was so arranged that it could be smoothed by a caressing hand; now there must be some new substitute for tKat old, loving, lingering touch: the boldest lover would hardly dare to lay a finger on the elaborate curls and puffs of a modern *coiffure*. However, as ours is not such a very modern story, we can imagine the dear old lady's little withered hand resting on her new niece's glossy braids, and Lady Gertrude looking up in her face with the most coaxing expression as she said this. In Aunt Isabel's heart, Percy already stood excused for his softness, but she only replied, "How can I help you? Am I to pretend to be dreadfully frightened, and faint away when you appear; or what part am I to take in the performance of Dame Alicia by a wild, naughty girl who is not a bit like her in any way?"

"Now, Aunt Isabel, I am really in earnest, and you can help me a great deal if you will only be nice about it. First of all, I must tell you the idea came into my head when you spoke of assisting Alice Leigh to arrange a dress in which to sit for the picture; then I have had a good look at that portrait, and nothing can be simpler than the costume. It could be made in a day, for it's only straight up and down white draperies, and black coif and lappets—something like a nun's dress. The great difficulty would be making myself look old and sad; and that is just where Mr. Thornhill has failed, for you can see Alice is laughing all the time, and doesn't look a bit rapt or dreamy."

"Alice certainly makes too blooming a Dame Alicia," replied Aunt Isabel, "and yet she is so fond of acting the character. You must not let her know you're going to dress up in her favourite costume, or she would immediately beg you to allow her to play the trick, whatever it is to be. Remember, you have not told me yet what you intend to do as soon as you have made yourself into the likeness of the poor old Dame."

"I'm coming to that, Aunt Isabel, but of course the costume is the first thing to be thought of. I won't go at all by Mr. Thornhill's picture; I will make out something in the same style for myself, and even *you* shall not see it beforehand. So much will depend on the moonlight and the armour, and the echoes in that old hall, to make me look like a real ghost I am sure not to remind anybody in the least of Dame Alicia whilst only

standing before my glass in her dress, with Payne fussing about me."

"My dear Gertrude, I don't want to see you beforehand: I want to try and get up a little surprise and astonishment at the proper time; but supposing that you and Payne between you, manage to turn yourself into the exact image of what the Dame must have been, what is to come next?"

"Next, Aunt Isabel, I will steal softly down the old staircase into the armoury, and hide myself in the Dame's room. By the way, I think I shall take Payne with me to keep me company, and she shall bring down a rug for us to stand on, for stone floors are very cold. Dame Alicia had rushes, you know."

"Yes, I know, my dear. Nasty, uncomfortable things they must have been, always sticking to the skirts of those long, trailing garments old-time people wore. But what is to happen after you and Payne have made yourselves comfortable in the Dame's room?"

"Now, dear, dear Aunt Isabel, this is where you are to help me," said Lady Gertrude, giving a most energetic hug to the old lady: "I want you to make some excuse to bring all the people into the armoury to-morrow night. After the gentlemen come in from dinner will be the best time, I think. I won't be in the dining-room; Percy shall not ask any questions—at least I'll beg him not to do so; but if he or any one else inquires after me, you must just say I have gone to bed."

"I'm to lead off with a tremendous fib, am I, Gerty? We will find a good excuse for you, at all events, but I don't think it will be so difficult to do that as it will be to decoy all your guests away from the bright fire and the warm drawing-room, into that cold draughty old hall. They'll think me mad for suggesting such a thing."

Gerty's piteous expression of face at this unexpected difficulty at the outset was sad to behold. She judged others by her romantic self, and fancied every one could quite as easily be induced to come and look at some old armour by moonlight; this thought, however, fortunately led to the suggestion that Aunt Isabel should use all her eloquence during the next day to get up some enthusiasm among the young people on the subject of armour as seen under the rays of a harvest moon. So the conspirators separated that night, resolved to play into each other's hands during the whole of the following day.

Aunt Isabel and Lady Gertrude looked guiltily at each other next morning, when during breakfast Mr. Delaware commenced a conversation with Miss Leigh about the Castle, which very soon turned upon the beauty of various suits of armour in the old hall. Alice responded enthusiastically, and both the old and young deceivers found their proposed task much lightened before the large party separated for the day's occupations; the last words they uttered were—

"Well, if it be moonlight to-night, we will all come and look at the armour."

"Oh yes," said Alice eagerly, "I know there is a moon, for it was shining splendidly over the park when I came down to dinner yesterday; it is nearly full moon, I fancy."

Aunt Isabel questioned her niece about Mr. Delaware's sudden mania for moonlight and armour, which was so very unlike his usual satirical chaff at anything not strictly practical, but Lady Gertrude denied having asked him to help her in any way, declaring she should have thought it useless trouble; however, she said it was a very fortunate chance, and went off to prepare her Dame's toilette in the most unghostly high spirits. Even Aunt Isabel felt what she called fluttery all day, and longed to know how Gertrude was getting on with the draperies, but the young lady did not show herself until dinner was announced, when she appeared, with so calm and unconcerned an air, that long before the real play began, Aunt Isabel was lost in admiration of her capabilities of acting. It was quite remarkable to notice how smoothly everything seemed arranged for the conspiracy; indeed they afterwards acknowledged that such fatal smoothness ought to have aroused their suspicions. When the ladies came into the drawing-room, Lady Gertrude slipped away, and Aunt Isabel did her best to supply the hostess's place, but she had time for a glance of dismay at Alice Leigh, who said boldly—

"I will run up to my room, and see if there is a good moon."

Aunt Isabel thought to herself, "She will meet Gertrude on the stairs, if she goes the back way;" but the gentlemen appeared much earlier than usual from their wine and walnuts, so the old lady had enough to do in watching that no one slipped away too soon to the armoury. Percy had disappeared after a glance round the room; but before he went he whispered to Aunt Isabel—

"I'm going to see after Gerty; bring them all to the armoury in half an hour's time exactly: that will be eleven o'clock; they'll all come easily enough, I've worked up their feelings."

Aunt Isabel laughed and nodded, and the fun and chatter went on merrily till eleven o'clock struck, when she exclaimed—

"We must really go and see the armour by moonlight; if we don't come now, it will be too late. I daresay Percy has gone to tell the servants to open the shutters, and to put out the lamps. Let us come!"

Nothing could be more unanimous than the expression of the general enthusiasm, and all rose to follow the active old lady. She had made a compromise with her conscience for her duplicity by trying to prevent any evil consequences from it, and there lay piled on a table in the ante-room a large soft heap of shawls, scarves, burnouses, and all sorts of wraps; the elderly ladies blessed her in their hearts as they each selected one, and in

high good-humour they followed the little guiding figure through corridors and unused ante-rooms, until at last, with a most effective clang, she flung open a low, vaulted oak door, all studded with iron bosses, and the company entered a rather narrow, high, old hall, lighted from the top by windows which had been pierced in its massive stone walls at a comparatively recent date. Before these had been made, the only light must have struggled in through slits or loopholes, barely sufficient to enable a person to see at all. The Lord of Delaware, therefore, who collected all the suits of family armour with much care and trouble, had been forced to add upper windows to admit light by which to admire the beautiful mail-clad figures. All the guests paused in wonder and delight at the weird, ghost-like appearance of the scene. There stood the motionless effigies of the former warriors of the house, still, as it seemed, keeping watch over its buried past. On the walls hung many a dented cuirass and battered helmet, all of strange old-time shapes. There were buff coats of the Commonwealth pattern,

In the style of the uniform of the British Commonwealth.  
laced and skirted uniforms of Marlborough's campaigns,

A reference to John Churchill, the first Duke of Marlborough (1650-1722) who was a famous General of the British army (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, online edition, last accessed July 2012).  
and, last of all, the blood-stained regimentals with one epaulet cleft through, which had been taken off the dead body of one of the four Colonel Delawares who had fought at Waterloo. The moonlight streamed broad and strong over these trophies, lighting up all the projecting parts of halbert and crested helm, and casting deep shadows wherever its glinting beams could not penetrate.

No one spoke, but the silence was more expressive than any applause. Aunt Isabel thought nervously to herself, "Where is Gerty?" Young Thornhill said, "By Jove! I could swear I saw that suit of armour move;" but no one attended to him, for the small heavy door of the Dame's room opposite was seen to open, and from behind the shelter of Sir Guy's colossal suit of armour, glided with conventional ghostly step, a tall figure draped almost entirely' in white, with solemn upturned face, and raised right hand: it took two or three steps forward, then wavered and paused. Into the rapt dreamy eyes came suddenly an expression of human agony and fear: the outstretched hand pointed to a dark corner of the hall on the same side as that where the terrified guests stood huddled together, and with a loud sharp cry the actress fell forward on her face. Strange as it may appear, no one stirred to pick her up, not even Aunt Isabel. She felt like the old magician we read of, who only meant to call up one small spirit, and found instead that many others came uninvited; for she followed the direction of the warning finger to see standing full in a broad ray of moonlight *another* Dame Alicia, motionless as a statue, and pale as if she, too, had risen from her grave. As the frozen spectators crazed in horrified silence, this nun-like form sank slowly down in a formless heap, and lay under the strong moonbeams, as if stricken with a second death. But what were the horrors of a pair of ghosts compared to the alarm caused by three of the suits of armour beginning to move very stiffly and awkwardly towards the prostrate figures? The guests could not stand this any longer; they turned and fled, shrieking wildly as they ran. Few knew their way back to the modern part of the house, so several found themselves in the servants' offices, where their panic was communicated to the kitchen maids, and the uproar swelled by louder cries and exclamations in less refined tones.

Aunt Isabel would fain have run with the rest, but a sense of duty kept her feet from flying, though her pretty lace cap nearly rose from her head with fright when the largest and clumsiest mail-clad figure shuffled rapidly towards the first ghost, saying in choice modern English, "Hullo, this is too bad!" In the middle of her genuine terror and embarrassment, the old lady could not help laughing at the attempt of the friendly *effigy* to stoop, which resulted in its knocking itself down, as one may say, for it toppled over, and came down on the stone flags with a clash and a clang which made all the suits of armour ring again. Apparently the fate of their comrade acted as a warning to the other two knights, who were cautiously stepping out of their places, for they paused, and as stage directions say, "struck an attitude," whilst a muffled voice issued from a closed visor surmounting a colossal figure in chain armour at the other end of the hall, saying in piteous accents, "Somebody come and take me out." No one, however, attended to his supplications, as the poor ghosts required first to be looked to. Aunt Isabel managed to step quickly across the hall to the Dame's room, where at least she expected to find assistance from Payne; but although Payne was there in the body, she was far too much terrified at the unexpected turn of affairs to be able to help: she shook from head to foot, and murmured constantly, "I *did* tell my lady as it was best not to meddle with spirits." Aunt Isabel tried to arouse her by saying, "Nonsense, Payne, it's all a joke; come and help me with your lady." Payne tried to obey, but she positively could not stand; and Aunt Isabel, taking her courage in both her hands, as the French say, ventured into the deserted hall again.

It looked ghostly enough now to satisfy anyone; the pale chill moonlight shining down on the prostrate death-like forms in their respective corners, and on the vacant places from which the grim suits of armour had moved a little way. Poor Percy (for you will have guessed it was he) lay like a knight overthrown near the rigid figure of his wife; but everything put together was not so appalling to the old lady's nerves as the sight of

glassy, rolling eyes within a helm belonging to a suit which had not moved at all.' She said afterwards that she could stand everything but the sudden conviction that here was no deceit; certainly no one could have ensconced themselves within this *effigy*, for was it not well known to represent the only bad Delaware in five hundred years, the black sheep of the family chronicles? "Percy never would have allowed any tricks to have been played with that dreadful Sir Lionel's armour," Aunt Isabel said to herself; "this must really be something *not right*." The poor lady meant to say that it was probably his Satanic Majesty in person, but even in her distracted thoughts she thus mildly alluded to him. Her first impulse was to gather up her silken skirts, so as to avoid a nearer contact with the Origin of all Evil,

Other ways of saying Lucifer or Satan.

and the only word which rose to her lips in answer to a stifled murmur, accompanied by a look of the most piteous entreaty in the supposed Lucifer's eyes, was "Avaunt!"

Meaning simply "away" or "hence" (*Merriam Webster Dictionary*, online edition, last accessed July 2012). As she shrieked this word aloud Percy began to struggle in his trappings with such goodwill that some of the fastenings gave way, and he managed to disencumber himself of breastplate and helmet, and to get up. Although he confessed afterwards that he was in an awful fright himself, he could not help laughing at Aunt Isabel's terror and indecision.

She did not know which ghost claimed her cares first; the ghost she knew, or the stranger. Her instincts led her to practise the old traditional hospitality for which Delaware Castle was famous even before Dame Alicia's sad plight called it forth so largely." Hesitatingly she turned towards the silent, lonely duplicate of Dame Alicia, and said,—

"Percy, can't you get out of those ridiculous things and pick up Gerty? Just think how bad it is for her lying there on those stones. Oh! how I wish I had stopped her from playing this trick. Who on earth can this be?" cautiously approaching the second ghost "I'll tell you what, Aunt Isabel, you'd better leave it alone, and go and get assistance and lights. If you could only let my man Saunders out of Sir Lionel's iron clothes, he'd help, I'm sure." Percy turned towards the supposed Lucifer, who was shaking visibly, and continued, "Come, Saunders, the play is at an end; get out of that corner and help Miss Delaware. Ask Dr. Kingscote to step this way directly."

Lucifer shook his round iron head, and in hollow tones replied, "My nerves is that shook, Mr. Delaware, as I don't believe I'll ever get over it. I should like to leave, sir, as soon as ever you can suit yourself; as soon as possible, if you please, sir."

"You may go to-morrow for all I care Saurders," replied Mr. Delaware, "but try and be of some use now."

"I don't care about the month's wages, Mr. Delaware, I'd rather leave at once," said the abject Lucifer; "I never engaged for this treatment, and it's what I can't be expected to put up with."

Percy took no further notice of his valet's warnings, but after vainly trying to arouse poor dear Gerty from her profound insensibility, he turned to Aunt Isabel with quite a frightened air, and said, "I can make nothing of her, and the other one seems just as bad; I'd better try and find Mrs. Mathers and Kingscote." Aunt Isabel nodded, for she was too utterly mystified to be able to form a coherent sentence, and "avaunt" rose to her lips again as she saw one of the figures in chain-armour cautiously approaching her with the polite words, "Can't I be of any use, Miss Delaware?"

"Yes, come with me, Bernard," said Percy. "We'll go for some of the women to carry Lady Gertrude upstairs; that's the first thing to do."

Now Percy had not completely got rid of his wrought-steel trappings: therefore when he appeared in the housekeeper's dominions with shining greaves, and a portion of his throatlet and cuirass still fastened over his evening clothes, the maids received him with a series of piercing shrieks; whilst Mrs. Mathers waddled off to her own room, and Percy could hear her bolting and barring the door with all convenient speed.

"Good gracious, Bernard!" he cried, "it's just like a bad dream; what shall we do? Here, wait a moment till I get rid of these things, or they'll all go into fits in the drawing-room, and Kingscote will be running off to *his* bedroom like a rabbit to its hole." He seized a knife and cut away the leathern lacings of his remaining armour, whilst Bernard followed his example, and unarmed as quickly as possible; but the clang with which each portion fell on the ground as its fastenings were cut, frightened the maids nearly into convulsions. However, neither Bernard nor Percy heeded their "Oh, lawks!" "Susan, did you ever?" but leaving their steel costumes behind them on the floor of the still-room, hastened to the drawing-room, which looked so beautifully bright and warm that Percy's first thought was, "What idiots we have all been to leave this good fire and go and play such tomfool tricks!" for Percy's conscience was by no means clear. He was still quite in the dark about the second ghost, and a good deal mystified, but he had no time for connected thought; he looked pale and rather dishevelled as he beckoned to Dr. Kingscote; then as the latter turned to accompany his host, Bernard Leigh said, "Where's Alice? Has anyone seen my sister? I'm sure *she* will not be afraid to come and help poor Lady Gertrude." But no Alice answered, and young Thornhill started forward, looking every whit as anxious as

Percy, crying, "Depend upon it, Miss Leigh is the other ghost; I've been wondering where she was all the evening."

This clearing up of the character and antecedents of the duplicate Dame Alicia evidently turned the current of popular feeling, which had been ebbing rapidly away from the shore of interference, and, with a sudden revulsion of courage and energy, all the guests cried out together, "Yes, let us go and help. Of course it must be Alice Leigh!"

And so it was—her last performance in the character of Dame Alicia, however, for never again would she consent even to see the nunlike draperies which she had been so fond of wearing. It was a long time before either of the ladies could jest about the double ghosts, for they were both ill for some days, partly from cold and partly from fright. They confessed separately that each had really fancied the other to be the "genuine article;" and that this conviction, succeeding so suddenly to the alternations of hope and fear for the success of their plan, had proved too much for their nerves. In fact, as Bernard said, "It was a regular case of the biter bit; the ladies meant to frighten us, and they only frightened themselves."

Poor dear Aunt Isabel was very much shaken, and considered the chapter of accidents due to her own weakness for story-telling; she was such a darling old lady, however, that she never once said to Lady Gertrude, "I told you so;" whereas Payne contrived to convey that aggravating reproach in a thousand ways to her young mistress.

"Now, dears," said Mrs. Owen, "you must really go to bed—at least the little ones ought to do so, and I shall go upstairs to dress for dinner. No, Cathy, I won't answer any questions—well, only one. Yes, Alice Leigh *did* marry Mr. Thornhill, but it would have happened just the same even if she had never acted Dame Alicia, though Percy always vowed that she looked so pretty trying to keep her dancing eyes demure and sad, that it really *was* the Dame who made the match after all. So now you may say you know a ghost story which begins and ends with a wedding."

## Chapter IV. Christmas Day in England (*continued*).

CHRISTMAS DAY dawned as it always does in a story, but only sometimes in real-life weather. It was crisp and sparkling, bright and clear with the winter sun shining on the leaves and berries; not only on the trees, but also on the decorations of the little chapel to which we went. The roads were hard and clean: along them trudged gaily various groups bound for church, or rather chapel; for, as I have said before, the village only boasted of a tiny little building, without vestry or even pulpit, in which service was held. The bell belonging to the adjacent school-house served to call the scattered worshippers together, and on this cheery Christmas morning it tinkled under the willing hands of the blacksmith's eldest boy, as if it, too, had a voice, and was saying, "Hurrah! isn't it nice? Come along!"

Many little boys and girls are anxious to go to church on Christmas morning because they have nice new prayer-books given to them on that day, and I am afraid this was rather the case with one or two of the little children in this true story; for I noticed in more than one case beautiful velvet-covered, gilt-clasped books, which were handled with the loving reverence bestowed on a new possession. The poorer children had no such temptation, however, for they would not receive their Christmas gifts until the afternoon, when they were all bidden to assemble in the school-room. Whispers floated in the bright air of a wonderful Christmas tree reaching from the floor up to the ceiling, with branches covered with snow—so the children declared—and of "*the kind lady*" (as one of the ladies who lived near my pet village was always called) having paid many visits lately to this same school-room, accompanied by her pretty fair-haired girls, all laden with big brown paper parcels.

However, church or chapel service was over in due time; the congregation lingered for a few moments round the lowly porch, exchanging cordial greetings, and then separated until the afternoon, for nearly all were expected to come down and help with the Tree and the school feast, later. Our home-party was a large one, and we hastened briskly over the fields to where an early dinner awaited us. It was impossible to keep the boys to the well-worn path; whenever our track led us near a pond or even a large ditch, that moment they darted towards it, in order to satisfy themselves, by a close personal inspection, that there was no immediate fear of a thaw. When we neared the house, however, and saw the ruddy firelight leaping and dancing against the diamond-shaped panes of the latticed windows, it was not so difficult to collect the stragglers, and the task was rendered even easier by the savoury smell which issued from the kitchen door, as Mrs. Owen opened it to see if Jim Hollenby had arrived.

"Why do you want Jim to-day?" I inquired, as she came back from her quest

"I have promised to send Widow Barnes and her crippled daughter their Christmas dinner," she answered, "and Jim must take it to them."

"Good gracious, Mrs. Owen!" I exclaimed, "you don't expect Jim ever to carry a quantity of beef and

pudding all that way without eating it himself, do you?"

Mrs. Owen looked at me with a slightly disdainful air and said, "Ah! I have thought of that. Jim is to be stuffed with roast beef and Yorkshire pudding until he can't possibly eat any more; he is also to be provided with a huge wedge of the servants' plum-pudding

A reference to the titular Christmas Cake.

for his tea, and then surely he ought to do for a messenger!"

"Well, that certainly gives Widow Barnes a better chance of receiving her dinner," I replied; "but suppose he gets hungry again by the way? You know that cottage is nearly a mile away."

"We will see him before he goes and lecture him," said Mrs. Owen, "and I think it will be all right"

I did not like to enact the part of Cassandra

A reference to the famous Greek prophetess Cassandra, the narrator meaning here that she did not wish to continue predicting a negative future for the meal meant to be delivered by Jim.

too long on such a bright, hopeful day, so I went upstairs to take off my bonnet and shawl, but not by any means convinced that Widow Barnes and poor Martha would ever get their meal. On my way downstairs I turned aside and peeped into the servants' hall. There I saw Jim sitting in solitary state, at a small table by the fire, with about three 'pounds of underdone roast beef before him; a huge allowance of Yorkshire pudding and baked potatoes were also heaped on another plate close by. I said—

"Well, Jim, how are you getting on?"

"Finely, thank you, mum. I think I can eat some more, though," answered Jim, indistinctly.

I calmed his fears, assured him he should have plenty more, and, after seeing that his mug of beer was replenished, departed to tell Mrs. Owen that Jim appeared to be going on nicely.

"Yes," she said, "that is the only way; he must be well crammed."

"He is such a stupid boy, even when he is not full of beef and pudding," I urged timidly; "he will be quite sure to make a mistake. Why did you not get some one else?"

"It is just because he *is* stupid that I chose him," replied Mrs. Owen; "the other boys are so sharp they would have played me some trick, I am sure."

The children's dinner was now announced, and we went in to see Jim's gastronomic feats rivalled by Jack and Frank, Gerald and Georgie. The little girls held their own very well too, I assure you; and turkey, roast beef, tongue, mince-pies and plum pudding, all presented a very different appearance when they were carried out of the dining-room by the pretty trim little parlour-maid, to what they did when she bore them proudly in and placed them on the table. My arms quite ached from carving, and so did Mrs. Owen's. At last Mary whispered to her mistress, "If you please, mum, Jim's ready to go."

"Has he been eating all the time?" solemnly inquired Mrs. Owen. Mary, with a scarcely suppressed giggle, satisfied her mind upon this point, and Mrs. Owen said,—

"Tell cook to let me see what she is sending before it is covered up, and desire Jim to come in here."

Jim could hardly get beyond the door, he had 'swelled visibly," he was red and puffy, his face shone like a well-polished apple, and he was trying to conceal the fact of many of his waistcoat buttons having what he called "popped."

"Jim, come here," said Mrs. Owen. "Now tell me truly, *can* you eat any more?" Jim looked as if he were going to cry, and faltered, "No, mum—I couldn't, nohow, mum."

"Well, then, Jim, will you take some dinner from me to those poor Barnes's down in the village? They have nothing else to depend on to-day, Jim, and it would be very wicked if you were to take any."

Jim was so affected by this suggestion in his state of repletion that he screwed his knuckles into his eyes and faltered, "I'm sure I wouldn't go for to do such a thing, mum, let alone that I'm so full as never was."

"Very well, Jim, then take this bason carefully, and give it to Mrs. Barnes with my best wishes, and say I hope she'll like it."

"Yes, mum," said Jim, and he promptly took possession of the basket, which, however, he deposited for a moment on the side-table, before leaving the room, in order to wave his hand in farewell according to the existing code of manners.

For fear that I should forget to do so later I had better tell you here of the sad fate of the dinner, and then we can go on with our story. Two days after Christmas I went with Mrs. Owen to see some old women in the village, and amongst others we called on Mrs. Barnes. After we had been upstairs to see Martha in the neat tidy little room where all her life was passed in patient, nay cheerful, endurance of suffering, we paused to say a word to "Widow Barnes. She looked very pinched and woe-begone, not at all as if she had been partaking of any Christmas cheer. I knew that Mrs. Owen's liberal hand had piled up the basket not only with beef and pudding enough for two or three days' food, but had added tea and sugar in large quantities. Not a word of thanks was forthcoming, or even any mention of Christmas Day. We both felt this perplexing; but Mrs. Owen did not like to allude to her own ample gift, so I plucked up courage and said—

"I hoped you liked your nice dinner on Christmas Day, Mrs. Barnes?"

It seemed as if my words unlocked Mrs. Barnes's tongue, for she immediately began a long lamentation over the cheerless Christmas she and poor Martha had passed. "Nowt but tea made out o' old tea-leaves. Martha, she had her physic; but I hadn't a drop o' comfort, an' I made sure you had forgotten us, mum," she added, turning to Mrs. Owen.

I am but human, and I could not repress a glance at that poor lady, which, while it was full of sympathy for her mortification, was also meant to convey a slight degree of triumph at the correctness of my opinion about Jim and his principles. Mrs. Owen positively gasped, as she exclaimed, "Nothing to eat! Oh, I am so sorry! I sent you an immense dinner by Jim Hollenby!"

"He's never been a nigh the place, mum," said Widow Barnes, wiping her eyes patiently with the corner of her coarse apron.

"The horrid, wicked, greedy, little wretch!" cried Mrs. Owen and I together, and off we darted to find Jim, and confront him with his victim as speedily as possible. Five minutes' brisk walking brought us to a large pond near the common, where Jim, in company with his friends, was sliding and floundering about on the ice like young walruses on dry land. We ladies were quite breathless from the pace at which we had been walking, so our first essay at overwhelming Jim by sheer eloquence was rather a failure. We looked angry, I daresay, but speech was difficult. Our reproaches must have sounded like a duet, and were conducted something after this fashion.

*Mrs. Owen.* "Jim, you bad boy, come here!"

*Mm A—*. "How could you, Jim?"

*Mrs. Owen.* "Hadn't you enough to eat, you greedy boy?"

*Mrs. A—*. "To go and steal a poor cripple's dinner!"

*Both together.* "And then to come to the tree afterwards and say you had given the dinner to the Barnes's all right. Oh, Jim, how could you,—could you be so greedy and so wicked?"

This last accusation was more than poor bewildered Jim's nerves would stand. He threw up his head like a dog, and began a loud dismal howl, mixed with fragments of defence thus: "An' so I did, mum—bo-hoo-o—I took it right away to the Barnes's, and werry much obliged they was—oh! oh! oh! They was a bit surprised at fust, but they thanked you kindly all the same; and Daddy Barnes he said you was a regular brick he did,—bo-hoo-hoo-o, bo-hoo-o."

"Stop a moment, Jim," I said, "Oh, you stupid boy, *which* Barnes did you take the basket to?"

"Why, them Barnes's there," answered Jim, removing a grimy finger from his eye to point to a tumble-down cottage at the further end of the village.

Mrs. Owen and I looked at each other in blank amazement and horror. What! had her roast beef and plum-pudding, her tea and sugar, her ginger-cordial and seed-cake, all gone to feed that terrible family? It was impossible to imagine a greater perversion of charity; poor Widow Barnes to go dinnerless and tealess to bed on Christmas night, whilst Barnes the poacher, his drunken wife and disorderly little vagabond children, feasted on the dainties intended for her. To this day Jim cannot see he was to blame, and only defends himself by a dogged repetition of his original line of argument, "The Barnes, they got it right enuff."

I have lingered so long over this episode that I must begin a new chapter for the account of the tree.

## Chapter V. Christmas Day in England (*continued*).

Perhaps some of the children who will read these pages don't know anything about humble village Christmas-trees, such as the one of which I am going to tell them. Their only idea of the happy toy-bearing fir will, probably, be taken from an artificial symmetrical tree, stiff and trim in stature, standing on a low table in a smart drawing-room, blazing with tapers, sparkling with coloured crystal balls, presided over by a lovely waxen angel, and with a general air of fairy-land and Mr. Cremer's shop about it.

In the late 1800's Mr. William Henry Cremer ran a famous toy shop in London that had elaborate displays; interestingly here, given Lady Barker's life in New Zealand before writing *A Christmas Cake in Four Quarters*, she could also be referring to what was in New Zealand a nationally famous Christmas toy and decoration exhibition by a Mr. Cremer in Wanganui. (See *The Dale Family Tree* (Yorkshire, UK and Baden, Germany), RootsWeb, [http://wc.rootsweb.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op=GET&db=david\\_dale&id=I3306](http://wc.rootsweb.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op=GET&db=david_dale&id=I3306), last accessed July 2012 and "Cremer's German Fair," Wanganui Chronicle Volume XXXIII, Issue 11147 (18 Dec 1890), Papers Past, <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&d=WC18901218.2.9>, last accessed July 2012). CREMER'S GERMAN FAIR. Wanganui Chronicle, Volume XXXIII, Issue 11147, 18 December 1890, Page 2

The guests are worthy of the treat provided for them, at least so far as their outside appearance goes. There are rosy-cheeked, velvet-frocked little boys, in their best tempers, and with their best manners: there are little

girls in white muslin and bright ribbons, with crimped manes of fluffy hair hanging over their shoulders, whilst the background is composed of admiring papas and mammas, aunts and cousins, with a sprinkling of nurses, just to act as a female police if required.

Now this was not at all like our Christmas-tree in Groundholme village, nestled among the wooded hills of a far inland county. None of us were very rich about there, and though we emptied our light purses completely at this happy season, still by the time we had provided the school children with a big tea, and the old women with a similar and yet more substantial meal, we had not much margin left for decorating the tree in the school-room; so every one worked hard for weeks beforehand at its adornments. The little children were as busy as bees in behalf of their poorer sisters and brothers, and it was both touching and pretty to see them at work. I think it must have been Jack who made very substantial, though perhaps rather rough frames for some gay-coloured prints; whilst Nora and Cathy covered his work with the prettiest devices of leaves and berries you ever saw. Alice and Lucy knitted dozens of pairs of bright warm socks and comforters, their mother provided a great pile of crochet half-shawls, whilst we elders contributed a goodly array of small linsey petticoats of every colour under the dyer's sun. Nor were the toys forgotten. We begged scraps of all our fine lady friends, and our dolls looked like models of beauty and fashion, when the lady's-maid had turned them out of her skilful hands. Indeed, I felt half tempted to apologize to these elegant young ladies, as I propped them up round the rude box in which the tree was planted. There were basketfuls of balls for the boys, hard and soft, solid and hollow, bounding and cricket balls; knives enough to cut all their fingers off, and drums and trumpets by the score.

The tree itself was a fine young fir; it had only one fault in my eyes,—its branches were astonishingly limp. They looked sturdy enough to bear a cannon ball, and yet if I hung a penny whistle or an orange at the extremity of a bough, it immediately dropped nearly to the ground, and amid a chorus of voices crying out, "Oh! that will never do, it's *much* too heavy," I had to unfasten the decoration again. This made me rather cross in my heart, but I don't think any one knew what I felt, all were so busy. The first thing we did was to lay white cotton wool lightly all over the branches, so that our tree looked as if it was covered with soft snow-flakes; then at the top we fastened a little trophy of gay silken flags on gilt paper staves. The tiny children had all been busy for two days past in stringing holly-berries together; and these bright scarlet garlands, hanging in festoons from branch to branch, had an exceedingly pretty effect. Close to the strong stem, dangled oranges and rosy-cheeked apples; the sugar-plums were contained in silken bags, made in the shape of flour-sacks, and tied at the neck with a gilt string. A few cheap masks grinned at us from the depths of the lower foliage, whilst books and tops rested on the moss which concealed the earth around the roots. The little petticoats were balanced by a heap of red and blue flannel cricket caps for the boys, and a regiment of dolls kept solemn, open-eyed guard around the box.

Just at the last moment, when we heard the grace being sung at the children's tea in the adjoining room, Mrs. Owen lighted up the tapers in their tin sconces, and the curtain was drawn back by the schoolmaster with quite a theatrical flourish, revealing a crowd of shining rosy faces all turned one way. We genii

Genii being the plural of "genie", the mythical wish granting creatures of folklore. Here referring to the adults as creating Christmas magic for the children.

of the tree stood in the deep shadow, and watched the expression of the little eager countenances. To our disappointment, however, the smallest children set up a loud howl, and had immediately to be comforted and soothed by their attendant mothers; whilst the elder ones stared stolidly at our handiwork with round, expressionless eyes. Here and there a finger went up to a small mouth, but that was the only tribute of admiration which the tree elicited for a long time. At last the schoolmaster suggested that the children should all be marshalled in order and made to walk round the tree four or five times, singing a carol. This idea was an excellent one, and had the effect of familiarizing the little ones with the shining splendour which alarmed quite as much as it attracted them; and by the time the last notes of the quaint old tune died away, all the little band were ready and willing to come up and receive their gifts.

Each boy and girl had first some article of warm clothing handed to them, then a book, next a few toys, and sacklets of pink and white sugarplums; whilst an apple or an orange ended the distribution. All looked joyous and bright; they seemed to realize their happiness more and more each moment I believe at first that they thought the whole thing was a beautiful dream, which would presently vanish away into thin air, and that they would awaken to their usual dull every-day life. But the tapers began to burn low; here and there a hasty puff from one of the guardians of the now stripped and bare tree, told of the sudden necessity for extinguishing a flaming light. The fat staring babies began to compose themselves to sleep in their mother's arms, dozing off in the most unexpected and uncomfortable positions. The school children appeared to be quite laden with small treasures, and more than one officious little gossip proclaimed "Please 'm, Tom (or Dick, or Harry) has bin an' cut 'is finger, orful." However, no boy worth a pin cares for a cut finger: it is the fruit of his own awkwardness, and is a lesson to be more careful next time; so, in spite of sundry slices and slashes on small hands, the boys

filed past us with grinning, joyous faces and a tremendous wave of the hand; whilst the little girls hardly dared to curtsy, lest they should drop some of the precious possessions with which they were laden. By the time it was all over, and we had prepared to return to our respective homes, it was quite dark, and very cold. There were many slips and stumbles before our own porch was reached; but as we all drew round the supper table, there was only one feeling amongst us, big and little, old and young,—that of satisfaction at the happiness all had helped to diffuse. We felt the truth of the biblical assurance,

Reference to the Bible, Acts 20:35 – “Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” that it is much pleasanter to give than to receive.

And now Christmas Day was over, with its grave and its gay rites and observances, its sad memories of the past, its bright hopes for the future, and its delightful present, in which only children live. Here this part of my story should end, properly speaking, but as I managed to get up a tremendous excitement in the middle of that night, I think we will not consider that Christmas Day had fairly closed till the great clock over the stables boomed out midnight in deep, solemn tones. A few moments before this happened, I had been awakened from my sleep by a crunching sound on the gravel path beneath the window. "Robbers," I thought at once. Now do you know why this idea came so promptly into my head? Because of a certain alarm bell, the cord of which hung down in tempting proximity to the head of my bed. The very first night that I arrived, Mrs. Owen had pointed out this rather ugly rope, and had said,—

"If ever you are frightened at night, you have only got to pull that cord, and it will not only set every bell in the house going, but it has been carried across the farmyard to the principal buildings where the men sleep, and it rings the great fire-bell in that turret, so you would have plenty of help in a few moments. In fact, we should probably have all the villagers up from Groundshaline if it were to sound in the middle of the night." This was rather awful, I thought, though at the same time I felt it to be a great comfort.

"Why did you have it put up?" I inquired.

"Well, you see, this is a very lonely neighbourhood, and we are only just off the road between those two towns, which are full of factories; so my kind landlord said he would not feel comfortable at our being here all alone without even a gentleman in the house, unless he knew we could summon help in an instant if it were needed. The carters and people belonging to the farm understand that every man who hears that bell is to turn out directly and report himself to me, on pain of instant dismissal, so I feel quite secure. Of course there are plenty of alarmists, who tell me I am very rash to keep the plate chest here during these long dark nights. By the way, dear, that chest stands in the room under this, so if ever you hear anyone trying to break open the iron shutters downstairs, mind you ring the bell."

Mrs. Owen never knew it, but her cautions kept me awake for nearly a week after I heard this "Story of the Bell," for I felt myself to be on guard as it were, and that the safety of the house depended on my wakefulness. However, the exercise and the excitement of the Christmas Day had proved too much for my watch-dog propensities: no sooner had my head touched the pillow than I was in dreamland, handing cake and tea to the school children all over again, and decorating whole avenues of gigantic Christmas trees in endless succession. From these fatiguing though profound slumbers, I was awakened, as I have said, first by the sound of cautious, heavy boots on the crisp gravel, and next by subdued whispers outside my window. I could hear that there were boyish tones murmuring, as well as one or two deeper voices. "Of course," I thought to myself, "that is *the* boy one always hears of who is pushed in at the window." Still I paused for half a second, then I heard quite a loud shuffling of feet, and some one apparently urging some one else to begin. "I am glad they have the grace to hesitate, but *I* must not." So saying to my frightened self, I grasped the bell-rope which dangled close to my head, and pulled it with all my might.

Such a charivari as ensued, for just as my tugs at the alarm-bell began to take effect, the clock struck twelve, and the waits

The waits were a Christmastime tradition of nighttime musical serenades by the watchmen (The Hymns and Carols of Christmas, "The Waits," <http://www.hymnsandcarolsofchristmas.com/Text/Chappell2/waits.htm>, last accessed June 2012).

set up outside my window in quavering tones, with their teeth chattering from the cold, an old-fashioned lilt. They had not accomplished more than two bars, however, before their music was silenced by the uproar which my bell-rope had raised. Lights appeared in every window, doors slammed, bells rang furiously in jerking peals, whilst in the clear frosty air outside we could hear the clang of the fire-bell in the turret of the great barn. What a commotion there was! Mingling with the shouts of the men to each other as they hurried towards the house, I heard the clattering of horses' feet.

One waggoner had ridden off for the nearest fire-engine, whilst another had started to fetch the police; a third was with difficulty dissuaded from going for the doctor, who, he thought, "might come in handy." Everybody was wildly asking everybody else what was the matter, before it occurred to any one that the confusion must have arisen from the alarm-bell sounding, and that no one could touch the rope except me. Mrs.

Owen rushed into my room, and I shall never forget her expression of face as I poured forth my apologies.

"Do you mean to say you rang that great bell only on account of the waits?" she asked; "I had no idea you were such a Cockney,

While in modern times Cockney is typically used to describe a particular English accent, here it is used to mean a childish or weakling townspeople – essentially calling the narrator a coward for being scared by the waits (*Oxford English Dictionary*, online edition, last accessed July 2012).

or I should have told you your slumbers were liable to be disturbed at this season. Good gracious! what shall I do? Do you hear how they are knocking at the door? That is probably Parker, the bailiff: poor man I fancy bringing him out of bed on such a night for nothing!" Saying this, Mrs. Owen hurried away, leaving me to my reflections, which were most mortifying.

Fortunately we have settled that my story is not to go beyond midnight, so I need not humiliate myself by telling you how the boys teased me the next day, nor how the little girls could not be persuaded but that something very dreadful had happened in the night.

In future, I shall not only think twice, but I will think twenty times before I ring an alarm-bell in the middle of the night, when I am staying in the country.

## **Part II. Christmas Day in Jamaica.**

### **Chapter I. Christmas Day in Jamaica.**

WHEN the next afternoon came, heavy fleecy clouds, which had gradually been sailing up towards us from the north, began to dissolve themselves in soft, silent snow-flakes, so we had to amuse the children as well as we could indoors. They were all the least bit tired, and fractious, not actually naughty, but inclined, to take a dismal view of things. For instance, Jack was quite cross with the younger ones for admiring the pure, feathery snow, grumbling, "You are so stupid don't you know it will spoil the ice for skating!"

"Oh no, Jack," said Cathy, the hopeful, "it need not do that; we will all get up very early and sweep it off the big pond. Think what fun that will be!"

"I wish Christmas went on over and over again for three or four days," sighed Nora; "it is so dreadful to think it is past and gone for such a long, long time."

"What is that I hear about Christmas being over?" said Mrs. Owen, as she came into the school-room, bringing smiles and good humour back again with her. These pleasant, pretty little household fairies had just got as far as the door, and were thinking sorrowfully that they must positively go into the kitchen, or even across to the big farm where the waggoners were having their dinner, when Mrs. Owen's cheery voice brought them all back again.

"Is it not nice to be at home again?" said Cathy's dimple to a laughing spark in Frank's eyes

"Very nice indeed," replied the merry beam; and just look how glad Jack's face is to get back its smile! We were all very nearly off that time; but hush! listen to Mrs. Owen, there'll be a lot more of us directly.

This is what Mrs. Owen was saying.

"Yes, dears, I have spent Christmas days all over the world nearly, and sometimes at sea. Once I fully believed I should never see the dawn of another holy birthday, and once I had to run for my life on Christmas Day."

"Oh! do tell us about that," said Jack and Frank together. "No, about the Christmas at sea!" screamed Gerald and Georgie.

"Top, make me 'peak," cried Hope, not quite knowing what he wished to say, but feeling it his duty to assert his rights.

"Dear me, this is dreadful," I thought to myself. "I wonder if people ever die of perpetual story-telling. I don't mean fibs, but adventures. If they do, Mrs. Owen won't survive this snowy Christmas."

However, that bright-eyed lady did not look like dying, except from being smothered with kisses and hugs, for all the children were clinging to her, clamouring for "more Christmases." As soon as she could make her voice heard, she said, "Now be quiet, and I'll tell you what we will do."

"Yes, be quiet!" shouted the boys to each other.

"Ki-et, go 'way," echoed Violet.

"No, don't go 'way," said Mrs. Owen; "at least only as far as the school-room. There is a capital fire there, and we won't disturb either nurse or pussy, who is fast asleep on the bear-skin. I see plainly there will be no more going out this evening, so we will amuse ourselves famously indoors. You must all be too tired after yesterday's fun, to care for romping games, so we will come' into the school-room, settle ourselves comfortably,

and I will tell you about my first Christmas in Jamaica. There now, Mrs. A——shall have the big armchair, so that she can go to sleep if she likes; and if we have not finished all you want to know when nurse calls you for tea, we will go on until dinner-time."

"All about Jamaica," stipulated the elder children. "And mind you begin from the very beginning of Christmas Day," whispered Cathy, coaxingly.

"Yes, from the very beginning," replied Mrs. Owen; "I can't begin earlier, you know, than when I opened my eyes on the first Christmas Day which I could recollect spending in Jamaica. We, that is my sister and myself, had been in England, away from our dear parents for many years, ever since we were little children in fact, for both health and education, and we had only returned to our tropic home a fortnight or so before this Christmas morning. Although it was in the middle of the cool season, as the Jamaica winter is called, we found it very hot, and our cheeks had already lost their English roses. But still it was so very delightful to be at home, to be suddenly promoted to the dignity of young ladies—for we were only fifteen and sixteen years old respectively—that we did not mind the imprisonment all day in large, dark, cool rooms, and the impossibility of getting out of doors, except before sunrise and after sunset.

"The novelty of everything was charming to our young eyes; we thought the costumes of the negro women so picturesque, and that they all looked so much nicer during the week in their bright short skirts and striped white jackets, their heads covered with a gay cotton kerchief, than on Sunday dressed in fine fashionable gowns, and with white bonnets and flowing veils perched on the top of their frizzed-out wool.

"Yes, Nora, don't be impatient, darling. I am coming back to Christmas morning; but just before I open my eyes, you know, I must tell you what sort of a room Frances and I had been sleeping in. Imagine a great lofty hall, not in the least like an English bedroom. It was supposed to be very cool, because only one side of it opened out into a rose garden with a 'grass-piece' or meadow of tall guinea grass beyond it. The big drawing-room opened off one side, and the long gallery off another, where we used to sit and draw or work, as it had a cool aspect. Then our bathroom, full of tall, Spanish earthenware jars, and with two enormous cedar bowls for baths, protected us from the fierce outer glare on the third side.

"When we first saw this great hall of a bedroom, Frances and I felt rather daunted. It looked so bare and desolate compared to our little snug English rooms, with their gay chintzes and carpets. The whitewashed walls of our new apartment had a workhouse appearance to us; and as for our two tiny brass bedsteads, they stood out in the very middle of the room for coolness, and were each furnished with a long mosquito net, covering them all over, instead of curtains. Then the dressing table was not at all pretty; instead of being dressed in nice pink and white petticoats, it had thick mahogany legs, and was quite bare of all drapery. Moreover, these solid heavy legs stood each in a small tin tub, half full of water, to keep off the ants. The principal furniture consisted of two of the biggest wardrobes I ever saw, and we wondered where we should ever get clothes to fill them, until we found that Papa liked us to wear nothing but white muslin gowns, and that he expected us to have on a perfectly fresh one each morning. We felt very like tiny children at first in our clean white frocks every day, especially as he made us wear dark blue ribbons and aprons with them. At last, some one said we looked like little men-of-war's men in their Sunday best, and then we were happier, for we would rather have been compared to sailors than to babies.

"My dear Cathy, it is of no use pinching me; I am coming back to that Christmas morning. Here we are, it is just six o'clock; our brown maid—and a very neat, clean little maid Amalia was—stood smiling in the space between our little beds with a tray of coffee cups in her hands."

"Merry Kismas to you bote, Missy. Wake up, Missy, and look 'pon all dem pritty tings.'

"Frances and I sat up as if we had been figures worked by machinery, and a touch on one spring had served to send us both into an upright position. We looked at each other and then at Amalia, whose hands were too full to use, so she grinned again—showing such rows of pearls—and pointing with her chin and nodding her yellow and red turban towards the foot of our little beds, she repeated, 'Ess, Missy, plenty pritties, Malia berry glad; dough, Miss Frances, him must drink him coffee fust ting afore him get up, else him hab feber for true.'

"That was Amalia's great threat. If we did not do everything she thought proper, we were to get 'feber dat berry minnit.'

"But Frances and I were both out of bed in an instant without our coffee, and standing in speechless delight at a small table, which had been placed during the night at the foot of our brass bedsteads. It was concealed by a fringed muslin cover; and when this was raised, the first things we seized upon with a shriek of delight were two little gold watches, with our pet names enamelled on the back of each, and a slip of paper to say they were Mamma's gift to us. How delighted we were; we could hardly stop to examine the charming inlaid desks, exactly alike, labelled 'from Papa,' or the twin fans, white silk embroidered in silver, from our soldier cousin, who had just come back from the Havannah.

As in Havana, Cuba. Lady Barker visited Havana herself, not long after marrying Captain Barker (Betty Gilderdale, *The Seven Lives of Lady Barker*, Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2009, p. 42).

The table also held some books we had longed most ardently to possess, and Amalia's offering of a gay bouquet of flowers, all wet and sparkling with dew, was by no means the least admired of the Christmas presents.

"We disregarded all Amalia's threats and cries 'Hi, my king,' and barely taking time to put on our dressing gowns, rushed across the big drawing-room to our mother's room, to thank and kiss her and Papa for their kindness. There we found the younger children assembled in equal glee and delight at the toy contents of their table, and we were all so uproarious and wild that Mamma had the greatest difficulty in getting rid of us, and inducing us to go away and dress for breakfast. Frances and I agreed that we were proud and happy girls as we hung our new watches round our necks, and fastened them securely in our blue waistbands."

"Where is yours now, Mrs. Owen?" asked a whole chorus of little voices.

"Ah, my dears, I cannot tell you the fate of that watch now. It was stolen from me. But let me go on with *my* Christmas Day. I remember it all so vividly that you must not disturb the current of my thoughts, or you may destroy the reflection in Time's stream."

"Were you in time for breakfast?" demanded Gerald, whose own habits were somewhat dilatory.

"Yes, I managed to be so, my dear; but Frances went on dancing about the room and romping with the children until the first bell rang, so I had to go down alone and make tea for Papa. It was not at all like an English breakfast table, for there was hardly anything but fruit and iced water on it; the tea and coffee stood on a side table at one end of the room, and the dishes of meat and rice and fish on another, as far off as possible. The servants were negroes, dressed entirely in spotless white, with bare feet, except the butler, who wore pumps, but no stockings.

"Well, Papa and I were sitting alone at breakfast, when we heard a noise in the marble flagged verandah outside, and between us and the dazzling flood of sunlight stood a very tall African soldier. He was the orderly of the day, and bore two good-conduct stripes on his arm. He was a full-blooded negro, but could hardly speak a word of English; he belonged to one of the West India regiments, which are chiefly recruited from the West Coast of Africa. The first thing I noticed was that he wore no shoes, and I cannot describe how funny his bare feet looked on the white flags, contrasted with his white duck trousers and scarlet coat. The moment this orderly caught my father's eye he drew himself together and made a stiff military salute, which he repeated until Papa acknowledged it, and then he took a letter out of his cartouche box

A cartouche box was a cartridge box used for storing ammunition (and in this case obviously important messages). (University of London, British History Online, "Cartouche box," <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=58718> (last accessed June 2012).

and handed it to my father. After glancing at it Papa said to me, 'I must write an answer; don't let him go,' and he went off to his desk into an adjoining room.

"Good gracious, Papa, how am I to keep that great man here, if he should try to go away?' I cried; but Papa did not answer, and left me wondering whether I was expected to knock the soldier down if he attempted to depart, or what means I should adopt to take him prisoner. However, as he stood quite still, I went on eating my pears, and occasionally glancing round at the big African, who made me a military salute every time I caught his eye. At last, between one of these glances I heard a whisper close behind my chair, 'Missy! Missy!' and turning hastily round, saw the black soldier bending towards me with the most earnest look of entreaty, joining his hands like a child at prayers, and whispering insinuatingly, 'Kiss, Missy, kiss.' Here was a pretty thing; I felt too angry to be frightened, and I am ashamed now to think how furiously and scornfully I looked at him and said loudly, 'No! go away.'"

"Go 'way," murmured sleepy Violet, from Mrs. Owen's lap; "go 'way."

"Yes, my pet, I did say! 'Go 'way, only not so prettily as that. I said it very crossly and to my horror I heard Papa call out, 'Don't let him go away, Pansy, whatever you do.' My indignation rose at this proof of filial devotion which seemed to be expected of me; and as the soldier advanced a step nearer and held out one hand, to take mine as I thought, I could endure it no longer, and shrieked out, 'He must go away, Papa, this minute, he wants to kiss me.'

"Hey! what?' said my father, coming into the room, pen in hand. 'What's this?' but he neither looked shocked nor angry as I anticipated; the orderly stood once more at 'attention,' but repeated, 'Kiss, missy; kiss, Massa.'

"This is what he wants,' said Papa, and he took a couple of shillings out of his pocket, saying, as he put them into the outstretched black hand, 'Missy kiss, massa kiss.'

"I was still bewildered, but my father had evidently hit upon the right reading of the riddle, for my sable friend troubled me no more, but stood contemplating the silver coins with much satisfaction, murmuring from time to time the words which had so offended me. After Papa had given him the letter, and sent him off, he turned to Frances, who was just coming down, and said. 'There has been a black orderly here, who brought me a letter, and frightened Pansy out of her wits by asking her for a Christmas-box. I do believe she fancied he wanted to kiss her. He was not dreaming of anything but the shilling I always give a messenger on Christmas

Day.'

"I am very glad I was late,' remarked Frances, 'for I should not have liked to have been mixed up with such a mistake, and Pansy shall never hear the last of it.' However, I looked so miserable that Papa promised not to tease me any more, and except a sly look when anything was said about blunders he kept his word pretty well.

"Did we go to church?' Of course we did. Only it was so hot, and the street being ankle deep in sand, we were obliged to drive, although our house was not more than two or three hundred yards from the beautiful old Spanish cathedral

Likely the same on that Lady Barker married Captain Barker in.

. I am told that I should hardly know it again, and that it has been restored and beautified to suit modern ideas, but I like to think of it as I remember it that blazing Christmas morning; its old high mahogany pews, with their arched roofs turned into bowers by green branches. The old-fashioned tablets of the Commandments, were supported by pillars of tree ferns; whilst the sprigs of pimento and coffee diffused a spice-like smell all over the gaunt, bare building. Old negro women, with broad straw hats put on over their turbans, sat on the rows of benches in the broad aisle, whilst the more fashionable members of the black community were hidden in pews. All the doors were set wide open, and every now and then a gay-coloured bird would flit in and raise a commotion among the swallows, who regularly lived within the cathedral, and who permitted no twittering save their own, hunting out all intruders with hot haste.

"The service was very beautiful, as it always is; and the anthem of peace and goodwill sounded all the sweeter to my ears for the loud, clear tones with which the negroes joined in its strains. They sang with all their might, putting a fervour and heartiness into their vociferous hymns, which make up for their strange pronunciation of the words. Frances and I agreed, whilst we were driving home, that this, our first tropical Christmas, would always stand out by itself in our memories from any others which might follow it. Alas! we little knew how soon we should be scattered, never to meet again on Christmas Day."

A comment about Lady Barker's own life, and how few Christmases she got to spend together with many members of her family before travels or tragedy claimed them.

## **Chapter II. Christmas Day in Jamaica (*continued*).**

"AND what did you do when you came home?" inquired Jack, who was determined not to be sentimental himself, nor allow anyone else that indulgence, if he could help it.

"Let me see," answered Mrs. Owen; "I believe the very first thing we did was to go to the refrigerator, or great zinc-lined box where the ice was kept, and take out some fruit—bananas or a pine-apple, or perhaps a naseberry (a delicious sort of plum). Then we went upstairs, where we found Mamma reading a letter from our soldier-cousin, who lived thirteen or fourteen miles off. In this letter he agreed to come and dine with us on Christmas evening, stipulating, however, that he should not be laughed at, for he admitted that he was a ridiculous object with a swelled face.

"Frances and I were both quite indignant at the notion of laughing at anyone who was ill or in suffering, and entreated Mamma to believe that we were incapable of such heartless conduct, but she did not seem so sure of our self-control, and said, warningly—

"Well, you must try to behave properly, for Paul certainly does look very odd when his face swells so terribly;' and some amusing recollection evidently flitted across dear gentle Mamma's mind, for she turned away hastily, but not before Frances and I had detected a smile dawning on her kind face.

"The only excitement we had in the afternoon was derived from the loss of our best bonnets, which were made of chip and trimmed with rosebuds, each bonnet containing about as much material as would make three head-coverings now-a-days; but in spite of their hideousness, Frances and I were very proud of them, as they were our first 'grown-up bonnets.' It was a pity, under these circumstances, that we were not more careful of them; but I am sorry to say that when we came back from church we flung them down on the bed, forgetting that Amalia had gone to see her 'mudder and de piccaninnies.' When it was time to go out for a drive we went into our room, and there beheld two black heaps on the floor. They were the bonnets, covered by ants. The sea-breeze had blown them down; the smell of the new straw and the gum and sugar in the artificial flowers had attracted legions and myriads of ants, who not only covered the bonnets so that it was difficult to see what was the foundation of the black heap, but had completely destroyed the flowers by biting the petals, and had even nibbled the straw edges of the bonnets so as to render them quite unwearable. You never saw anything so systematic as the ants' method of setting to work, They formed themselves into processions; some arriving in an orderly, business-like manner to take part in the great work of destruction; whilst those who were either fatigued or had eaten enough departed in return battalions, with here and there a tiny fragment of straw or a mite of muslin rose-petal borne as a great treasure by stalwart ants.

"Frances and I uttered loud lamentations over our ruined finery, but Mamma's first care was to get the

housemaid to sweep the angry creatures away, and to take care that there were no army-corps in reserve anywhere waiting to pounce upon us when we were off our guard.

"This mishap sent both of us girls out for our drive with Mamma in very sober spirits, and we did not derive any comfort from the stories she told us of the ravages committed by a species of fish-tail moth, which had been known to devour a wreath of flowers so completely as to leave only the wire foundation behind; or of the digestion of the white ant, who is a sworn foe to all imported woods, and, leaving the veneer untouched so as to conceal his operations, will eat away the legs of a piano, or the whole of an English-made work-table, until the unfortunate piece of furniture collapses suddenly with a crash, having been reduced by gradual stages to the thickness of a sheet of paper.

"Just as we came home another carriage drove in to the court-yard, with which all Jamaica houses are surrounded, and waited for ours to be dismissed from the steps where we had alighted. Mamma glanced at a muffled-up figure in it by the side of the black coachman (for it was a sort of cabriolet or buggy), and, turning to us, said, severely, 'Now, I insist on it, girls, that you don't laugh.' We had no time to answer, for the buggy came up to the steps where we were still standing, and one glance at the figure inside was sufficient to scatter all good resolutions to the winds. As long as Cousin Paul kept *his* countenance such as we then beheld, it was of no use our trying to keep ours! You never saw such a face in all your lives; and I hope, if it be necessary to try to preserve your gravity on the occasion, you never may. Under ordinary circumstances Cousin Paul had a thin face, with rather nice eyes, but there was generally nothing remarkable about his appearance one way or other.

"Now he seemed to have two mismatched faces badly joined together. One side represented a pale, haggard, thin face, with a reproachful eye set in it; whilst the other half was scarlet, swollen so that it was more like a hideous mask in a pantomime than anything else; and there was no eye to be seen at all. This cheek was level with his nose, and his mouth had also disappeared in the general mass of swelling, leaving only a very little hole on the well side of his face, through which poor Cousin Paul said, in a high whistling voice, quite unlike his usual tones—

"I wish I hadn't come; I knew you'd laugh.'

"Laugh! I should think we did. It was of no use trying to run away; the sight of such a countenance kept us rooted to the spot where we stood, positively shrieking with mirth. Mamma made one supreme effort to look perfectly grave and sympathising, but when Cousin Paul turned his melancholy eye upon her, she too gave way and laughed nearly as much as we did. But she suffered agonies from remorse whilst she laughed, and tried more than once to recover her composure, whereas we made no attempt of the kind.

"When Cousin Paul got out of the carriage it was worse, for with his hat off he was a more astounding object than with it on; and every time he began to whistle out a mournful recital of the remedies he had tried, and how everything only seemed to make the swelling worse, we set off again in peals and peals of laughter.

"This is the result of hot camomile, fomentations,' said he with difficulty, and pointing to where his left eye should have been.

"It was impossible to go on in this way; Frances and I would have died of laughing, I believe, if Mamma had not carried off her pet nephew to his room, summoned Cadda, the old black housekeeper, to her aid, and advised him to keep quiet and go to bed, which he did, poor fellow! It was a dismal way of spending his Christmas evening, but it never would have done to allow us to see him trying to drink some soup out of a spouted mug inserted into one corner of his mouth. Badly as we behaved at the first glimpse of his face, we should have been much worse at the sight of his efforts to feed himself. He told us afterwards that we had no idea of the agonies he endured from being seized with a paroxysm of laughter at the sight of his own face in a looking-glass that morning. Ever after, whilst the swelling lasted, there Avas nothing he dreaded so much as being made to smile; and as Mamma was the only person who could, after the first shock, look at him without laughing, he steadily declined to see anyone else until he was well.

"Then, as if we had not laughing enough before dinner, we had a dreadful trial of our gravity during that meal. The party was rather a large one, for our father always made it a rule to invite new comers, or people who had no family circle of their own, to dine with us on that day, declaring that he had spent *one* solitary Christmas in his life, and had found it so inexpressibly dreary and sad, that he could not bear to think of anyone else doing so. Now the great difficulty at these Christmas festivities was *the* plum-pudding. Very few negro cooks (they are all men by the way) had the remotest idea of what a plum-pudding was like, for it is by no means a favourite dish in the tropics. Indeed no one ever thought of having such a rich, hot thing except at Christmas; and in the generality of tropical households, after many efforts and many failures, it had at last been given up. Mamma would have rejoiced at the abandonment of the national dish, for she had gone through severe trials connected with it; but Papa considered it a dreadful, almost a wicked thing, to sit down to dinner on Christmas Day without roast beef, turkey, mince-pies, *and* a plum-pudding. So, instead of our usual nice, light, digestible dinner, suited to the climate, we found ourselves a large party, sitting round our Christmas dinner table laden

with English fare. Poor Mamma had two great anxieties on her mind. There was the uncertainty when and how the pudding might make its appearance. Once it had been sent up in the form of sauce, to be handed about with the mince-pies; and on other occasions it had come to table tied up in its cloth, and the whole affair had been set on fire by the butler, who thought it was all right, and poured the blazing brandy over it before he could be prevented. Her second great dread was that any of the guests should mention or allude to Cousin Paul. There was nothing Papa disliked so much as giggling; and if Paul's name had been uttered, it is quite certain that Frances and I would have behaved badly in that respect. My own belief is that Mamma went about before dinner entreating her guests not to mention Paul's name, for the way the subject was avoided struck us afterwards as being very suspicious.

"However, all went well until it was time for the second course to appear. Everything had been removed belonging to the first course, and servant after servant went out of the room to see what had become of the sweet things. Mamma grew paler and more nervous at each moment's delay, and murmured plaintively to her neighbour, 'I am sure it is the plum-pudding.' But it was *not* the pudding—at least no pudding appeared; and at last my father said sternly to the butler, who alone remained in the room,—

"'We can't wait all night for the pudding, James; send it in just as it is; or let us have the rest of the dinner, at all events.'

"James bowed gravely and departed; a moment after he left the dining-room we heard a wild scuffling and confusion outside and many 'Hi's' —'top him.' In rushed the black cook, Alphonse by name, very tipsy, with his shirt sleeves rolled up, his cooking apron fluttering behind him, and bearing in his outstretched arms a very large dish, which he set down before Mamma, crying,—

"'Dere, my good Missus, dere your puddin's; Alphonse make dem fuss-class. James say dem too small. Cho! him know noting 'bout puddin'. 'Top one littel minnit, Alphonse break him sarcy head;' and out he dashed to carry his threat into execution.

"Certainly the puddings were small, very small; in fact they were no bigger than Violet's little fist. Three or four of the diminutive dainties, looking exactly like tiny cannon-balls, reposed, with wide spaces between each, on the huge dish. Mamma gazed mournfully at them and said, 'I wonder why he has boiled it in separate pieces like this.' Papa took a more cheerful view of matters and cried gaily, 'Never mind, mother, I daresay they taste very good; let us each have a little bit,—

## **"Dere, my good missus, dere your puddins; Alphonsc make dem fuss-class."—p. 128**

just for luck, you know.' Mamma shook her head, for she had grave misgivings about their taste, but she took up a spoon and attempted to carry out her husband's directions. We all watched her in breathless silence. First she tried one small pudding and then another—tried to help it, I mean—but the moment she touched it with a spoon, the hard little lump bounced away. It was impossible to catch it, and, after chasing the refractory hard lumps of pudding round the dish, she laid down the spoon in despair.

"'Let me try,' said the gentleman nearest to her, and he seized a spoon with more goodwill than judgment, for the moment he tried to get the pudding into a corner of the dish, and divide it into two pieces, it sprang bodily out of the dish and leapt, like an india-rubber ball, right into the lap of one of the guests.

"'It is as hard as a stone,' said its new possessor. 'I don't believe I could cut it with a knife;' and as he spoke he tried to hold it with his fork and cut it with his knife. But he was equally unsuccessful: the pudding slipped as skilfully away from under the sharp blade as it had done from the spoon, and bounded off to the opposite side of the table.

"I remember quite well that we let the other puddings alone: they appeared to be all equally solid and equally averse to being eaten; so James once more took up the first of this strange species of Christmas fare, and putting it back on the dish, carried the whole affair off to Alphonse, who had been tied into his chair, and who was so enraged at the rejection of his cherished dainties that he shied them one after the other at the butler's retreating figure. Certainly James made a most undignified and hasty entrance into the dining-room, and we heard a sound as of a Stone following him closely.

"'Is that a plum-pudding, James?' asked my father.

"'Ess, Massa. one little hard puddin', Alphonse him trow it; bad man Alphonse, him can't make English puddin.'"

"Frances and I did not laugh at the time so much as might have been expected, because we were rather alarmed about Alphonse's state of tipsiness, and also because we saw that Mamma could not laugh. She knew how much importance our father attached to having a large English plum-pudding at his Christmas dinners, and, like a good wife, she grieved sincerely at his disappointment. I am sure she would have tried to make one pudding herself if she had possessed the slightest practical knowledge of cookery; but ladies in Jamaica hardly

ever go into their kitchens on account of the great heat, and are therefore obliged to trust entirely to their negro cooks, who are not generally very clever in their profession.

"And now I have dwelt so long on the merriment of this Christmas Day, that you will perhaps be astonished to hear that before the party broke up, both Frances and I had a good fit of crying; but when I tell you why, it will not seem so odd, I dare say.

"In the evening, after dinner, we were all sitting out in the verandah, enjoying the cool north air, which was stealing down from the mountains, and the delicious scent of the tube-roses and jasmine in the flower-beds beneath us. We could hear the cool lapping sound of the river Cobra, one of whose many serpentine curves swept round the bottom of our grass piece, and the distant croak of the frogs on its banks. A nightingale, as it is called there—though it does not resemble our English nightingales a bit, either in its plumage or note—was singing its sweet low song, as if to itself, on the great lignum-vitae tree, outside the window, and the glorious tropical night breathed around us in all its depth and glow of beauty. Frances and I used to declare we liked the starlight nights better than those on which everything was as distinct as in the day-time, under the brilliancy of the moon; for in the comparative darkness, the fireflies and glowworms could be seen hanging their fairy lanterns on every quivering blade of grass, or every fragrant flower bell.

"Ah! my children, it was a beautiful night—a night so beautiful that it made us all sad, which is a strange effect of beauty, that you cannot yet understand. Indeed one reason why I remember it all so vividly is, that it was the first moment I seemed to leave my child-nature behind me, and comprehend the touch of melancholy which so often comes with intense feeling. Although, we were all determined to be gay on this our first Christmas evening together, we were a very quiet silent party, as we sat out there in the soft summer night, and it seemed in harmony with the scene, when one of our party said softly, 'I heard such a sad story to-day, and I am afraid there is no doubt it is true.'

"'Did you?' answered Mamma; 'tell us what you heard: we should like a story, even if it be a sad one.'

"And so he told us this little tale, which is perhaps too sad for Christmas time; but those who don't like sad stories may go to the tea-table, to which I hear Nurse calling you. No, I won't tell you a word more, until you have all had your tea—I want some tea myself, you dreadful children; I can't go on for ever talking to you without having what Jack calls 'a spell' now and then!

"Yes, Nurse, they are quite ready: run away, monkeys." And so saying, poor Mrs. Owen shook off her tribe of listeners, and went away to have her own tea and enjoy a little silence and quiet in another room.

## **Chapter III. Christmas Day in Jamaica (*continued*).**

THE children lingered longer at their tea-table than we expected; for when once they found themselves with plenty of bread and butter, and buns and seedcake before them, they discovered that they were really very hungry, and kept Nurse busy pouring out weak tea and cutting up the large loaf. The little ones ate but slowly, and the elder boys' found it very tedious to wait until they had finished; but Nurse would not allow anyone to jump up and run away before the rest; besides which she said:

"Do let poor Mrs. Owen rest a bit, Master Jack. A body must needs have a tongue that goes by steam, to satisfy you and Master Frank. How ever Mrs. Owen can keep hers going all the afternoon and evening is more than I can make out."

"Yes, Jack dear," agreed Nora, "let us tell stories to each other, until the little ones have finished their tea, and that will rest Aunt Owen."

"Girls' stories, indeed," said Jack, somewhat contemptuously; "all about dolls, I suppose, or their new frocks."

Cathy and Nora drew their chairs closer together as if to show they were prepared to stand up for their rights, and darted some very flashing glances at the contemner of their sex; but before they could express their indignation, peace-making little Georgie said in his sweet, clear voice, his face looking so droll, with eyes twinkling with fun, but keeping his mouth as grave as possible, "Ladies and gempemen, I have written a short, true fairy story; it's only got five chapters, and if you like I will read it to you now."

"That's right, Georgie," said both the little girls together. "Did you make it up all yourself?"

"Fire away, Georgie!" shouted Jack; "but mind you shut up directly those little beggars have done stuffing themselves."

Georgie felt there was no time to be lost, so he mounted up on his chair, thrust his hand into the pocket of his knickerbockers

Knickerbockers, while modern British slang for underpants, were at the time a style of short pants. (*Merriam Webster Dictionary*, online edition, last accessed July 2012).

, and drew forth some crumpled pieces of paper with pencil scrawls all over them. These he smoothed as carefully as possible, cleared his throat, and read aloud as follows.

Copied word for word from the MS. of a seven years old author, with only a few corrections of the phonetic spelling.

[note by Lady Barker as part of original text]

## ***The Three Princes: A fairy tale for young people.***

### **Chapter I.**

*ONCE upon a time there was a king, whose fame was spread far and wide, and his name was Zeberhad. Well, to go on with my story, he had three sons, whose names were Miars, Charley, and Jack. As soon as Miars came of age he told his father he wished for to travel. And so his father had everything prepared for him, and gave him his best horse, a suit of armour, his trusty sword and shield, also a lance, a battle-axe, and a dagger; and he had a hundred knights for his attendances; so he set out.*

### **Chapter II**

*WELL, in my last chapter, I said that the eldest son set out with all his attendances. He soon came to a thick forest. Well, there he lost all his attendances. He wandered on and on, until he came to a brook; feeling very thirsty, he stooped down, but the first drop he drank he turned into a pig, and moaned away over his fate again and again.*

### **Chapter III.**

*WELL, soon the second son set out. He was equipped in the same way; so, with all his attendances, he soon came to the same forest as his brother had done; where he lost all his men. Well, soon he came to the same brook, where, just as his brother had done, he turned into a pig.*

### **Chapter IV.**

*WHEN the eldest nor the second son did not come back, the king said, whoever brought his sons back should receive the hand of his niece. Well, you must know that Jack was deeply in love with Lita, for that was her name; so he said he would go, and his father said he might. He took a good horse and good arms, but only his servant John. Soon he came to a little dwarf, and the little dwarf said, "Please, sir, will you give me a piece of bread?"*

*"Well," said the Prince, "I will give you a piece, but I have only a very little bit for myself; but never mind." So he gave him a piece of his bread.*

### **Chapter V.**

*As soon as the dwarf had received it, he said, "No, thank you, but I will reward you, by giving you a wish."*

*"Oh! thank you so much," cried the Prince; "I only wish that I could find my brothers."*

*"Well," said the dwarf, "they are turned into pigs, but I will give you a wand, and you can turn them back again." And so he did, and Prince Jack went home and married Lita, and lived happily ever after.*

*BY GEORGIE.*

*The End.*

Mrs. Owen and I had stolen into the room just as Georgie commenced to read, but the little man did not mind having grown-up listeners, and went on steadily to the end, though he looked very shy and red long before it was over. "I wish you wouldn't make a fool of me, Georgie," was Jack's only comment. "Catch me falling in love with Lita indeed. I intend to marry Aunt Nancy when I grow up, because she knows such a lot of jolly stories."

"If we mean to finish our Jamaica Christmas Day, we must make haste," said Mrs. Owen; "so let us come into the drawing-room for a treat, and we will leave the very little ones with Nurse here. They won't care for a sad story, and you know I warned you this was going to be sad. When it was told to us we were in a mood to like hearing a melancholy story, because it all fitted in so well with our rather dismal feelings in a distant land on the great, essentially English, festival; but you, you little rosy-cheeked romps, you don't look as if you would care to hear anything which was not intended to make you laugh."

"Oh yes, we do," said Jack, the ever-ready spokesman of the little party; "we like to hear Jolly awful stories

sometimes, I can tell you."

"Well, then, listen quietly to me while I try to remember for you what our stranger-guest told us that beautiful tropical night.

"Two little boys lived with their parents in a cottage among the hills not far from Spanish Town. The family had only arrived from England a few months before. Mr. Elmslie was a clergyman, and had been presented to a very good living in the lowlands, but he was too much afraid of the deadly climate of the plains to risk the lives of his only children on their dusty, burntup level, during the summer-heats. So he had taken this pretty little place with its staircase-like paths and spreading cedar-trees, which sheltered the cottage from the afternoon sun. Mrs. Elmslie and the boys were enchanted with their new home, and never wearied of watching the sunset-gun fired from the fort at Port Royal,—a strip of sand stretching out to bar the entrance to Kingston Harbour. To the boys' great delight they could see from their pinnacle-perched home, first the great flaming ball of sunlight touch the shining water-line of the wide horizon; then in breathless silence they used to watch the glowing disk sink slowly, slowly down out of sight, till its upper rim vanished. Just as it disappeared, and while yet long golden rays of sunlight were streaming up against the rosy western sky, there came from the Point where the forts stood, a sudden puff of white smoke, which had time to float quite away in filmy wreaths, away into the bright blue air which quivered with the reflected sunbeams, before 'boom' came the *sound* of the big gun nearly a minute afterwards, making Artie and Chattie shout with surprise, and rush to ask their Mamma how long it had been since the 'evening gun went off.' 'Quite half-an-hour at the very least,' Artie suggested, but accepted, with equal content, the assurance that it had not been much more than half a minute. Little Chattie, who was only about two years old, had no more distinct idea of time than calling it 'whiles;' thus a short time was, with him, 'a tiny whiles;' and when he heard his mother and brother discussing the time which had elapsed between the sight of the puff of smoke and the sound of the report, he used to nod his curly head gravely, and settle the question by saying—

"'Eesha, half a whiles.'

"The worst of these mountain homes in the St. Catherine Hills is, that they are very lonely. Generally speaking, the dwelling-houses are attached to coffee plantations, or 'walks,' as the negroes call them; and as the properties are of some extent, the distances between the houses are too great for social purposes. But Mrs. Elmslie was fortunate in having one charming neighbour, a Mrs. Grant, who used sometimes to come over to 'the Pines,' as Mr. Elmslie's mountain-cottage was called, and spend a long day with her and the little boys. Mrs. Grant had several children, and as she did not like to leave them all behind at Percy Cottage, she generally brought two with her, seated in basket-panniers, on a mule's back.

"These Coffee-mules'

Mules used for transporting coffee beans that are grown abundantly in Jamaica.

are wonderfully careful and sure-footed, spending their whole lives in plodding up and down the narrow hill-tracks with a great bag of coffee packed on each side. Their chief anxiety seemed to be to keep the bag or sack which was inside from being rubbed against the side of the rocks which arose on one side of the way like a wall, whilst on the other was a sheer descent, whose depth was fortunately concealed from view by the splendid cotton and cedar trees which clothe the mountain sides of beautiful Jamaica. Do you know why the mules are so careful to avoid rubbing a hole in the side of the coffee-bag? I will tell you. Because they very soon found out that if a sharp projection of rock tore a hole in the canvas, all the coffee-berries streamed out on the road with great rapidity. I am afraid they would hardly have been unselfish enough to regret this sudden lightening of their load on account of the waste of the fragrant little greenish nuts; but they were quite clever enough to learn, after one or two accidents, that as soon as the inside bag emptied itself into the road, the balance of the pack was destroyed, and the outer sack, still full and heavy, tipped up the saddle, and generally upset the mule down the precipice. After this had happened once or twice to a coffee-mule, he took very good care to keep well to the edge of the path; and when I rode one, and tried to urge him to go a little nearer to the cliff on the inside of the ladder-path which we were climbing, I found it impossible to do so, as the firm belief had got into his obstinate head that I was a sack of coffee, and must be dealt with accordingly.

"Mrs. Grant therefore had no fears for the safety of little Clara and the pickle Tom, who could never be trusted out of his mother's sight, during their early morning ride to 'The Pines,' and she had gone over there as usual with these two little ones only a few days before the Christmas Day about which I am telling you. Most of the long summer day had to be passed by the children indoors; but they all played about very happily in a cool verandah looking due north, where they could watch the humming-birds flitting in and out of the tall aloe plants outside the little garden enclosure, for but scant level space could be found for turf or flowers in that hilly region. But there is no such thing as bareness in these tropic lands: gardening means pruning there; and Nature is exquisitely beautiful when left to herself to cover a hillside with her own luxuriant web and woof of creepers and shrubs.

"Just without the low garden-fence, and almost hidden from sight by its stone wall, was a large tank about

five feet deep, and some eight or ten feet long. This reservoir was intended to supply the house with water for scrubbing and washing purposes, and had lately been filled almost to the brink by the heavy rains which had fallen a week or two before. On its surface Mrs. Elmslie had thrown, just to try an experiment, some seeds of a water-lily bearing a beautiful blossom. The seeds had sunk to the bottom, and liking the slight layer of soil they found there, which had been blown into the tank from the hillside close by, they had taken root, and now covered the centre of the tank's surface with exquisite cup-like flowers. The children had often gazed at the bright blossoms with admiration, and more than once Clara had said:

"Oh, how I wish I could get some of those flowers for my mamma to make a picture of!"

"We can't get them except with a long stick, and when old Franz is with us."

"Mamma said we were never to get over this wall by ourselves."

That settled the question for Clara, but not for Tom or Chattie, who were both rather naughty and disobedient, poor little fellows, and especially liked attempting to do anything which they had been forbidden.

On this sad day the children were allowed to go out and play under the shade of the cedars rather earlier than usual, and Mrs. Hooper, the fat black nurse, received many injunctions not to allow them to go beyond the low stone wall which enclosed the garden. Now Mrs. Hooper was very trustworthy and devoted, except when she had a toothache, which was not an unusual malady with her, poor woman; and on this particular day she was afflicted with what Shakespeare calls a 'raging tooth.'

Reference to William Shakespeare's play *Othello*, wherein Act 3, Scene 3, Iago describes what kept him awake as "being troubled with a raging tooth".

In vain she tied up her head and stuffed all sorts of horrid compounds, made chiefly of pepper, into the hollow, decayed shell which was all Time had left of her beautiful strong white tooth. Nothing seemed to ease the dreadful torture; and as the children were playing happily in the garden, building little gipsy houses for themselves out of fallen twigs and broken sticks, Mrs. Hooper thought she would go into the house and get one of the other servants to put some creosote into the tooth. Before she left them, she charged Artie and Clara to see that neither Tom nor Chattie strayed beyond the garden, and desired them to call her if the two little ones proved troublesome.

All this time Mrs. Elmslie and Mrs. Grant were sitting quietly indoors reading and working, or chatting about the difficulties of managing children and servants in Jamaica.

"Tom is dreadfully wild and naughty," said Mrs. Grant, "and so venturesome, as his old nurse used to say. You know he is not three years old yet, and I assure you he is in every kind of mischief all day long. I am wretched if he is out of my sight. Where is he now, I wonder?"

"Oh, you may be quite happy about the little monkey," replied Mrs. Elmslie. "Hooper is with them, and she is accustomed to keep a sharp eye over Chattie, who will be quite as great a pickle when he is as old. He gets through a good deal in that line now, but Artie looks after him very carefully."

So the afternoon wore on until the long shadows warned Mrs. Grant that it was nearly time to think of her homeward ride; for Percy Cottage must be reached in daylight. There was no trusting to twilight, for darkness follows sunshine with hardly half an hour between, in the tropics.

"We will have tea now," said Mrs. Elmslie; "if you will call the children in, I will go and order a nice supper for them."

"Where are they?" asked Mrs. Grant; "I don't see them under the cedars."

"Oh, they can't be far off," replied Mrs. Elmslie; "I heard their little voices five minutes ago."

The two ladies walked out under the shade of the wide-spreading cedars; there they saw in freshly-plucked flowers already fading, and miniature wigwams of sticks and leaves, abundant evidence that the children had been there; but all was silent, though Mrs. Grant called anxiously, "Tom, where are you?"

"Surely you are not frightened?" Mrs. Elmslie said, laughingly, to her friend; "they can't get into any mischief here; and old Hooper is with them: but even as she spoke Mrs. Hooper came towards them from the house, in rather a dishevelled state as to her turban, crying—

"Miss Clara, Mass' Artie, where dem pickny got to? Oh, me good Missis! dis toot gwine for kill dis old ooman; my king! my king!"

"Where are the children?" answered Mrs. Grant; "when did you see them last?"

"Missis, me went get some tuff for dis toot, him altogeder too bad."

"It is very shady round here," said Mrs. Elmslie, leading the way to another and rather more distant part of the garden; but even as she spoke her heart died within her, as she remembered how low the wall was and how steep the hill on its other side—and then the tank! She hurried on, and her first feeling was one of deep relief and thankfulness when she saw both Artie and Clara,—rather muddy and dirty, it is true, but still safe and sound, standing close to the low wall, beneath which was the tank, leaning over the stone boundary and dabbling-in the water, apparently with long sticks.

"Those children have made their clothes damp, and must go in and change at once," she cried to Mrs.

Hooper, who was following her at a little distance. 'Tell Mrs. Grant they are here;' but even as she spoke Mrs. Grant came running up, saying still more anxiously—I

"'Yes, I see; but where is Tom?'"

"At the sound of their mothers' voices both the children turned round, showing deathly pale faces and wide open staring eyes, quite unlike their happy, joyous countenances.

"'Oh, Mamma!' screamed Clara, 'come quick; Tom is asleep in the tank, and We can't wake him!'"

"'And Chattie, too,' called out Arthur; 'make haste—make haste, Mamma!'"

"You may imagine with what rapid steps the two unhappy mothers, already guessing the worst, hurried towards the children, who had resumed their efforts with the long sticks. When Mrs. Grant and Mrs. Elmslie came up to the wall and looked over its low coping-stone, they saw a sight which I hope none of us mothers may ever behold. On the surface of the tank, among the broad green leaves and pink and white blossoms of Mrs. Elmslie's favourite lily, floated a little sunburnt straw hat; and, as if they had stranded on the shore, two large freshplucked leaves of a dwarf Sabal palm lay half in and half out of the water.

"'What are those? where are the boys?' asked Mrs. Grant and Mrs. Elmslie, almost in the same breath.

"'Those are their boats, Mamma dear,' sobbed poor Clara, who had given up her fruitless poking in the deep cistern, and, flinging her stick away, buried her head in her mother's gown. The two mothers, not daring to look at each other, bent over the low stone wall, and there saw—what at first they could not see for the shadow of the lily leaves—two little figures in the water, one quite at the bottom of the tank, and the other caught midway by the slender lily stems. They looked just as if they were asleep: peaceful and quiet they lay at the bottom of their perilous playground.

"I will not tell you, dears, of how the two poor mothers grieved and cried over their lost darlings, for you can easily imagine what your parents would feel if any accident happened to anyone of these precious little heads; but I will tell you how it came about, that you may see that disobedience was the origin of the dreadful death of these two children, just as surely as it caused the first sin in this beautiful world of ours.

"Artie gave a very clear narrative, and Clara, when appealed to, bore him out in every particular. It seems that after they had built their tiny houses they wanted some palm leaves with which to thatch them, as the negroes did; and knowing where some broad leaves grew, they set out to gather them. Mrs. Hooper, as we know, had left her little charges, and the two elder ones endeavoured faithfully to carry out her injunctions not to go beyond the garden wall. But, alas! the right sort of leaf for thatch could not be found anywhere except just below the tank. The children intended only to cut what they wanted, or rather to let Artie (who was the only one boasting of a pocket knife) cut as much as he thought sufficient, and then hasten back to the cedar-trees and the half-finished hut. But Chattie and Tom found such great delight in wandering among the tangled vegetation of the hill slope, that Clara and Artie had much ado to induce them to come towards the garden, and finally-suggested that they should come and float some of the big leaves on the tank. This unfortunate proposal was met with great glee, and they all four reached the forbidden spot in safety.

"'We never meant them to do it, dear Mamma,' sobbed Artie; 'we thought, when we got them there, that we could coax them on into the garden, but they would not come. At last Tom got tired of seeing his leaf float by itself, and said he would get on it and sail right away back to England; and Chattie said yes, he would do the same: and then when Clara and I found how naughty they were going to be, we came quite away and left them; and then when we went back again presently to see if they had wet their pinafores, we found that the leaves had no one on them, and that Chattie and Tom were both fast asleep at the bottom of the tank, and we tried to get them out and couldn't Oh! Mamma, don't you think they will ever wake up again?'"

"But you know, my darlings, without my telling you, that they never did wake up again, and that was what made us so sad as we listened to the story that Christmas evening."

## **Chapter IV. Christmas Day in Jamaica (*continued*).**

"BUT," continued Mrs. Owen, not wishing to send the children away to bed with sad faces and wet eyelashes, "it was not fated that Frances and I were to go to bed with tears in our eyes on our first Jamaica Christmas Day. Our guest—who by the way was the doctor who had been called in to see the poor little drowned children—had hardly finished answering the many and irrelevant questions which are so sure to follow a story, be it gay or grave, than we heard a curious distant sound of drums and shrieking fifes, and a great deal of singing and shouting.

"'Oh, here are the "Johnny Canoes,""

Johnny Canoes are a Jamaican tradition of dance, music, mime and symbology that developed from historical African dances. (Marcia Davidson, "John Canoe or Jonkonnu Parade," Jamaicans Online, <http://www.jamaicans.com/culture/intro/johncanoe.shtml>, last accessed July 2012).

said our father. 'Shut the gates, James; don't let them in.'

"'Oh *do*, Papa,' Frances and I pleaded, 'do let them in; we want to see them so much; and you know you always let us have just what we ask when we give you a kiss, both together at once—like this!'

"So poor Papa, like other fathers before and since, had to give in, and, as soon as he could speak for kisses, say, 'Very well, James, the young ladies wish it, so I suppose we must let them have their own way. Don't let the people get at any rum, or anything of the sort. Say I will give them some money to-morrow morning.'

"James did not like admitting these revellers by any means; and I must say that Frances and I would willingly have retracted our request as the noise drew nearer, and we saw coming up the street a great crowd of negroes, both men and women, dancing, waving torches, and singing at the highest pitch of their shrill voices. They were not particular what they sang, hymns or anything which came into their giddy heads, minded with snatches of 'Rule, Britannia,' or 'Daddy was a tailor, oh!' Presently, as the centre of the shifting, shouting throng turned the corner of the street and came in sight, we could discern masks and fancy dresses, and above all a sort of triumphal car in the shape of a canoe, filled with gaily-dressed negresses, and decorated with flags and garlands of flowers. It looked like a mixture of the Carnival at Rome,

Carnival is a tradition of celebrations before Lent, and at one point in history the Carnival at Rome was the biggest and most famous of the celebration held around the world (Virtual Roma, "Rome's Carnival," <http://roma.andreapollett.com/S1/roma-c16.htm>, last accessed July 2012). Here Lady Barker is comparing the costumes and colours of the Johnny Canoe to those of the famous Carnival.

and the best of our May-day sweeps, with a slight dash of Guy Fawkes;

May-day, the first of May, was a holiday for English chimney sweeps. They celebrated with parades and fanciful costumes, which is what Lady Barker is referring to here. (Andrew Graham Dixon Archive, <http://www.andrewgrahamdixon.com/archive/readArticle/94>, last accessed July 2012). Guy Fawkes Night is another annual English celebration held on the fifth of November to commemorate the failure of the Gunpowder Plot and the infamous Guy Fawkes to assassinate King James I.

only there was a picturesque grouping of colour and a thorough childlike gaiety in the revels, which seldom enters into English merrymakings.

"I must tell you that our house, like most in Spanish Town, was a large upstairs one, approached by a high double flight of steps, made of black and white marble, round the balustrades of which every imaginable creeper twined at its own sweet will, until the bannisters seemed to be made entirely of flowers. Then in each niche formed by the staircase, where it separated to lead down on either side, was a small grove of oleander, or South Sea roses. I tell you all this to help you to see us as we stood on the broad marble landing in the centre of the stairs; for we must have looked quite as picturesque and weird standing there under the bright starlight, surrounded by flowers, as our guests, who now came streaming into the courtyard, did. The negro has a keen eye for what is poetical and pretty, so the appearance of the little group leaning over the flowery balustrade, with the fireflies glittering about them, and the white dresses of the ladies gleaming out of the semi-darkness of the background, raised a shout of delighted approval

""'Top, till we dance for de young Missy! we show him for true how poor nigger can dance. Strike up, Johnny Canoe;' and Johnny Canoe did strike up, the most jig-like of tunes, and all the assistants at this open-air festival danced as if their lives depended on their exertions, singing and shouting in chorus as they flitted round and round the centre group in the green canoe. The inhabitants of this aerial boat, which was perched high up in a most insecure manner, were the only grave people in the assemblage. Their resting-place was so uncertain, and had such a tendency to topple over, that the gaily-dressed negresses inside were obliged to keep still unless they wished to overbalance the canoe. But they seemed to derive immense satisfaction from contemplating their own finery. They had feathers and flowers and real jewels all stuck into their frizzed-out wool, and Mamma told us that in old days masters and mistresses used to lend the slaves all their ornaments, and often buy their finery for them; and that the different sugar estates tried to rival and outdo each other in the splendour of their John-Canoeing. But since the Emancipation in '38.

Emancipation and the outlaw of slavery in Jamaica was declared in 1838. (Jamaica Information Service, "Emancipation," [http://www.jis.gov.jm/special\\_sections/This%20Is%20Jamaica/emancipation.html](http://www.jis.gov.jm/special_sections/This%20Is%20Jamaica/emancipation.html), last accessed July 2012).

this custom has been gradually dying out, and John-Canoe is nearly as much a thing of the past as Gog and Magog, only he has no statue to commemorate his former splendours.

Gog and Magog are mythical entities with a mixed history of both pagan worship and several passing references in the Christian Bible; for example Revelations 20:8 states "and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth —Gog and Magog —and to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore." In England they were declared the protectors of London and a statue of each can be found outside the Guildhall in London (The Lord Mayor's Show, "Gog and Magog," <http://lordmayorshow.org/history/gogmagog/>, last accessed July 2012).

"But to return to that Christmas night, with its soft perfumes, its star-beams filtering down on us through

the clear blue ether, and the strong contrast to the peace and beauty above our heads which the flaring torches and fantastic dancing figures made. To the merry jig and universal chorus succeeded a plaintive ditty, founded on some romantic story which had just touched their hearts. I remember hearing one woman, the leader of the soprano voices, chanting something about a white man and a white woman weeping together over a little grave under a mango-tree, and she said, 'Dem tears dey fall like rain, like de pearls round de Missis' neck, same as if you break de 'tring, and de pearl dey all drop down;' and so she went on, inventing her similes as she went. But it was a time for frolic, not sentiment; so the sad song was not encored, and a triumphal march of all the principal characters succeeded it. Round and round the uplifted canoe they paced with a swinging, dancing step, holding each other's hands, whilst the flare and flicker of the torches showed a strange medley of uniforms and fancy dresses—general officers and harlequins, sailors and judges with white wigs, looking irresistibly comic, crowning black and grinning countenances.

"At last Papa thought the fun and noise had gone on long enough, so he went to the top of the marble steps, and called out loud, 'Now, Johnny Canoe, I am getting tired and sleepy, so you must go away and let Massa go to sleep.'

"'Yes, good Massa, Johnny him go right 'way; but Johnny berry tirsty; please, good Massa, give him little drinky drinky.'

"'No, no, Johnny, Massa can't do that,' cried James, the butler, who was in readiness, 'key of cellar "gone a bush."

A favourite negro expression for "mis-laid."

Come to-morrow day, James give plenty quattie.'

A small silver coin, worth three-halfpence.

"After a little good-humoured chaffing and laughing James managed to get rid of the rollicky crew, and shut the court-yard gates, having first made the round of the premises with Turk, the great bloodhound, just to satisfy himself that no loiterer was concealed among the bushes with felonious intentions.

"So Frances and I went off to bed to dream of John-Canoes and drowned children, with poor Cousin Paul's grotesque face, all mingled together in the wildest confusion; for we were fairly overtired and over-excited by this our first Christmas Day in Jamaica."

## **Part III. Christmas Day in India.**

### **Chapter I. Christmas Day in India.**

WHEN we were all assembled the next afternoon, for story-telling and hearing, the first remark Jack made was to express a hope that the other Christmas Day which we were going to hear about would have been spent in a cold climate. For his part, he could not bear the idea of a broiling hot Christmas Day; it would not seem like the real thing at all unless there was snow and ice.

"I am very sorry, dear," replied Mrs. Owen. "I wish for your sake, that I had gone to the North Pole with some of our explorers; but I am afraid in the first place they would not have taken me; and in the next, if they had done so, it is just possible I might not have returned to tell you about it."

"No, no, Aunt Owen," said warm-hearted Irish Nora, "we would not have had you go there on any account. We like you to be here now; and we like listening to stories about warm climates. "Why," continued Nora, appealing to the rest of the small audience, "it's so nice to hear about sunshine, and flowers, and all sorts of bright things, when it is so dark and cold outside."

"That's right, Nora," echoed Cathy; "we shall like hearing about a hot Christmas Day very much. Where was it passed this time, dear Mrs. Owen?"

"Well, I am afraid I must tell you about an Indian Christmas, the only one I ever spent in that country, for it is the next in order. I say 'afraid,' because it really was rather a hot one; though I will begin with an account of icemaking, to cool Jack if he finds my story too sunny. You must know that on the Christmas Day I am going to tell you about to-night, I was living in a tent, or rather in two tents, for we had to use them on alternate days,—and I formed one of a great many people—ten thousand souls in all—who were marching up the country, from Lucknow to the Punjaub, far away to the North-west of Bengal, on what is called in India a tour of inspection. I don't know that I ever inspected anything except the shops at every station we passed, but at all events I had the honour and glory of belonging to the camp.

"Of course we saw a good deal during this gipsy journey, but I am not going to tell you about anything except the events of the Christmas Day spent in a tent. I remember thinking when I opened my eyes, and saw the blue and white striped lining of the pointed ceiling, and my saddle laid across the back of a chair outside in

the verandah, that it did not feel a bit like Christmas, although it was not particularly hot; but still it was so unlike a *real* Christmas that I felt rather melancholy until I got up and dressed, and went into the centre partition of the tent for my 'chota haseri,' or 'little breakfast.'

"There I saw a large tray heaped up with bunches of flowers, wreaths and garlands of green leaves, and sweetmeats of every description. Among the flowers lay two necklaces formed of tufts of scented cotton, made into an oval shape by silver thread wound round them, and fastened together by little rosettes of crimson silk. I felt very much surprised and delighted to see the flowers, because they were very scarce and difficult to procure in the jungle; and a bouquet was regarded as a great treasure in camp. Yet here were beautiful Gûlistan roses (the exquisitely sweet little rose from which the attar is made), and English mignonette, and sweet-scented verbena and jasmine. Evidently the native servants must have taken extraordinary pains and trouble to procure me this treat; and my syce, or groom, had added an offering in the shape of a pair of parroquets, in a little bamboo cage. Of course they all expected return gifts, according to the Indian custom; but still I was very much touched and pleased by the attention, and felt directly much more as if it were the Blessed Day.

"There was to be no marching that day; we were to be given twenty-four hours' rest,—a great boon to the tired tent-pitchers and to the crowd of native servants, who could have had very little personal comfort during their camp life, especially as they disliked the cold of the nights and early mornings extremely. The sun in the middle of the day was intensely hot, but at the end of the year, and with our steps bent due north, the nights were cold enough to form the least light film of ice on a shallow surface of water. At first it seemed very odd to be invited to come and see 'ice made.' 'In a machine?' I naturally inquired. 'Oh no; out of doors.' So upon this Christmas morning, as there was no long ride before us, and from habit I had got up and dressed as early as usual, I went to see ice made.

"I don't quite know what sort of process I imagined I should behold, but certainly it seemed very odd to be shown a field covered with straw, exactly as if bricks were being manufactured there, and among this straw were packed rows and rows of shallow brown earthenware saucers, about the size and shape of those we use at breakfast, which had been filled with water over-night. Now, in the grey dawn, before the sun had risen to dissolve with his earliest beams the effects of the slight frost of the night before, hundreds of Coolies

Coolie was a European term for Asian workers who were used as cheap labour in places like India, and were not treated much better than slaves. (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, online edition, last accessed July 2012).

were employed in collecting these saucers, and turning out the little flat cakes of ice which had formed in them, to be rapidly re-packed in an ice-house near, which I afterwards visited.

"The ice-collectors have to be up very early, for their work must be over before sunrise, or else adieu to that night's ice. It would have changed back again into a few drops of water as surely and as swiftly as Cinderella's coach returned to its pumpkin shape at the magic midnight hour.

"'Who pays these men?' I inquired.

"'The Ice Club,' answered my guide. 'At every station up country there is a club formed, whose members subscribe so many rupees

The rupee was (and is) the currency used in India.

a year, and this pays for the labour of collecting the ice during these few cool weeks, and storing it for summer use.'

"The ice-house was most scientifically built, with an elaborate system of drainage, and tremendously thick walls and roof; and altogether the impression conveyed to my ignorant mind was that ice had to be treated like a tiny baby, and kept very warm indeed; but the plan answered very well, and during the scorching summer months the icehouse was opened once a day, and so many *seers* of ice distributed to each subscriber.

"'What did we do next?' Well, I think we had breakfast next, and after breakfast a full churchservice in the Commander-in-chief's tent, and then lunch, and after lunch I had my famous adventure with the Ghoorka, which I promised to tell you about.—No, Georgie dear, a Ghoorka is *not* a monkey; it is the name given to a very hardy mountain tribe, from which some of *out* best native light regiments in India are recruited.—The men of the Ghoorka race are wonderfully small, but as active and brave as wild cats, and quite as fearless. They seem to know neither fatigue nor hunger and thirst, when on duty; but have been known to march steadily for hours under a burning sun, when the men of other regiments were knocking up and falling out of the ranks one after the other. They have the reputation of being very high caste,

The caste system in India is a strictly structured system of social hierarchy, from those with high caste status like the Ghoorka mentioned here, down to the lowest class "untouchables". (Mount Holyoke College, "History of the Caste System in India," <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/~epandit/page2.html>, last accessed July 2012).

and consequently extremely scrupulous about their religious observances; but their character in the camp stood high for good behaviour, and a quiet orderly performance of their duties. Their own encampment was pitched rather to the rear of the principal tents, between them and the Highlanders'

The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders were an army regiment stationed in India from 1855 to 1870. (The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, "India, 1857-1880," <http://www.argylls.co.uk/history-of-the-regiment/the-93rd-sutherland-highlanders-1799-1881/india-1857-1880>, last accessed July 2012).

camp. I don't know whether I have ever told you how orderly these great camps in India are. After the first day or two, as soon as every one has found out his place, there is no confusion or difficulty; each soldier and each camp-follower or servant knows exactly where he is to go to: consequently the profound quiet, and absence of all fuss or hurry, is wonderful, when you consider that ten thousand people change their position to one twenty-five miles ahead, every day.

"After luncheon, or 'tiffin' as it is called in India, on Christmas Day, I felt rather at a loss to know what to do with myself; for not having had a long ride in the morning, I was not sleepy or inclined for my usual mid-day nap. I had read all the English newspapers by the last mail through and through; and as for work, if I attempted to put in a stitch, my *durzie* or tailor used to come with a melancholy face and ask the 'Protector of the Poor,' or the 'Pearl of the Universe' (to either of which titles I answered quite readily), why she needed to work when her faithful Mirza was there to save her all trouble. In vain I protested that I liked to work: the *durzie* stuck steadily to his point, that it was not the custom for 'Burra Mem-sahibs,' or great ladies, to sew; and he fairly tormented me into giving way and letting him do all the needlework wanted.

"Sometimes, on other days, I used to go out on the shikari elephant,

A shikari was a hunter of big game, or a guide in India (*Merriam Webster Dictionary*, online edition, last accessed July 2012), a shikari elephant was an elephant used by the shikari for transportation.

and watch the sportsmen of the camp bring down red-legged partridges, hares, quails, &c, with their guns; but we felt it right to give everybody a holiday on Christmas Day, so that resource for whiling away a long afternoon was denied to me. As I lay back lazily in my dear folding-up arm-chair, which had accompanied me for so many thousand miles by land and sea, I suddenly remembered that I had long owed a visit to the wife of a Colonel, whose tent was pitched at a short distance.

"I will go and see her now,' I cried, jumping up: 'how glad I am I have at last thought of something to do;' and I slipped off to my own portion of the tent, to put on my shady pith hat and my gloves. Now this was very naughty and disobedient of me, and you will see by my story that it is no safer for grown-up people to disobey orders than it is for little ones. I had been expressly told that I must only return visits made to me in camp in the cool of the evening, and that I was *never* to go alone. I had a vivid recollection of having set out to make some calls a few afternoons before, and of being surrounded by servants as soon as my intention became known. One great white-headed man held an umbrella over my head, a second carried my card-case, whilst a third went on before to see if the ladies were at home, or if their 'door was shut.' This appeared to me, with my independent English habits, a most ridiculous and formal way of going to see my acquaintances, and I secretly resolved not to sally forth again in a procession to pay visits. Consequently I rejoiced at the opportunity of getting away without being seen by any one. A minute sufficed for my toilet, and as I could see Mrs. I Urquhart's tent from the back of mine, only a couple of hundred yards away, I thought I was really quite big enough to go and visit her by myself.

"To reach that part of the camp, my path lay through the canvas stables and cooking tents, at the rear of the principal canvas street, and had to cross one corner of the Ghoorka encampment. All was orderly and quiet. The cooks and their numerous assistants were squatting in front of the little mud ovens in the open air, over which they prepared such wonderful and elaborate dishes for us every day. The syces, and grass-cutters, and water-carriers

Syces, grass-cutters, and water-carriers were all types of Indian attendants or servants used by the English. (*Merriam Webster Dictionary*, online edition, last accessed July 2012).

were lying and sitting in groups, smoking their pipes, and discussing the merits of the respective steeds under their care, whilst equal peace and quiet reigned supreme among the Ghoorkas. Scarcely a man was to be seen in their encampment; and as I was going straight across country, my path led me near one of the few men of that tribe who had not betaken himself to sleep in the shade. This individual, as I heard afterwards, was of high caste, and very strict in the observance of its rites and ceremonies. At that moment he was in an extra state of purity and holiness, having performed his ablutions

Ablutions are a ceremonial cleansing or washing of the body. (*Merriam Webster Dictionary*, online edition, last accessed July 2012).

at his leisure, said his longest prayers, and was just preparing to eat his breakfast, which was quite ready for him in a brass *lota* or cooking vessel, simmering over a few bits of charcoal by his side. These people only make one meal in twenty-four hours, so it is to be presumed that the Ghoorka had a fine appetite, which the savoury smell of his curry and rice tended to increase.

"As I approached, I could not help admiring the extreme neatness of the little soldier's appearance and

arrangements. His uniform was tidily folded up and laid on a clean cloth, his knapsack and accoutrements were near him, and so were his weapons. He was only clad in a white cotton vest and voluminous white drawers, gathered, native-fashion, into a girdle around his waist; and his bare shaven head looked like a bronze-coloured billiard ball, so smooth and shining was it. On his forehead and cheeks he had stuck one or two wafers of red cloth, to tell all whom it concerned that he had said such and such prayers. He was so absorbed in his cooking, that he did not perceive me until I was quite near him, and then he never suspected who I was, seeing me walking alone in such undignified fashion. As I came near he called out some word of warning which I had never heard before, and took for an equivalent of 'Good day,' so I smiled and nodded and went on past his *lota* of food; unluckily I had never noticed that my shadow must fall across it

As a member of a high caste, the Ghoorka here obviously observed strict purification rituals and the narrator's shadow falling across his food would make it impure to him, unless I changed my course. The Ghoorka waved his hand impatiently, but I never guessed that he was telling me to keep further away; and as I wanted to get to Mrs. Urquhart's tent as quickly as possible, I did not swerve from the straight path which led to it. Another rapid step or two brought me near enough to the *lota* and its contents for my shadow to fall completely over it.

"Up jumped the Ghoorka with a wild howl of outrage and fury. He rushed at the unoffending but defiled cooking vessel, and with one vigorous kick sent it flying half-a-dozen yards off, scattering its savoury contents on the dusty sward. His next movement was towards his weapons, and in far less time than it takes me to tell you, he had drawn his long glittering knife or rather dagger from its scabbard, and, holding it high up in the air, rushed at me like a wild animal, his eyes glaring with hatred, and his thin lips drawn back from his shining white teeth, which looked as if they were going to bite me. I could not understand a word he said or rather screamed at me, but the pantomime was only too expressive. I gathered my muslin skirts closely round me and prepared to fly for my life; in other words, to see which could run the fastest, the Ghoorka or I!

"Yes, it is all very well to laugh at it now, but just then it was not in the least amusing; for, although I was so surrounded by people, help there was none, for no one knew what was going on. Instead of making for Mrs. Urquhart's tent, which was close by, I turned and fled towards my own; and I well remember deciding as rapidly as thought on this course, from a dislike of making my first appearance before a strange lady pursued by a frantic Ghoorka. Luckily for me, in those long-ago days, I was a slim, active young lady, instead of the fat old woman who likes now to sit in an arm-chair and tell stories; so, having a few yards' start, I held my own very well. But when I drew near the back of the large tents my troubles began, for their ropes stretched to an immense distance, and I could not make up my mind to keep far out, which would have been the wisest course, but I tried to get to them as near as I could, hoping some one would see or hear me, and run out to my help.

"Racing people say, 'It's the pace that kills,' and so I found it, especially in the steeplechase which my race soon became; for a whole line of sloping ropes stretched before me, and over these I leapt with the most wonderful agility, dreading at each jump that some of my petticoats would get entangled and throw me down, in which case there probably would have been no story-telling to-day on *my* part!

"After I had bounded over a few of these horrible ropes, I began to feel that my speed was slackening, and that the Ghoorka was gaining on me; another jump brought him so close to me that I could hear his panting breath, and I was fast losing all hope and courage, for my own tent was still some way off, when I saw through an uplifted purdah, or curtain-door, a group of young officers sitting smoking inside what I remembered was the mess-tent, close by. I had no voice to scream, nor could I spare time to make a sign. Before they could see me, or have the least idea of what danger I was in, I darted under the purdah, and into the tent, like a swallow pursued by a hawk, and flung myself right into the arms of the biggest and strongest-looking person present. Yes, that was all I cared for—some one who could save me from my terrible enemy. I nearly knocked down the poor man into whose arms I rushed, and certainly frightened him out of his wits; but big as he was, he would not have been able to save me, if some other officers near the door had not seized the Ghoorka as he dashed in after me, and one—with more presence of mind than the rest—knocked the uplifted knife out of his hand. I did not feel safe even then, but trembled and cried like a great baby, and insisted on having the knife given to me to hold. I have it now, and there it hangs, above the Indian tulwars,

A talwar is a type of curved sword (Social Science Dictionary, "talwar," <http://history.socialsciencedictionary.com/Medieval-Dictionary-D/talwar>, last accessed July 2012), tulwar as it is spelled here is either an error on Lady Barker's part, or a regional variation in the spelling.

over the fireplace; and I never look at it without remembering how nearly my disobedience cost me my life on Christmas Day.

"Does Cathy want to know what became of the Ghoorka? That is the worst part of the story. It seems the poor man had always been a fanatic, and my insult, as he regarded it, had driven him quite mad. He knew his life would pay for mine if he had overtaken and stabbed me, but that was of small consequence in his eyes compared to the burning desire to avenge his slighted faith. For my part I shall always think that hunger made

him as desperate as it does animals, for in consequence of my unlucky shadow, not only was his dinner spoiled and rendered unclean, unfit for food, but his law forbade him to prepare any more until the same time next day; so he had the prospect of forty-eight hours' fast before him.

"After he was seized he continued to invoke death and destruction on my sacrilegious head, and at the drum-head court-martial, which was hastily summoned, he boldly declared his wish and intention to kill me as soon as possible. I did my best to get him off, though I had but little breath or voice in which to give my evidence; in vain I took all the blame upon myself, and entreated that he might be forgiven. The sullen prisoner would only dart vengeful fiery glances at me, and say, 'She has no business to live; she shall die.'

"Poor wretch! he was sentenced to be shot at sundown, not only for his chase after me, but on account of his mutinous language to his officers. In fact he was perfectly reckless and mad, and evidently thought he might just as well die as go without food for another day.

"But this execution would have been a very dreadful ending to my first and only Christmas Day in India, and I am happy to say that it did not take place. I enlisted every person of authority in camp on my side, or rather the prisoner's side. I cried like a baby, I believe I tore my hair; at all events I made such a fuss, vowing that I should kill myself if the man were shot, for that it was all my fault, that at last some clever person thought of a technical loophole by which the Ghoorka might escape. The court assembled again; I stood outside the tent (for I could not be admitted) and sobbed all the time in the most heartrending manner; and at last, to my great joy, the sentence was altered to a long imprisonment, and the captive was marched off under a strong escort, very hungry and very revengeful, wishing that he had been shot, and assuring me that he would kill me on the first opportunity."

"Weren't you frightened lest he should get away and do it?" demanded Gerald.

"No, she had his knife," answered Georgie, who thought that possession not only meant the nine points of the law, but as many points of safety.

"I felt very unhappy, my dears, for a long time," said Mrs. Owen, "for the man's imprisonment was owing to my disobedience. If I had only minded what I was told by those who knew the country better than I did, he would never have been shut up in a horrid prison, but lived free and happy among his native hills."

## **Chapter II. Christmas Day in India (*continued*).**

"BY the time the excitement caused by the Ghoorka had died away, and the man had actually been sent off on the first stage of his journey to Umballah under a strong guard (for it was not considered safe to keep him in camp that night), it was getting time for us to think of dressing for dinner. We were all invited to dine with the Commander-in-chief, and a very pleasant Christmas dinner we had, only I need not describe it to you, for boys and girls do not care to hear about a dinner-party unless something dreadful happened at it—some accident to the plumpudding, or some catastrophe among the servants. But the 'Jungy-Lord-Sahib' or Mr. Fighting-Lord's domestic arrangements were in too good order for anything funny to happen in his establishment, and the dinner went off without any particular incident. After coffee had been served our host proposed that we should adjourn to a large open pavilion in front of the tent, and listen to the music of the band of one of the native regiments who were marching with us.

"It promised to be a delightful ending to a delightful evening, so we all proceeded thither, each person (except the few ladies) carrying his own chair, for there was no such thing in camp as a spare chair. We always took our own seats with us, and expected our guests to bring theirs, to any of the numerous parties which took place during our sociable, pleasant camp life.

"How well I remember the whole scene! Before us stretched out the principal street of large White tents, guarded at each end by a double row of sentries, from whose musket-barrels the bright moon-rays glimmered, shining in slender, glistening lines of light amid the gloom. Beyond these slowly pacing figures lay a perfectly flat, open country, its monotony broken here and there by a clump of bushes or a grove of mango-trees. To right and left, at the rear of the wide canvas street, were dotted, in seeming confusion, hundreds of smaller tents of various sizes and shapes, but they were mostly hidden from our sight as we sat under the large square canopy called the Pavilion. Not only was the scene thoroughly strange, but even the distant sounds told how far away we were from home. Every now and then a wretched pariah or wild dog would come near a sentry, gaining courage if the man stood still for a few moments, to dart back again into the jungle with a snarl or a yelp when the soldier moved. In the pauses of the music we could plainly hear the horrid joyless laugh of the hyæna or the distant howl of a prowling wolf. The gurgle of the camels, or the sudden trumpeting of an elephant afflicted by nightmare, broke in upon the familiar tunes which recalled our distant homes to many of us, and we were fast becoming a silent, if not a sad, little group, when one of the officers present, whose wife was in England, drew out of his pocket a case of ornaments and showed it to us, saying that he had been amusing himself all day by thinking of her pleasure when she received this Christmas gift.

"It will be nearly Midsummer when she gets it,' he admitted; 'but still I consider it a Christmas present all the same.'

"We admired to his heart's content the magnificent golden bangles with the jewelled dragons' heads; and then we began to talk about the native ornaments. Delhi had been one of our latest encampments, and we had all been buying pretty things in the tempting Chandnee Chowk—the street of gold and silver. One lady showed us her set of amethyst studs, beautifully carved in Oordoo characters; and we compared each other's purchases, deciding that the husbands whose wives were away had shown the softest hearts towards the Delhi jewellers, and had bought more from them for their absent dear ones than those gentlemen whose wives were on the spot to restrain their extravagance.

"During our gay chatter, one lady of the party remained quite still and silent, neither looking at glittering bracelets and brooches, nor taking any interest in the discussion. She wore no ornament herself, except her wedding-ring; no locket nor earring, nor trinket of any kind, smartened her quiet toilet. Of course we could not venture to ask her any questions about this severe simplicity, which was the more remarkable as her husband was a very rich man, and well known to be as generous as he was brave. Perhaps she felt instinctively how much, puzzled we all must be to account for her unfeminine indifference to pretty things, for she said, half apologetically—

"I used to be very fond of buying ornaments, or rather of Tom's buying them for me, and he often wants to give me heaps of lovely trinkets now, but I lost all mine in such a sad way that I shall never care to possess any more.'

"I think I may say that the same idea occurred instantly to everyone of Mrs. Burton's hearers, and that idea was, that we should like to hear *how* she lost her jewels; yet we hesitated to ask her boldly, only turning such beseeching faces towards her that she guessed what we wished, and said—

"It is quite too sad a story to tell on Christmas Day; we ought not to revive those dreadful recollections of the Mutiny

The Mutiny refers to the Indian rebellion of 1857, when Indian soldiers rebelled and attacked the English officers. Stability to the rule of the English was restored by 1858 (BBC History, "British India and the 'Great Rebellion'," [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/victorians/indian\\_rebellion\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/victorians/indian_rebellion_01.shtml), last accessed July 2012).

at this season of peace and goodwill.'

"Now, if there was one thing more than another for which I had a passion at that time, it was for listening to stories about the Mutiny, and I often lamented in secret over the difficulty I found in inducing anyone to tell them to me. Looking back, it is easy to see how painful such recollections must have been to the actors in those terrible scenes, but in those days I was only too apt to think of what I wanted at the moment, like other young people of my acquaintance—ahem!

"At all events, I must have cast very imploring glances at Mrs. Burton's kind face, for she addressed herself to me and asked—

"Do you mean to say, you bright little creature, that you would like to be told a long, rambling story of old hardships and dangers to-night, when we are all sitting here so comfortably and quietly?"

"I should certainly have said 'Yes,' but there was no time for me to speak; every lady, knowing that Mrs. Burton was the queen of story-tellers, said, as if there was but one voice amongst them—

"Oh, please let us hear all about it.'

"Well, if I must, I must,' said Mrs. Burton; 'but I warn you, it is not at all a suitable story for Christmas Day.'

"Any story is suitable,' proclaimed one of her listeners, 'so long as it is interesting.'

"I don't even know whether this is interesting to others; of course, I can never forget it; but, at all events, you shall hear it, since you wish to do so.

"Colonel Burton's regiment had been quartered at Meerut ever since our marriage; and as I had known no other station in India, I had grown to be very fond of my first foreign home. Our bungalow was a nice cool one, and all our pretty wedding presents, and new furniture and books, gave it a thoroughly English and comfortable appearance. After Harry was born we made a point of getting away to the hills every hot season, and I was beginning to think of packing up for our usual summer visit to Nynee Thal, when Tom horrified me by suggesting that if I went at all I must go without him, as he did not like to leave his regiment. He was evidently ill at ease about the state of affairs all through the country, and often said he could not imagine how the other commanding officers could take so little notice of things which he considered sure signs of a coming outbreak.

"I need not explain to all of you gentlemen what were the signs which alarmed him, and the ladies would not understand the importance, in a native's eyes, of what we call trifles. As the hot season approached there seemed less likelihood than ever of our getting away; for, in spite of Harry's pale cheeks and failing spirits, I could not make up my mind to set out and leave Colonel Burton behind at Meerut. Early in May I remember

there was some talk of our misunderstanding with the Sepoys

The Sepoys were the Indian soldiers who rebelled in the Mutiny (BBC History, "British India and the 'Great Rebellion'," [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/victorians/indian\\_rebellion\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/victorians/indian_rebellion_01.shtml), last accessed July 2012).

having been removed, and that the poor fellows were more loyal and devoted to their officers than ever; but Tom was not deceived by this lull before the storm. One evening, after a grand parade, where the native non-commissioned officers had been hearing and making affectionate speeches, and had been allowed to come up to the carriages where the ladies and the little children were seated and speak to them, Tom took me into our garden and showed me a ruinous well, hidden by tangled creepers, and half choked up with fallen stones and rubbish. He looked carefully round to see that no one was watching us, and, stooping down, removed the dense thorny covering of matted, trailing branches which effectually concealed the brickwork.

"Do you think you and Harry could get down here?" he asked.

"No, certainly not!" I cried. "Why should I get into such a horrid place? It is probably full of snakes and animals of all kinds. I would not get into it for the world!"

"Don't be childish," Tom answered very gravely; 'it is a capital hiding-place; and I have been looking out for some hole which you could creep into on a pinch for the last month. I can tell you I thought myself in luck when I found this. There are no snakes, and the jump won't hurt you, or you could even get down this way if you liked better;' and Tom stepped cautiously on a stone which projected from the side, and then, on the loop of a vine, reached the bottom easily.

"I think I see his face now,' continued Mrs. Burton, covering her own with her hand,' so pale and haggard, yet trying to smile at me. I noticed, for the first time as I looked down on him, how old he was beginning to look, quite grey and worn.'

"Come, come,' chimed in the Colonel, who was among the listeners, 'if you are going to make personal remarks I had better get out of the way, for one doesn't like to hear one's wife calling attention to any little defects in one's appearance. Perhaps you intend to inform the company the exact date at which you first observed that I was getting rather bald;' and the Colonel held down his bare and shining pate for the better inspection of its smooth, hairless surface.

"Yes, go away, Tom, there's a dear,' said Mrs. Burton; 'I never can tell a story properly if you are by.' So great, big, good-natured Colonel Tom walked off to finish his cheroot during his stroll up and down the grassy street which laid so quiet before us in the moonlight.

"We were afraid to remain a moment longer at that neglected part of the garden, lest our servants should suspect anything unusual, but as we strolled towards the house Tom bade me notice exactly where the mouth of the well was hidden, in case I wanted to find it suddenly, or in the half darkness of an Indian night. He urged me not to give way to foolish nervousness, saying, "Remember, you will have Harry's life to take care of as well as your own." That thought made me brave and strong directly, and I listened attentively whilst my husband told me exactly what to do in case of danger. He knew enough of the native character to be sure that if any outbreak took place, it would be at a moment when the officers must be away from their homes on duty at the barracks or elsewhere; so he took great pains to explain to me how I was to act when the hour of danger struck.

"We were obliged to be very careful not to allow our servants to suspect that we had the least anxiety on our minds; and the most dreadful part of all that time was the *acting* which went on. We parted every day feeling that we might never meet again, and yet Tom's last words—spoken for the servants to hear—were always of some gay project which we pretended to have on hand. By his directions, I carefully stole, one at a time, and day by day, the trinkets out of my dressing-case, wrapping up bits of wood and stones in their place. Tom collected every rupee he could lay his hands on, without his *bearer's* or valet's knowledge (for the bearer always keeps the purse in India), and we packed our money and small valuables in a little leather bag, which I always wore under my dress like a pocket.

"How long those first ten days of May seemed! each wearily dragging its hot hours along with leaden feet, as we thought; and yet the terrible moment was hurrying towards us all too soon, before we were half ready. Sunday came at last, and among its blessed comforts one of the greatest to me was that we were all together on that day. I always felt safer on Sunday than on any other day, and it was a great disappointment to me when on this, the second Sunday in May, I awoke in the morning with such a headache that I could not go to church. Tom stayed at home with me, saying he had to attend a church parade with his regiment at sunset. I remember how grave and anxious he was all day, and when I, thinking he was uneasy about my headache, tried to make light of it, he told me he was not unhappy about so slight an ailment.

"I am sure that the end is not far off," he said, "or rather the beginning. Remember, the moment it comes, at whatever hour of the day or night, snatch up Harry in your arms, don't stop for anything on earth, but go straight to that well in the garden. Hide yourself in it, and wait there for me. If I am alive, I will come and look

for you in that spot within twelve hours. If I am killed, why then you are better there than anywhere else. But don't stir out of it till I come for you."

"My head grew worse and worse as the hot stifling day passed on. Towards the evening the pain became so bad that I resolved as soon as Tom started for the barracks to go to bed, and the moment he left the house I went into my room and undressed; but feeling easier I thought I would try if an hour's sleep on the sofa would do me any good. I must tell you that I had never parted from my precious bag, day or night, for many weeks; but the heat of that Sunday was so insupportable that instead of fastening it round my waist I put it under the pillow of the sofa and laid down in my white muslin dressinggown, to go to sleep if I could. But to sleep was not an easy matter in these anxious times. I felt easier and more rested lying there, but I could not sleep until I knew that Tom had returned home. I listened to the distant sound of the band playing in chorus out of the "Elijah" as it marched to church, and the time seemed long as I waited to hear the sunset gun which I knew would be fired about the time that service was over; then Tom would come home, and I should feel secure for a few hours longer.

"Although it was not a dark evening, the servants commenced bringing in lamps earlier than usual. I sent for the Khansamah or butler, and asked why the house was lighted up before dark. He assured me it was the ordinary hour, and entreated me to let the men do their usual duty, or else in future they would make excuses for being late with the lamps. I thought it odd, but as Tom had specially charged me to avoid all fault-finding with the servants, I pretended to be satisfied and gave up the point, thinking that Tom would say the house looked as if a ball was going on in it, when he saw, a long way off, such an illumination through the open windows and doors.

"Next to my large and now brilliantly lighted bedroom was the nursery, and I heard the ayah

An "ayah" was an Indian nursemaid. (*Merriam Webster Dictionary*, online edition, last accessed July 2012).

## **"When I looked up I saw the Ayah with the most extraordinary expression of face I had ever seen."—p. 207**

crooning a little song to Harry as she put him to sleep. Her monotonous chant made me so drowsy that I was just dozing off, when she startled me by touching my arm and saying, "Will the mem-sahib come and look at the baba-sahib?"

Sahib was a word used in India when addressing the English as a ruling class; mem-sahib is the female form used for European ladies and baba-sahib a diminutive for the child. (*Merriam Webster Dictionary*, online edition, last accessed July 2012).

he is not well."

"In a second I was wide awake, and, thrusting my bare feet into my slippers, followed her into the nursery. There I found Harry, flushed indeed, but sleeping soundly and with no trace of fever about him. I told the ayah I thought there was nothing the matter with the child—he was about two years old then—but she persisted that he had a rash. I stooped down over the crib, and examined him carefully. When I looked up I saw that the ayah had collected all the candlesticks in the room on one table near which she was standing, with the most extraordinary expression of face I had ever seen. It was solemn and awe-stricken, but her dark eyes gleamed with intense watchfulness and anxiety. I gazed at her in silent surprise as she stood there looking so unlike, in her excitement, to her usual apathetic self wrapped in calm indifference. She had nursed Harry ever since he was born, and the little fellow loved her with all his heart, but I never could tell whether she returned his affection; for although perfectly kind to the child, she did not make as much fuss about him as the other servants did.

"Somehow I could not speak, but stood silently by Harry's bedside watching the ayah, who was not looking at us, but gazing eagerly out of the window, as if she were looking for a signal. And so she was, poor faithful creature! She had not dared to warn me sooner, but had devised the false alarm of Harry's pretended feverishness in order to bring me to his side at that awful moment. Through the fast-gathering darkness, through the profound stillness and repose of that Sunday afternoon, came the long-looked-for signal. The sunset gun boomed out sharp and sudden through the heavy silent air, one instant's pause succeeded the report, and then the great Mutiny had broken out, and there arose a wild yell from thousands of dusky throats, and the whole place was alight with a hideous dawn from the burning bungalows, barracks, churches, every dwelling which could act as a torch. In a second, in less time than it takes me to tell you, the ayah had blown out the lights so as to secure that one spot of darkness amid my brilliantly lighted house, and I felt her muslin drapery brush by me as she passed, only pausing to whisper in my ear, "Take the child and go—he will sleep sound."

"I had snatched poor little Harry up from his crib even as she spoke, and holding him tightly clasped in my arms reached the back door of the nursery by the time she had opened it. I would fain have lingered to thank

and bless the good creature for her devotion and courage, but she pushed me out into the garden, and I heard her lock the door behind me and take out the key. From that moment to this I have never heard or seen anything of her.

"It seems strange to me, looking back on it, how little alarm or doubt I felt now that the worst had come. There was the shelter of the friendly well, and I held Harry in my arms. It seemed to me therefore that I was quite well provided for and comfortable, as I softly picked my way among the tangled shrubs and rubbish of that neglected part of the garden, stooping down as low as I could, until I reached the cover afforded by a few yards of wall. Then I ran swiftly on until I saw—for my eyes were gradually becoming accustomed to the dim twilight out of doors—that I was near the opening Tom had shown me. Holding Harry with one arm, I knelt on the rough earth, and, removing the branches from the mouth of the well, slipped down, I know not how, into its cool shelter. I looked round to see where I had best seat myself, and then, before settling down with Harry, cautiously drew the displaced creepers and vines back to their places from whence I had disturbed them, and, sitting down on the highest part of the rubbish heap, prepared to wait for my husband. As I moved Harry's head to a more comfortable position I noticed how profoundly he was sleeping, and the ayah's words flashed back into my memory. She had evidently given the child some opiate, knowing that he was easily disturbed, and that a sudden cry or sound from his lips would bring death on both our heads. I remembered also that I had left my precious little bag under the pillow of the sofa where I had been lying, but I could not feel the least regret for the loss of any of its contents except a little locket with my dead father's hair and portrait. When I thought that I should never see that precious possession again, my eyes filled with tears; but Harry moved and moaned, and all except the extremity of the moment was forgotten. I could see nothing as I crouched in my blessed shelter, but I heard volleys of musketry, sharp single shots, ringing out with horrible distinctness, amid the yells and howls of the people, the crackling of the burning houses, and wild confusion everywhere. Still I am amazed to think of the certainty, which I was mercifully permitted to feel, that Tom was safe and would come to me. I prayed for him as I sat there, and I felt positively happy—yes, composed and happy. I *knew* he would be preserved to me, and I had nothing to do but wait in quiet thankfulness. The time did not even seem long, though in reality it was past midnight when I heard the branches overhead rustling and saw his face, or rather the outline of his head, as he looked into the well and whispered, "Are you both there?"

"Yes, here we are, Harry and I, quite safe," I answered.

"Thank God!" he said briefly, and in another moment he had crept down through the opening, and stood beside me, safe and sound.

"One of the first questions he asked me was whether any of the rebels had been near our hiding-place. Not very near, I told him; but near enough for their shouts and cries to have awakened Harry if the ayah had not provided for the danger by giving him a sleeping draught. There was no need for him to tell me what had happened.

"It had broken out," he only said, adding with that sob which is so terrible to hear from a man when his eyes are tearless, "they are all gone—Fenwick and Pratt, and all of them, shot down just as the regiment was forming on parade after church. I had dropped one of my gloves, and stayed to look for it in the pew. I heard the gun fire, and a yell and a volley, and I knew then it had come. My first idea was to go out, but I saw through the open window the Sepoys rushing about like demons and firing right and left, so I knew I could do no good, and thought of you and Harry waiting here for me, and hid away, and have made my way here, running from cover to cover as best I could, sometimes stopping an hour in one place before the coast was clear."

"We debated for a long time what was the best thing to do. Tom said we must get away before daylight, into the jungle or anywhere, and he suddenly remembered that within a mile or two lived a native Prince, whom the English had always protected, and who might feel inclined to succour us in that hour of need. At all events his palace lay on our road to the nearest military station, where we might hope to find shelter and protection; so, as there was no other course opened to us, we crept out of our hiding-place, Tom going first to reconnoitre, and, amid more frights and perils than I can stop to tell you of now, found our way to poor old Abdullah's house. Never was such a scene of confusion; it was about three o'clock in the morning, but every one was awake and up, and everybody speaking at once. The Prince sat on a divan in a large hall, surrounded by excited natives clamouring for the lives of the English residents who had escaped the general massacre, and who, like ourselves, had come to seek and claim the protection they had so often extended.

"What a forlorn little band we looked as we stood there: the ladies just as they had rushed out of their houses, some in dinner-dress, some half-dressed, but none more dishevelled than I, bareheaded, in my muslin dressing-gown and bare feet thrust into old slippers. Yet I felt proud of the dignity and fortitude of my fellow-countrymen as they stood there, full of anxiety, but self-possessed and calm. Our composure evidently awed the natives around: the old instincts of submission could not, fortunately for us, be shaken off in an hour; so it came to pass that, although the poor Prince could not guarantee us the shelter and safety we sought, he undertook to give us some food and send us as far as he could through the jungle towards a fortified station

about fifty miles off. His protection was not of much use, however, though we owe our last good meal of tea and chupatties

A chupatti is a type of flat, unleavened Indian bread. (*Merriam Webster Dictionary*, online edition, last accessed July 2012).

to his hospitality. Before we had travelled—closely packed in country carriages drawn by oxen—five miles from the palace, at the entrance to a thick jungle—our unwilling drivers bundled us out of the carriages, snatched at whatever they fancied which had been saved out of the wreck, and left us at daybreak to wander about the roads as best we could. Their last mocking words were an assurance that we should be all murdered as soon as ever it was light enough to see our accursed white faces, so that we should not have long to wait for our doom.

"One of the party possessed a little toy compass, more precious than diamonds or rubies at that moment. By its help we ascertained where our destination lay, and boldly struck into the jungle, where alone we could find shelter and concealment, determined to try and make our way through its tangled undergrowth towards the fort. I will not stop to tell you now of the miseries and hardships of those weary days and nights of burning sunshine and heavy dews. We had for food the crusts and fragments of bread and meat which we had each managed to secrete from the native Prince's table, and once or twice we had some game which the gentlemen managed to knock down or snare, but the danger of lighting a fire to cook it by was too great to be often incurred. I tore a strip of muslin off the skirt of my dressing-gown and made myself a turban to keep the sun from my head, and Harry's headdress was made of our pocket-handkerchiefs and large leaves. Poor child! he was very patient and good, though his sufferings from mosquitoes and flies biting his blistered skin were great indeed.

"As this is Christmas Day I will not dwell too long on the hardships which have been already forgotten, or only remembered as one remembers a hideous dream, when the blessed light and comfort of day returns; but I will try to make you laugh at the recollection of those comic incidents which I have always found mixed up with the most serious events of life—just as if we saw some tragic Muse surrounded by a bevy of little teasing elves and imps, whose antics force us to smile, in spite of the sad aspect of the stately, mournful dame.

"You can easily understand that what was a real misery at the time looks a trifling inconvenience when it has drifted away into the distant Past, and even I can almost laugh now as I recollect my horror and dismay at the loss of Harry's solitary garment before our dreadful journey was half over. We used to travel at night for the sake of the cooler air, and during the day we crouched under bushes and slept as well as we could for heat and insects. One morning we camped by a jheel or pond in the very heart of the jungle, and had quite a good breakfast off wild-fowls' eggs, which we found among the reeds and rushes on the bank. I felt so much stronger and better after this unusually good food that I thought I would wash little Harry's night-shirt, hang it on a bush whilst he slept, and that it would then, be cleaner and more comfortable for the poor child to put on when we set out again. Accordingly I took it off, and his father kept him quiet and amused under the shade of a clump of shrubs whilst I scrubbed and rinsed the small garment to the best of my ability. As soon as I had finished I joined the others, having spread Harry's nightshirt on a bush hard by, and taking him in my arms we laid down to get what sleep we could. The flies teased the poor child so much that he kept constantly crying for his little shirt, and when I thought it would be dry I went to fetch it. There was no shirt to be seen, and we never were able to find it. Not a breath of wind stirred the heavy air, so it could not have been blown away, and our only conjecture is that some solitary low-caste native, making his way through the jungle, had watched our movements, stolen the shirt, and made off with it. I confess the idea of any of the dreaded race hovering about us was much worse than the loss of poor Harry's only garment.

"I had nothing I could spare from my own scanty and insufficient clothing, for a week's wandering among the thorny jungle had torn my dressing-gown and solitary muslin petticoat into ribbons, which were held together by thorns instead of pins, on the curative principle, I suppose, of "a hair of the dog that bit you."

The folklore principal of "a hair of the dog that bit you" as a restorative cure for such ailments as hangovers by drinking more of whatever caused the sickness, is used here to refer to using the thorns that tore up the Lady's skirt to hold it together.

"At length we saw the towers of the fort not far off at daybreak one blessed morning. The rest of the party pushed on to reach its shelter as soon as possible; but weary and wayworn as I was I persuaded Tom to linger at the outskirts of the jungle until nightfall, for I was too much ashamed of my scanty rags to venture into civilized haunts in daylight.

"When the friendly darkness had settled over the land, we glided like ghosts through the silent streets, for it was a quiet, out-of-the-way place, safer far than a populous town; and I remember taking up a crouching position in one corner of the verandah of the Commandant's house! Harry lay on my lap, but I could not spare any of my insufficient drapery to cover him. There I sat, and no inducement would persuade me to move. The Colonel commanding was soon aroused by Tom, and proved a most kind and sympathetic host. He came out to speak to me in the dark, told me his house was perfectly full of refugees from Meerut and other places, but that

the stable was much at our service. Into this we went, and thought ourselves lucky to get to its friendly shelter; but first I must tell you of my toilet difficulties.

"Mrs. Smith—for that was the name of the Colonel's wife—came out to see me in the early dawn after I had spent the night sitting in the verandah. I cannot say she was very gracious or hospitable. Indeed she eyed me as if I had really been the disreputable tramp I looked.

"What do you want?" were the first words she said.

"Want! I want everything," I cried; "first a good bath, and then some clothes for myself and the child;" and I held up poor naked little Harry, quite like a professional beggar.

"Mrs. Smith grumbled something about my requiring a bath, and added, "I have really no clothes to give you—I have given away almost all mine; but there is the *pink calico* of the dressing-table which would do for a petticoat if you could make it." Well, this did not sound very promising, but I went into her room and had a bath (good heavens! what a luxury it was to Harry as well as me), and came out to breakfast in the petticoats belonging to the dressing-table, basted up into a gown, and very odd I must have looked! The worst of it was that every piece of stuff except pink and blue calico, had been bought up out of the native bazaars; so Harry and I had to wear the crackly gaudy material for several weeks, until we could get to a town which was larger and better supplied. Tom went off to fight the mutineers as soon as he had placed Harry and me in safety; but we made our way to Calcutta, and so home to England as soon as ever we could, not the worse for our hardships, and deeply grateful for our merciful preservation. Harry is now at school in England; and there is Tom walking up and down with Major Leslie; and here am I," concluded fat, jolly Mrs. Burton, laying her hand on my shoulder, 'only I do not care about having any more ornaments, and now you know why I dislike the sight of them.'"

### Chapter III. Christmas Day in India (*continued*).

THE children had a hundred questions to ask about Mrs. Owen's stories, and Jack made but one objection, that they were not half dreadful enough, and entreated that the evening's amusement might wind up with one more story, which should be really "jolly shocking."

"But it must be about India," stipulated Frank; "at least, if Mrs. Owen can remember anything more about that Christmas evening."

Such contradictory orders would have puzzled anyone else except the lady to whom they were issued. I felt that these demands, which "grew by what they fed on," were becoming overwhelming, and I was preparing to come to Mrs. Owen's aid by suggestions about Nurse, and bedtime, and so forth, when, after a moment's pause, she said—

"Well, I will tell you just one more story tonight; it must be the very last, remember. It is rather dreadful, Jack, for it is about assassination" (here I looked horrified), "and I heard it the Christmas evening when we sat in that same pavilion, after Mrs. Burton had told us her adventures, so it must be considered an Indian and a Christmas story together. This is how it came to be related:—

"After Mrs. Burton's long story was ended, we were thinking of saying good-night, and going away in a somewhat subdued and silent frame of mind, when one of our party called out to Colonel Burton—

"You may come back, now, Colonel! Mrs. Burton has finished her story, and has worked upon our feelings to such an extent that we are all very dismal. What are you and Leslie laughing at in such a heartless manner? You have gone through enough to make you grave all your life, I should think.'

"So I have, so I have," replied Colonel Burton, 'but still a hearty laugh now and then does one a world of good;' and he went off into shouts of mirth again.

"We all thought this a great deal too bad, the Colonel keeping the joke, whatever it was, to himself; and we called upon Major Leslie to tell us what they had been talking about whilst we were listening to Mrs. Burton's story.

"I was only telling the Colonel of an absurd mistake which happened to a sailor brother of mine the other day,' said Major Leslie. 'If hearing about Mrs. Burton's escape has made you all feel nervous and excited, you can't do better than listen to my nonsense, which I will warrant to send you all to your charpoy's

A charpoy is a type of bed in India. (*Merriam Webster Dictionary*, online edition, last accessed July 2012).

in a light-hearted, Christmas-evening frame of mind, if it has no better effect.—You remember my brother Bob, perhaps, Sir James,' continued Major Leslie, turning to our gallant host and commanding officer; 'he is the most hare-brained young monkey in her Majesty's service—afloat, I mean; and I fully expect he will get into trouble some of these days. The worst of it is, he looks upon everything as a joke, or a capital story; and when I was shaking my elder-brother head at him the other day for some middy's frolic in which he had been concerned, he assured me *that* was nothing, and, being in a confidential mood, added that he really had *ance* nearly come to grief. Once! I thought to myself; a dozen times would be nearer the number of your escapes,

Master Bob. However, I said nothing, knowing he never needed encouragement to talk; and without any questioning or pressing from me, he told me this story, which has amused Colonel Burton so much.

"Master Bob was pretty high up among the middies a year or two ago, when he went his last cruise, and, according to his own statement, leaving off his childish pranks, and behaving more like the fine young man he was growing. He had a capital Captain, and a very smart ship in the *Sylphide*, and all went well until they dropped their anchor in the Bay of Honduras, just outside Belize. No sooner was the cable let go, than the officer of the watch reported that a boat was pulling towards them from a timber ship a little way further out. On being hailed, the crew, only two in number, announced that they were the bearers of a note from their skipper to the Captain of the *Sylphide*. The note was handed up over the side, for the crew in the dingy were such villanous-looking fellows that the officer would not let them come on board. The short, hurried epistle contained an earnest entreaty that the Captain of the frigate would send one of his boats' crew on board of the timber vessel, for the rest of her sailors, of whom the scoundrels alongside were specimens, had mutinied, and the poor skipper fully expected to be murdered.

"The *Sylphide's* commander was much shocked at this state of things, and warmly promised assistance, despatching immediately a boat's company of blue-jackets, under Master Bob's command, with orders to use all possible haste in reaching the timber ship, and further instructions to signal the state of affairs on board. For this purpose the coxswain had provided himself with a boat-signal book, and the men gave way with hearty goodwill.

"As soon as they came near enough to the distressed ship to hail her, the captain reported all right on board, but invited the officer in command of the friendly crew to come on board, which Bob lost no time in doing. He told me he felt rather aggrieved at the prospect of a "jolly row" ending peaceably after all, and when he stood on the deck of the ship which he had come prepared to help, and saw the faces of her mixed crew, he suspected that if the quarrel had come to blows, they would have been pretty hard ones. However, all was now smooth sailing, her skipper reported, owing, doubtless, to the fortunate arrival of the *Sylphide*, and he had only to offer his best thanks to the captain for his promptness in sending the help he had asked for. Would the officer in command come below and take a glass of sherry before he returned to his vessel? Certainly he would; but before Bob descended the companion-ladder, he hailed his coxswain, and desired him to signal to the *Sylphide* that they had found all quiet on board the timber ship, and were on the point of returning.

""Ay, ay, sir," replied the coxswain, touching his cap and wetting his thumb, the better to turn over the leaves of his signal-book.

""Have you got it?" asked Bob; "be careful what you signal, and look sharp about it."

"With a quiet conscience, feeling he had amply fulfilled his duty towards his Queen and country, Master Bob followed his entertainer down into the dingy little state cabin, and prepared to give his opinion on the merits of some highly-esteemed vintage which was about to be produced. But the cork had no sooner been drawn, and the guest about to raise his glass to his lips, than an exclamation from his entertainer caused him to put down hastily his wine-glass, and rush on deck as fast as his legs would carry him. There he found everybody in a state of bewilderment, each man asking his neighbour what was the matter on board the *Sylphide*. Bob snatched up a telescope, and looked towards the frigate, but it only enabled him to see more clearly what he had just refused to believe when his own eyes showed him. The great launch had been got out, a large gun had been slung over the side, and was placed in the middle; marines with their muskets, blue jackets with their cutlasses, were swarming over the side. He heard the Captain calling out through his speaking trumpet, "Boarders, away!" and all the oars dipped at one stroke into the water, whilst the boats literally bounded like spurred horses, away from the *Sylphide's* side.

"Where is the enemy? was Bob's first thought; but before it had hardly glanced through his mind, one of his own men in the boat alongside said to him, "Coming this way, sir." So they were; there was no doubt about that, and as fast as stout and willing arms could ply their oars, too. "What on earth is the matter on board your ship, Mr. Leslie?" asked the skipper of the timber merchant. "What, indeed!" cried Bob. "I am sure I don't know;" and, feeling as if he were dreaming, he walked to the lee side, where his boat was moored, and saw the coxswain standing up in it, still and fixed as a statue, with one arm akimbo, like this, and the other stretched straight out, holding an extended cutlass. "What are you doing, Simmons?" asked Bob. "Signalling, sir," replied Simmons without moving. "I never seed such a rum go as this. I signals this way, as I'm a-doin' on now, which is 'all quiet' in the book. They signals back, *Repeat signal*. I repeats, and then they get in this blessed fuss, and out with the launch, and all the time they keep tellygraffying *Repeat signal*, so I is repeaten on it, sir."

""Hand up the signal-book, one of you," said Bob; and as soon as he got it he turned to the page. What was his horror to find that his Irish coxswain had been all this time steadily making the signal which stood for the word ASSASSINATION in the code. The mistake was an easy one, for it was only reversing the position in which Simmons was still standing.

""Hold hard, Simmons," roared Bob, in great dismay; "no wonder they are in a fuss on board,—you're

signalling 'assassination' as hard as you can; look here," and he showed him the book.

"Simmons' face fell, and for that matter so did his extended arm, as he said, "So it is, sir; I thought it was t'other way." By this time the launch and two other boats were within hail of the timber ship, from whose deck Bob shouted with a confidence he was far from feeling, "It's all right now; you may go back." And so they rowed away, in much surprise, I should think, at such a sudden change for the better in so desperate a situation.

"The astonishing part of the story, to my ears,' concluded Major Leslie, 'is, that there was not a tremendous row of another sort on board the *Sylphide* as soon as Master Bob and his clever coxswain got back to their ship; but, from all accounts, the affair blew over in perfect safety and silence. Bob confessed to have been in what he elegantly called "an awful funk" for some days; but my own impression is, that the Captain laughed at the mistake so much that he felt it was no use trying to make a serious matter of so ridiculous a story. The coxswain was observed to be very diligent in his study of the boat-signals for some time afterwards, but that was the only effect of his unfortunate mistake.'

"We certainly had a good laugh at Mr. Leslie's story, in which merriment Colonel Burton joined as cheerily as if he had never heard it before, and then we discovered it was actually eleven o'clock, a frightfully late hour for our primitive and early habits. So there was nothing to do but for us all to shake hands very cordially with each other, and with fresh good wishes for future Christmas Days, to say good-night and go off to our tents, which would be struck at five o'clock the next morning.

"And so ended my only Christmas Day in India; and if it was not made up of the usual pleasant routine of the English festival, it had, at all events, its own share of adventure and excitement."

## **Part IV. Christmas Day in New Zealand.**

### **Chapter I. Christmas Day in New Zealand.**

The last evening had arrived. Although the children were not to return to school for some weeks yet, the party would disperse on the morrow to their respective homes; for you must know that many of these children had only been borrowed for a week or so. Mrs. Owen had a mania for collecting young people around her, especially at Christmas-time, and she was quite as sorry as any of her guests could be when the week's fun and story-telling drew near its close.

On this last evening, therefore, she was more submissive than ever to her beloved little tyrants, for she remembered during every moment of that last day that on the morrow they would have betaken their noisy, merry selves to gladden other houses, and she felt rather envious of the owners of those bright rosy faces. I confess that I endured the prospect of the break-up next day with perfect fortitude, for I had not been able to enjoy five minutes' quiet talk with my dear hostess ever since my arrival more than a week before. As I could not tell stories, and had led a very peaceable uneventful life, I was speedily voted "of no account," and for a brief period of time I seriously contemplated paying a visit to America before next Christmas, in order to give myself a chance of having something to relate next year.

This was the way I came to entertain so wild a project. When we were assembled in the schoolroom for this our last evening of Christmas stories, the clamour arose for a story of a Christmas in America.

"But, my darlings," protested Mrs. Owen, "I have never been in that part of the world."

True at the time of writing this book, Lady Barker did eventually go to the United States in 1903 to visit family living in Detroit. (Betty Gilderdale, *The Seven Lives of Lady Barker*, Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2009, p. 337).

"Oh, how stupid of you!" said one boy. I won't tell his name, because it was not a pretty thing to say.

"Hush!" cried Cathy, much scandalised, "how can you say such a thing? She (Mrs. Owen, *bien entendue* French for "of course". (Merriam Webster Dictionary, online edition, last accessed July 2012). ) had to go where she was obliged."

"Well, Cathy, dear, it is very kind of you to take my part," said Mrs. Owen; "and you are quite right. I have never, in all my life of travelling, which began before I was two years old, had time to go where I liked.

A very self-descriptive sentence from Lady Barker, whose travels over the years had either been because of being sent somewhere by her parents as a child or because of the work of her husbands as an adult.

All my journeyings have been merely following the lead of circumstances over which, I may truly say, I had no control. If I had ever been able to choose a place where I should have liked to spend a Christmas, it would have been in America; though, you know, that is rather a vague word, because I might spend twenty different Christmases there in twenty different ways."

"Yes, it must be a jolly place," said Jack. "Think of the sleighing, and the skating, and the fun generally."

"Fun, indeed," laughed Mrs. Owen, amused at Jack's ecstasy; "and as, from all accounts, they are the most hospitable people in the world, suppose we all go over there in a body next year, and say, 'Please, dear, tall cousins, we have come to spend Christmas with you!' I have no doubt we should be very comfortable, and that they would be very good to us."

"Let us go! let us come!" shouted all the wild little monkeys, capering about the room. It was easier to raise this storm than to still it, and I thought peace and quiet would *never* be restored that evening. I was surprised to find what a good general idea of Transatlantic life the children had. I said to one of them, "Why, how do you know so much about what little girls and boys do in America? I think you must have been there."

"From all the nice books, to be sure," answered Nora. "There are loads and loads of delightful stories about the way American children live, and they seem to have, what they call themselves, such 'good times' there, that I want to go over and see them dreadfully. I daresay," continued this young person, "they know all about us in the same way. Oh, don't I wish some of those children I have read about would come and see us; wouldn't I hug them!" And so saying, Nora pounced first upon Cathy and then upon George, squeezing each until they shrieked for mercy. I was so afraid that the hugging might become general, that I hastened to recall a suggestion of Nurse's, which had been but coldly received at the time, that the bed hour should be earlier than usual on this last evening, on account of the long journey next day. My remark produced a sudden silence and gloom, of which Mrs. Owen availed herself to say,—

"If we are going to hear anything about a New Zealand Christmas, we had better begin at once, then."

"At the very beginning," stipulated the little girls.

"Of course I shall begin at the very beginning," answered Mrs. Owen. "Do you think that I have been telling stories to children all this time, and have not learnt to begin at the beginning? I only wonder you don't expect me to begin *before* the beginning. Do I ever begin in the middle, pray, or at the end? If I ever hear a word more about beginning at the beginning, I shall say that my story has *no* beginning; and what will you do then?"

"It will be all right," answered Jack, "for then you will be obliged to say 'once upon a time,' and that is the very nicest beginning any story can possibly have. Aunt Nancy always begins her stories that way."

"Well, well," said Mrs. Owen, "we will begin this story of a New Zealand Christmas Day, the best way we can, and it shall be early enough, I promise you."

"If I am not very much mistaken, I have told you, in other places and at other times, that Christmas falls in Midsummer at the other side of the world, and that so far from being a festive, idle season, it is generally the busiest time of the whole year. It certainly is the busiest time on a sheep run, and that was where all my New Zealand Christmases were passed. This particular day fell in the middle of a week of what is there called 'mustering,' that is, collecting the sheep by thousands and tens of thousands, and driving them gradually all down to the vast plains near the homestead, where they are guarded night and day for the three weeks, or more, which it requires to shear them. We have not time this evening to hear all about the shearing, or even the mustering, though that is really a very wonderful sight to English eyes, and requires nearly as much forethought and arrangement as the plan of a campaign. Imagine eight or ten men and half-a-dozen dogs bringing in 10,000 or 12,000 sheep, feeding over the same number of acres. Up and down steep hills, across bogs and creeks and rivers, they have to go, walking from early dawn to sunset, and accomplishing their task in three days. Of course, in many runs, the distance to be traversed, and the number of sheep to be brought in, are twice and three times as many; but I am only speaking of a small station.

"A great deal of the success of mustering depends on the clearness of the weather, as it is of no use going on the hills if a mist is hanging about. Very often, in the early summer, the hills are covered during the night by filmy clouds, which do not always disperse until the sun has risen and shrivelled them into light, upward-floating wreaths by one touch of his lancelike beams. But it is a great disadvantage in a day's mustering to make a late start; the sheep have dispersed from their high camping grounds, and are feeding all up the gullies and over the hill-sides in scattered mobs; and it is of course much harder work walking under the burning sun than if his fiercest hour of mid-day heat found the men at the top of the range of hills, and with the sheep so well in hand, driving slowly before them, as to allow of the tired musterers sitting down under the shadow of a great rock (for there are no trees), and having a ten minutes' 'spell' and half a pipe.

"We were in the middle of mustering on this 25th of December, and the weather had not been quite so propitious as usual. A great deal of rain had fallen among the hills at the back of the run, and very few mornings dawned as cloudless and clear as the musterers desired. Of course Christmas Day would be a complete holiday, and we had invited shearers and musterers, and all the odd hands which flock to a station at shearing-time, to come up to our house, which stood in a valley a mile or so away from the sheep-yards, wool-shed, &c., and attend first a church service and then a good dinner, the day to wind up with athletic games.

"The bad weather had been such an anxiety to F——

Lady Barker omits the name for "F" but in context, based on the autobiographical nature of the text, it is

safe to assume that this is a stand in for her husband Frederick Broome.

for some days past, that he could not shake off the habit of watching the clouds at sunset, and I had laughed at him on Christmas Eve for going out late at night to see if 'Flagpole had put on his night-cap.' Flagpole was the highest hill on our run; in any other country it would have been called a mountain, being over 3,000 feet high; but as one of the last low spurs of the great Southern Alps, it did not take any rank after those mighty monarchs. When Flagpole put on his nightcap of clouds he was never in a hurry to take it off again, and the surrounding lower hills thought it only polite, I suppose, to follow his example, for it was sure to be a misty morning until 9 or 10 o'clock, if Flagpole had drawn his nightcap well over his rocky ears after sunset.

"Never mind Flagpole,' I said; 'there will be no mustering to-morrow, so it does not signify what he does.' But F——still loitered in the verandah, watching Flagpole's misty summit, until long after I was asleep and dreaming of the pies and puddings I had been so busy preparing all day for my Christmas dinner.

"Such was the force of habit, that the first faint streak of daylight stealing into our bedroom woke both F——and me wide awake, and our first thought, forgetting in our sleepiness that Christmas Day had dawned, was, 'Is it a fine clear morning?' F——tumbled out of bed, and, murmuring something about going to see, stepped sleepily out of the French window which opened on the verandah and commanded an exquisite view up the valley whose narrow entrance was guarded by Flagpole. It soon stole like a delicious whisper on my sleep-steeped senses that there was actually no occasion to rouse myself up, for that it was Christmas Day, and there would be no mustering, no getting up at 5 o'clock, no anxiety about the weather. Flagpole and his nightcap became matters of profound indifference to me as I settled myself comfortably for another nap; yet, drowsy as I was, I never can forget the excitement in F——'s face as he darted back into the little cosy bedroom. If we had been in the North Island, I should have imagined that a regiment of Maoris were encamped on the lawn;

During Lady Barker's time in New Zealand relations between the European settlers and the native Maori were not entirely peaceful, but as she states here her home in Canterbury in the South Island was not near the main conflicts. (New Zealand Ministry for Culture and Heritage, New Zealand History Online, "Treaty events 1850-99 – Treaty timeline," <http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/politics/treaty-events-1850-99-treaty-timeline>, last accessed July 2012).

but in our peaceful Middle Island home we are not even afraid of thieves, still less of murderers. I certainly thought F——had gone suddenly stark staring mad, for he made one bound to a stand of fire-arms which hung against the bedroom wall, seized his rifle, and merely gasping out the words 'More cartridges!' dashed out as swiftly as he had entered.

"Here was a rude awakening on Christmas morning! 'It can't be a hawk,' I thought to myself; 'what *can* it be?' But I jumped out of bed, flung on my dressing-gown, thrust my feet into my slippers, and taking as many cartridges as my hands would hold, out of their tin box, I stepped out of the window into the verandah. No F—— was to be seen; nothing but the quiet home-like scene of lawn and garden and paddock glistening with dew, and Sandy, the house cat, daintily moving about in quest of his breakfast, which invariably consisted of the early bird. Acting entirely on instinct, I peeped round the corner of the house, which commanded a view of downs rolling into a narrow gully, the flax swamp of which formed a natural boundary to one bit of the kitchen garden. A slender path made of very rough shingle and gravel wound among the sloping potato and strawberry beds, and along this path F——was creeping, almost on his hands and knees, so as to keep well under cover of the gorse hedge at the bottom of the garden. It must have been the most painful progress ever made by sporting pilgrim, and it certainly was the most ridiculous sight which can well be imagined. Bareheaded and bare-footed, crouching down on the rough path until he looked only about four feet high, F——held his way, his one white garment fluttering in the wind, and his right hand grasping his rifle. The moment I perceived him creeping warily along, I dodged behind a great bush of Cape broom laden with fragrant yellow blossoms, and from this cover I too peered out, not daring to glance at F——for fear I should laugh aloud. A careful survey of the broken ground beyond the garden fence showed me a huge black boar tranquilly feeding with his back towards the gorse hedge. Fortunately the wind blew down from him to us, so his keen snout was no protection to him. If a cock should crow, or a dog bark, or even a duck quack, he would be off almost like a deer, up those hills and far away before man or dog could reach him.

"Still F——must have his cartridges; if he missed his first shot, a second might bring the great fierce brute down on his knees and give time for the revolver to be used. So I crept swiftly back into the verandah, got the loaded revolver, stuck it and F——'s hunting-knife into the muslin sash of my dressing-gown, and was out again behind the bush in a moment. During my short absence, F——had made great progress, and was rapidly nearing the hedge from whence he would be able to take aim. I could not get up to him in time to be of any use without jumping into a wide wet ditch, whose high banks afforded excellent shelter. It is not a feat I should advise any of you young people to perform, excepting for strong and cogent reasons. My kid slippers stuck fast in the tenacious yellow clay and were nearly dragged off my feet, and I made myself in a fine mess in about

two minutes. However, I struggled along, feeling rather ashamed of myself, and somewhat inclined to cry. By this time F——had reached the gorse hedge, and was kneeling down on a tussock (which must have seemed like a velvet cushion after the gravel path) to take a leisurely aim. He glanced round, and beckoned cautiously to me; so I floundered on as quickly as I could until I reached the friendly hedge and could scramble out of the ditch. He took his cartridges from me with only a nod of thanks, for the faintest whisper would have reached the boar's sharp ears. It seemed ages to me before the loud crack of his rifle rang through the clear morning air, and the boar gave a bound into the air—only to fall flat on his great side, shot through the heart

"F——and I were over the hedge and wading through the flax swamp before we saw that our game was bagged; indeed, we did not know he was dead, and approached him with the greatest caution, for a wounded boar is about the most dangerous animal to attack. When we were able to perceive his huge black side upheaving through the flax bushes, we fell into our usual line of march when on sporting expeditions. F—first, with his finger on the trigger of his revolver, and I as far behind as was compatible with my own safety, carrying the hunting-knife in a very shaky hand.

'Our precautions were useless on this occasion. for poor piggy (I am always sorry for them as soon as they are hit) was quite stone dead. He must have been a great age: his gigantic tusks were notched and broken, and his thick hide bore traces of old scars, received in former battles with his enemies; for boars are very pugnacious and will not brook 'a rival near the throne.'

"The report of the rifle had aroused the whole establishment. The dogs barked and bayed furiously, the inmates of the poultry-yard seemed to become distracted, to judge by their clamour, and from every window in the house and its outbuildings a bearded head was popped, whilst cries of 'What's up?' 'Wait till I come,' &c. &c., were heard amid the noise of the animals. High and clear, piercing through the Babel of sounds, my maids' shrieks came at intervals like minute-guns at sea. Whenever anything was the matter, from a cut finger to the chimney on fire, those two girls screamed at the pitch of their exceedingly shrill voices. So this Christmas Day was ushered very noisily into existence; but you will be glad to hear that I got back into my own room very cleverly before any one could array themselves sufficiently to sally forth, so I was spared the disgrace of being seen by my small household with bare feet and muddy skirts.

"F——could not tear himself away from his victim quite so soon, and when next I peeped round the corner of the verandah, I saw him, looking more ridiculous than ever in his short white garment, the centre figure of an admiring and excited group of shepherds and shearers. Pepper, our head shepherd, recognized an old enemy in the dead boar, and declared that he and his dogs had bailed him up unsuccessfully 'many a time and off.'"

## **Chapter II. Christmas Day in New Zealand. (*continued*).**

"I WAS not sorry, as it happened, that the episode of the boar had aroused the whole household at so early an hour, for it enabled me to get a great deal done before breakfast towards the reception of our Christmas guests. As soon as I had dressed myself, I sallied forth with F——, following the windings of the creek until it led us far back into the hills, to a little wooded gully which nestled between two steep ascents. If only we could have seen that strip of green anywhere from the house! but, alas! it was too securely hidden to be visible, and I lighted upon the lonely spot quite by accident in one of my many rambles. At this part the creek was quite as noisy as a Scotch burn,

A "burn" in this context is a word for a river or stream (Douglas Harper, *Online Etymology Dictionary*, "bourn," <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=bourn>, last accessed July 2012). The usage comes from Scotland where many of the settlers of the Canterbury region of New Zealand (where Lady Barker lived) were from.

and, like it, rippled and chattered noisily over a stony bed, as it wound for a few hundred yards under the shadow of the trees. Its banks were beautifully fringed with many varieties of ferns, which even in winter were kept green and fresh by the sheltering bushes above. It was upon these lovely feathery ferns my raid was directed; and if F——and I could have only come across a magical carpet, or that delightful horse in the fairy tale who was set in motion by a peg, either of which would have borne us swiftly across land and sea, we might perhaps have realized a handsome fortune in a few minutes by selling our enormous green bundles in Covent Garden that Christmas morning.

"But what a cruel change it would have been for the beautiful ferns, from their enchanted mountain nook with the wood-pigeons cooing in the trees above them and the little green parro-quets flashing past their waving, plume-like tufts. to a cold, raw Christmas morning in smoky London! I beg your pardon, Jack. I forgot your preference for cold Christmases, and this was going to be a very hot Christmas Day, as we discovered to our cost during our long homeward walk.

"When the little homestead was once more reached, we deposited our huge armfuls of ferns in a shady hole in the creek, and went in to breakfast with Splendid appetites. I am afraid there were no presents exchanged that

morning, for we were fifty miles away from the nearest shop, and had not been down to Christchurch for months. However, we received and returned many hearty good wishes; and in that foreign land it is something to be among friends on Christmas Day, even if there are no presents going about.

"After breakfast I filled all the vases, and decorated the hall, and covered up the stand of Indian arms with my beautiful ferns, each spray of which was a marvel of grace and loveliness, and then it was time to arrange the verandah for service, which was soon done by the aid of boxes and red blankets. But it was fated that our gravity was to be sorely tried long before the short sermon which F—read us was ended.

"I think I have told you before, that the shepherds who formed the principal portion of our congregation always brought their dogs with them, and these dear sensible animals behaved in the most exemplary manner, lying down by their masters' saddles and never moving aught but their intelligent eyes until church was over, when they greeted their owners with rapture, as if to congratulate them on escaping from some dangerous ceremony. Amongst our most constant guests were the Scotch shepherds of a neighbouring 'squatter. These men, M'Nab and M'Pherson by name, were excellent specimens of their class. Sober and industrious, they were also exceedingly intelligent, and thoroughly enjoyed the privilege of an invitation to attend our Sunday services. I observed that they invariably took it in turn to come to us; and when I asked M'Nab to come over on Christmas Day, I added, 'Don't you think you could manage to put the sheep in some place from which they would be safe not to stray, and *both* of you come to us at Christmas?'

"'It is na the sheep, mem,' replied M'Nab bashfully; 'it's the claes.'

"'But your clothes are very nice,' I said, looking at the neat little figure before me, clad in a suit of Lowland plaid, which was somewhat baggy, but clean and whole.

"'Yes, mem, but we've naight but the one suit between US SO we can only come one at a time, like,' said M'Nab, turning red through his sun-brown.

"'Dear me, how can you both wear the same clothes?' I inquired. 'M'Pherson is such a giant, and you know you are not very tall, M'Nab.'

"'Well, mem, we made them our ainsells, and we cut them on a *between* size, you see, so they fit baith, fine. The trews were hard to manage, but 'Phairson wears 'em with gaiters, and I rolls 'em up; so though they're a deal too short for him and too lang for me, we manage first class,' said M'Nab, relapsing into colonial phraseology.

As the well educated daughter of a prominent family, a Lady, and the wife of an educated man, Lady Barker would have of course noticed the various quirks that the English language developed in each of the colonies she lived in.

"On this Christmas Day it was Long 'Phair-son's (as he was generally called) turn to wear the Lowland suit, and he had appeared in due season, accompanied not only by his colleys, but by a small white bull-terrier, with a knowing patch of yellowish-brown over one eye, a most vicious turned-up nose, and a short upper lip.

"Fortunately, 'Phairson's arrival had been early, so I contrived to collect my hens and chickens, and decoy them into the fowl-house, out of the reach of this ferocious-looking animal. At church time, therefore, I took my place in the verandah with no domestic anxieties to distract my attention from the beautiful service, which has never seemed more beautiful to me than when held in that distant hidden valley with nothing but hills and mountains around us, and a New Zealand summer sky overhead. The great tidings of 'To us a Child is born,' rang as sweet and clear and welcome in my ears, amid that profound unbroken silence, as they have done when pealed from organs or proclaimed to hundreds of gathered worshippers with all the pomp and ceremony of the most gorgeous cathedral.

"We had even managed to get through a hymn with tolerable correctness, and the last page of the sermon had been reached, when we were 'ware' of an extraordinary scuffling and rustling beneath our feet, accompanied by violent thumps against the wooden flooring of the verandah. It was evidently a battle; but who could the combatants be? Our own dogs were securely fastened up in their kennels, our cat had prudently retreated to a loft as soon as 'Phairson and his dog Nip appeared, and the other colleys, though bristling with excitement at the strange sounds, lay motionless as statues in obedience to their masters warning glances. I am sorry to own that, as the noise increased, our repressed curiosity and wonder became too much for us, and it was fortunate for the decorum of the congregation that F——'s discourse (borrowed from one of Canon Kingsley's volumes of Cottage Sermons) came to an end, for hardly was the service over before we were perfectly deafened by the thumps. What could they mean? Nip was concerned, no doubt, for M'Pherson looked guilty and nervous; but what unhappy object was he dragging from end to end beneath the verandah? No dog but himself could get beneath the flooring,—the cat we knew was safe. 'Oh! it's Betty, poor Betty!' I shrieked in dismay, as I remembered that a favourite white Aylesbury duck was sitting on her first nest beneath the flooring of the verandah. In vain I had tried to coax her into arranging her nursery elsewhere; she insisted on taking up her abode in a hole scratched by a tame rabbit which had met with an untimely fate some months before.

"And so it was Betty, who soon appeared before us, dragged to M'Pherson's feet by Nip, in answer to his

summons of Nip, ye scamp, come here, sir P Not a vestige of tail was left to her, but still Nip held firmly on to her poor stump feathers. She had flapped against the boards with her wings as he ruthlessly dragged her up and down beneath our feet; but she must have been too terrified to cry out, for no 'quack' or sound did she utter under this ignominious treatment. In addition to her bodily suffering during the process of parting from her tail, she must have gone through much mental anguish at beholding her cherished eggs scattered and broken. When Nip released her at last with great reluctance, she laid at M'Pherson's feet too utterly exhausted to stir; her snowy plumage, of which she was so daintily careful, all draggled and dusty, her wings extended, and only her bright terrified eyes giving evidence that Nip had not succeeded in killing her. Poor Betty! I took her up in my arms, though she was an immense and very heavy bird, and carried her tenderly into the house, soothing her as well as I could; but still she remained gasping and unable to move. At last I remembered my medicine-bottle full of brandy, and I administered such a tremendous dose of the stimulant, that Betty choked and struggled back into life and movement. In fact, I believe she spent the remainder of Christmas Day in a box full of hay in the stable—very tipsy, but safe, and, I hope, happy. For many weeks no one could look at Betty's ridiculous tail, or rather no-tail, without laughing, but in my eyes it was a very sad sight, and I asked M'Pherson never to bring Nip to church again.

"As soon as we had restored some sort of gravity, and after Nip had been well scolded and Betty soothed, the men (for, alas! there were no women, except my servants, who were busy cooking) adjourned to the washhouse, where F—presided over a substantial dinner of beef and poultry, for the great point is to have no mutton at a party in New Zealand.

Living on a sheep station, mutton would have been in overabundance and as such considered an every day meat and not a dish for a special occasion.

We happened to possess a big musical box, which was wound up and set playing, and the dinner proceeded to the sound of a succession of old-fashioned waltz tunes. It was much too hot to remain indoors; so directly the huge dishes of cherries and strawberries (presents from my neighbours' gardens on either side of the ranges) had been duly emptied, the company adjourned to the only spot of shade out of doors, the south-eastern side of the stables. We could contemplate little plantations of tiny trees about three feet high, dotted over the low downs, and carefully fenced in from investigating animals. We could contemplate them, I say, and speculate as to how many of us would be in that valley on a Christmas Day in the far future, when these trees would have struggled up against their enemy the Nor'-wester,

A strong wind coming from the North West.

and attained sufficient stature to afford shelter from the afternoon sun.

"Probably not one of the party then assembled will ever sit under those imaginary branches; but at the date I am telling you of, Tom Thumb could not have found shade enough

Tom Thumb was a character from English Folklore. As an extremely tiny, fairy sized person; to say that there was not enough shade even for Tom Thumb is to say there was no shade at all. (Susan Bauer, "The History of Tom Thumb," University of Rochester, <http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/TTEssay.htm>, last accessed July 2012).

to shield himself from the bath of golden sunbeams anywhere on the run, unless he had joined our party, sdated on hen-coops, in the lee of the stable.

"The question then seriously presented itself to my mind, of how to amuse my twenty stalwart guests from 3 o'clock until 7. I intended them to have tea again about 5, and quantities of plum-cake if they could possibly eat it; but there were two hours of broiling heat to be got through, socially speaking, before they could be invited to eat again. After tea I knew there would be athletic games, so soon as Flagpole's mighty shadow had laid a cool patch over the valley. My guests would be affronted if I went away, and yet my presence evidently made them miserable. They all sat in rigid and uncomfortable attitudes, and blushed furiously if I spoke to them, trying hard all the time to persuade themselves and me that they were enjoying themselves. Even the unfailling pipes, which I had insisted on being produced, failed to create an element of contentment, for the smokers suffered incessant anxiety lest the light shifting summer air should send a puff of tobacco-smoke towards me. We were all very polite, but wretched; and I shall never forgive F——'s unkind enjoyment of the horrible dulness of this stage of my party. 'Dear me, this is too exciting,' he would whisper; 'don't let them all talk at once;' or else he would ask me if it was not 'going off' very brilliantly, when all the time it was not going off at all.

"I began to grow desperate; my company would not talk or do anything, but sit steadily staring at each other and me. In vain I asked questions about subjects which I thought might interest them. Conversation seemed impossible, and I had firmly resolved to go away in five minutes, and see if they would be more lively without me, when some bold individual started the subject of gold-digging. Everybody's tongue was unloosed as if by magic, and all had some really interesting story to tell about either their own or their 'mate's' experiences at the West Coast gold-diggings. One man described with much humour how he had been in the

very first' rush,' and how amazed a lonely settler in the Bush had been at the sudden appearance of a thousand men in the silence and solitude of his hut, which was built up a gully. When the eager gold-seekers questioned him as to whether he had found the 'colour' in the creek which they were bent on tracing to its rich source, he lazily shook his head and said, coolly, pointing over his shoulder, 'Me and the boys' (his equally lazy sons) 'have never earned no wages, no, nor had any money of our own. Whenever we wanted to, go to the store'—about twenty miles off, and wretched track between—'we jest took and we washed a bit among that 'ere dirt, and we allers found as much dust as we wanted.' The bed of that creek contained nearly as many particles of fine flake-gold as of sand; and that lazy old man could have made a fabulous fortune years and years before, if he had taken the trouble to seek it, as it rippled past his log hut. He never found a speck of gold in all his life afterwards, for no sooner had he finished his dawdling speech than the diggers had flung themselves into the wealth-bearing streamlet and fought and scrambled for its golden sands, which glided away during the night like a fairy vision. Great boulders were upheaved by the gold-seekers in their first eager rush, so the natural dams being thus removed, when the next morning dawned the water had rushed away into a new channel, bearing its precious freight with it.

"The spokesman took from his neck a little wash-leather bag as he finished his story, with the words, 'All gone—clean gone;' and opening it shook a few pinches of the sparkling flaky dust into my lap, saying, 'That's some o' wot I got evcnin' before. It's beautiful, ain't it, mum?' I duly admired the shining tresasure, and he bade me keep it 'for my Christmas box,' and I have it safely put away to this day. But I very nearly lost it, and this was how it happened. A discussion arose as to the most successful method of washing sand for gold, and some new inventions were freely discussed. 'Well, I reckon I got them there nuggets'—the largest no bigger than a small pin's head—' by washin' with a milk dish.' 'How?' I asked. 'I'll show you, mum, if I may get a dish from the gals;' and he strode off towards the house, returning with a large milk-tin in his hands. He then proceeded to the side of the duck-pond, and, in spite of the 'agony of dress' in which he was arrayed, filled the shallow dish with mud and stones and grit of all sorts. At this stage of the proceedings he appeared intent on making a huge dirt-pie. Imagine my dismay when he pounced on the paper packet into which I had just carefully collected my gold-dust, counted the tiny flakes rapidly up to fifteen, and then scattered them ruthlessly over the surface of this abominable mess. He next proceeded to stir it all up with a piece of a wooden shingle, and regardless of my face of dismay, said calmly, 'Now we'll wash 'em out.' I should have had no objection to seeing the experiment tried with anyone else's gold dust, but I must say I was very sorry to find that my newly acquired treasure was thus disposed of. 'Lightly won, lightly lost,' I thought to myself, 'for I shall never see it again.'

"Pratchard (that was the name of the quondam digger) now marched off to the creek close by, and in spite of the blazing sunshine we all followed him. He stooped down, and, scooping up some water, began shaking his great heavy tin backwards and forwards. By degrees he got rid of the surface mud, then he added more water, until in half an hour or so he had washed and shaken all the materials for his dirt-pie out of the dish, and disclosed my fifteen wee nuggets shining like so many flecks of sunlight at the bottom of the tin vessel. 'Count 'em, mum, if *you* please,' said Pratchard, hot, but triumphant; and so I did, to find not one missing. To me it seemed like a conjuror's trick, but Pratchard and the rest of my company hastened to assure me that it was not possible to wash away gold. It sank and sank, being so much heavier than anything else, until it could be perceived at the bottom of whatever dish or even plate was used to scoop up the dirt among which it was to be found.

"We were more sociable now, but hotter than ever, and we returned gladly to the shade of the stable. As things looked more promising at this stage of my party, I suggested that everybody should, in turn, tell a story. Of course they all declared 'they didn't know nothing,' but finally I coaxed old Bob, a shepherd, to tell me about one of his early Christmas Days in the colony, and this is his narrative, but not in his own phraseology. I wish I could spell it as he pronounced it."

### **Chapter III. Christmas Day in New Zealand. (*continued*).**

"'THINGS are very different now,' said Bob, 'all over the country, though it is not so many years ago, not more than six or seven perhaps. We did not think much of Sunday in the early days; we didn't exactly work, such is digging or such-like on that day, but we did other jobs which had been waiting for a spare moment all the week. We used not to think any harm of breaking a young colt on Sunday, or of riding over to the next run with a draughting notice; or if it was wet we lay in our bunks and smoked, or p'raps we got up and sat on a bucket turned wrong side up, and mended our clothes. As for Christmas Day, we never thought of it beyond wondering what sort of 'duff' we were going to have. That's colonial for a pudding, ma'am, you know, don't you? If we had a couple of handfuls of currants and raisins, we shoved them into a lot of flour and sugar, and we put a bit of mutton fat into the middle, and tied it all up together in the sleeve of an old flannel shirt and boiled it, and it used to come out a first-rate plum duff, and we thought we had had no end of a Christmas if we

Could manage such a pudding as that.

"But we could not always get even a holiday on Christmas Day, because of the shearing. Shearers were too scarce in those days, and wages too high to miss a day's work, so it often happened that we had to work just as hard, or harder on Christmas than on any other day of the year. I was working then up at Mr. Vansittart's ("Vans-start's," Bob called his master), and we had hopes of getting finished by Christmas Eve, and having at all events a good lie-in-bed on Christmas Day; but as ill-luck would have it, a mob of wethers bolted from the flat where Tom Duckworth was watching them, and got right away into the hills at the back of the run. *He* said it was because his dogs were new and wouldn't work properly for him, but I knew better—he done it a-purpose. Tom's sheep were always coming to grief. He couldn't cross 'em over a river without losing half the mob, and never a week passed without his getting boxed. That's mixed-up, ma'am," explained Bob politely, observing a puzzled expression in my eyes. 'We calls it boxing when your sheep go and join another mob feeding close by, and you can't tell one from another except by the brand or the ear-mark. It's a nasty business is boxing, and *werry* trying to the temper. Even the dogs get out of patience like, and nip the stupid sheep harder than they do at any other time.

"Well, ma'am, as I was saying, Tom Duckworth let a fine mob of young wethers get away the day before Christmas Day, and started to look for them with his precious dogs. They were the very last mob which had to come up to be shorn., so, as he couldn't find 'em—I never expected he could,—there was the skiillions standing empty

A skillion is a shed; here the empty ones mean that no shearing had taken place therefore there was no wool in the sheds.

, and the shearers lounging about idling when Christmas Day came; and a *werry* beautiful day it was, just like this one. The boss, that's Master Vans-start, he was at his wits' ends what to do. He knew right well that if the wethers wasn't in the yards that night, the shearers would be off across the hills to Brown and Wetherby's next morning first thing. You couldn't expect men who had their two pounds a day waiting for them to lose many days, especially as Brown and Wetherby's was an 'open shed,' where any shearers that came were taken on until there were hands enough, so they knew they might lose the job if they didn't look sharp. The boss managed to keep them quiet on Christmas Day, by pretending he always meant to take a spell on that day. He got the cook to make a stunning duff, and he sent a boy on horseback across the river to Mulready's for some beef; he knew Mulready always killed a bullock about Christmas, and he served out some grog, so in that way he kept the shearers well fed and rested all Christmas Day. He never let them out of his sight, not even down to the creek to wash their shirts, lest any of them should slip away.

"I didn't come in for any of these good things: so far from it, quite the contrary;" and here Bob paused and took a pull at his pipe, resting his hands on his knees and gazing straight before him with regretful eyes, as the memory of his wrongs rose freshly to his mind. "Tom Duckworth did, though, the stupid fool! He laid in his bunk on Christmas morning and had his snooze out, and then he got up and eat the best part of a cold leg of mutton for his breakfast, and he came in for the duff, and the grog, and all the rest of it afterwards. But I'll tell you how I spent my Christmas Day, ma'am, and I hope I'll never have to spend another like it.

"As soon as ever it was light, the boss, leastways Master Vans-start, he came into the kitchen where I was sleeping, and he says "Bob, I must have that mob of wethers by to-night, and that's all about it They're quite likely to have gone up into the back ranges, but unless they're gone up into the sky I'm bound to have 'em in the skillions to-night." You see, ma'am, when Master Vans-start put it in that way, I knew that mob had got to be found before nightfall, and that he was going to tell me off to find 'em. So I lay there and listened, as was my dooty to. "Bob," says Master Vans-start, "I'll tell you what it is, I'll give you a fiver,"—that's a five-pound note, Ma'am, you'll understand, —"yes, Bob, a fiver, over and above your year's pay when I draws a cheque for your wages next week, and you can go down to town and spend it, Bob, if you bring me in the whole of that mob of wethers by sundown. Take any body you like with you and the best of the dogs, only you bring them in; for if you don't, I shall be three hundred pounds short in my wool-money this year, and I've got too heavy a mortgage on this run, Bob, to be able to afford to lose that much, and all through Tom Duckworth's sleepy-headedness."

"Well, ma'am, when the boss spoke so feelingly, and put it to me in that way, I knew it had to be done, so I said, "Right you are, sir," and then he only said, "I looks to you, Bob, for them sheep," and he went away. It was barely light enough to see your hand, and I knew the *mistesses* (that was the way Bob pronounced mists) would be hanging about the hills for a good time yet, so I reached out my hand and I got my pipe and a match and I smoked a bit, whilst I considered which way I should go and who I should take with me. Men, I mean I didn't want to know what dogs I should take, for if Sharp and Sally couldn't find 'em, all I could say was, they wasn't to be found. I'd a good mind to name Tom Duckworth to come, but I meant to give whoever went with me a pound a-piece, and I didn't want to tip him for giving all this bother; besides, he was just as likely as not to sit down under the lea of a rock and smoke the moment he got out of my sight. No, I wouldn't take Tom, but I'd take little Joe Smelt, who was as active as a kid on the hills, and Munro, who, although he belonged to the next

station, knew every yard of country round, and who had the best head on his shoulders of any man I knew. Besides, Munro had always been a chum of mine, and was such a decent well-spoken fellow, it was a pleasure to have any dealin's with him.

"By the time I had settled all this in my own mind, I thought it was about time to get up, so up I got and I lighted the stove and put the kettle on to boil, and a whole lot of chops on to fry, and I got the pannikins

Pannikin is a word for a small dish. (*Merriam Webster Dictionary*, online edition, last accessed July 2012).

out and the tin plates. I remember well I was so anxious to have a good comfortable breakfast ready before I called Joe and Munro, that I even cleaned up the knives and forks for 'em. How did I do that, is it you want to know, ma'am? Oh, very easy: I just stuck 'em into the soft ground outside the back door, and worked 'em up and down a bit, and they came out fine and clean. Well, as soon as I had got everything ready, I went into the men's hut, and I got out Munro and little Joe Smelt without waking any of the others; and when they'd got on their boots and their moleskins, saving your presence, ma'am, they come into the kitchen, and I showed 'em the breakfast all ready and smelling uncommon good, and I told 'em what the boss had said, and I lays it before 'em whether they likes to come up the hills with me and earn their pound a-piece, or whether they'd *pre-fer* to loaf about the station all day, whiles I goes out by myself and sticks to the whole of the fiver.

"Munro, he goes on eating his breakfast quite quiet-like—for that matter we was all pegging away pretty tidily—and then, after a bit, he says in his peaceable way—I've told you he was a very well spoken man, ma'am, haven't I?—he says, "Well, Bob, I don't mind if I do come;" and then Joe Smelt says, as well as he can speak for a mouthful of damper, "The same here;" so then I knew it was settled, and I enjoyed my breakfast with the rest. We didn't dawdle too long, though, for it was getting light enough to see, though them mistresses was still too low to please me, but I thought we might be making our way up the river-gorge and smoke our pipes as we went. The sheep had gone up that way, I knew, and there was no way out. Besides, sheep don't like crossing the water oftener than they can help. Nine times we had to cross that there river on that there blessed Christmas morning. Get wet! I should just think we did: leastways I took off my Cook-hams and my worsted socks at each ford, because I knew right well that if I went up the hills and walked all day in wet things, my feet would get that blistered I'd feel like a cat in walnutshells. Joe Smelt found that out to his cost before the day was over. He started werry cocky and turned up his trowser-legs and walked right through the water, saying he couldn't be bothered to stop and take his boots off and on at each crossing. Munro, he walked through all nine fords in his boots; and then, when we had done with 'em for that day, he sat down on a big stone and took off his socks and his boots and drew out a nice dry pair of worsted socks and put 'em on; then he poured the water out of his boots and shook 'em up and down a bit and put 'em on again, and laced 'em up werry tight. But still, long before the day was done, his feet was smartin' and his boots was all out o' shape, and wringing him awful. Joe and I couldn't have managed that way if it had been ever so, for socks wasn't plenty with us in those days. We just used to get one pair at a time from the nighest store, and wear 'em till they got into one big hole all over, and then we chucked 'em away and got another pair. Now Munro, he had a nice little Scotch wife up at his place, and she was always a-spinning and a-knitting for him, and kept him as comfortable as could be. But Joe and me, we hadn't neither wives, nor socks, nor anything nice about us, but we just pulled through as well as we could.

"Well, ma'am, to come back to that Christmas Day. It was as beautiful a morning as you would wish to see, and not too hot, neither; the sun just beginning to shine, and drinking up them mistresses as if they was grog, till there wasn't one to be seen, and Munro's glass showed him every sheep on every hill within sight as plain as you see your hand now. Lots of sheep there were too, and werry cheerful it sounded their calling to each other, and werry good feed there was for 'em on those hills. But they was all too white for what we wanted. They'd all been *shored*, 'twas easy to see that, and the mob we wanted was still in their wool, and would have looked dirty and much larger among the fresh-shored ones. We could track 'em easy enough by their footmarks up to the head of the gorge, but there we lost all trace, and though we spent a good hour hunting. We felt sure they'd all keep together, for they'd be frightened at the sight of all their fellows so white and so bare, and likely as not travel away from 'em. They wasn't anywhere on the low hills, that was certain; there was no use funking it, we had got to separate and go carefully over the back ranges, and a long hot climb we had before us that Christmas morning; and, not to be too long about it, ma'am, a long hot climb we had if ever there was one in this world. I sent the dogs many and many a time after what I thought might be a part of the mob; but though I hunted as close as ever I could, never a sheep did I see, no, nor a sign of one. Well, ma'am, it was very disheartening, you'll allow that, and I was so vexed I couldn't feel properly hungry even long after dinner-time came, and I kept thinking whatever I should do if they wasn't to be found. You see, I had chosen the most likely place to search in myself, as was but nat'ral, so I never thought that if I couldn't find 'em any one else could. There's where I deceived myself; because when I had worked all round that blessed range and come upon Davis's hut—that was the out-station where we had settled to meet some time in the arternoon—what should I see but Munro and Joe Smelt a-lying on the shady side of the hut as cool and comfortable as you please, smoking their

pipes, and the whole mob of sheep lying quiet and peaceable on the little flat, with Munro's dog watching em. Not that they wanted any watching just then, for sheep always take a good spell in the afternoon of a hot day, and lie down and go to sleep, maybe, until it gets cool enough to make it pleasant to wander about and feed before dark.

"As soon as ever I see that sight I flung up my hat and danced for joy, and I felt desperate hungry all of a minute. I can tell you, ray mates, I didn't lose much time getting down that hill, though I come pretty quiet for fear of scaring the sheep.

"When I comes up to the men, before I could speak, Joe Smelt says, first thing, "Munro found 'em; I haven't been long here." And Munro smiles quiet and pleased-like, and says, "I had a mob once served me the same trick, and I thought I knew where to look for 'em, and sure enough they was there, reg'larly hiding; I had to bring 'em down uncommon easy, for it was a nasty place, and I didn't want half of 'em to be smothered in | the creek."

"Well, of course I meant to ask and to hear all about it, but I thought it would keep until we had had a bit of dinner, for it was about two o'clock, and you must please to remember, ma'am, that we had breakfasted somewhere about five, and likewise that walking up and down them back ranges is hungry work at the best of times, besides being wearing to the boots. "Where's Davis?" was my first words. "Davis must have gone away altogether for a bit," they said, "for the hut is locked and fastened up until it can't be fastened no more, and unless we reg'larly break into it, we shall never get in it."

"Drat the fellow!" I cried, "there ain't no bushrangers about Why doesn't he just lock his door and hang the key on a nail outside where anybody can see it, as I used to do when I was a back-country shepherd, and wanted to go away for a bit" But it was no manner of use pitching into Davis, not then, because you see, ma'am, he wasn't there to hear himself abused, though we did that same and no mistake. It *was* aggravating—now, ma'am, wasn't it? There was we three, and the dogs, poor things! as hungry as hungry could be; and we knew there'd be flour and tea and sugar, and likely a bit of bacon (for Davis was a good hand at curing a ham of a wild pig), inside the door, if we could only open it. Not a bit of it would stir, though, for all our kicks, and Joe Smelt ran at it with his shoulders until I thought he must burst it open; but no, the lock didn't give one bit. "Tell you what," said Jim, rubbing his shoulder after his last attempt, "Davis has gone and barred this 'ere door up on the inside, and then got out of the window and fastened it up outside afterwards." When we came to look, it seemed quite likely, for the shutter was driven home and kept in its place by good-sized nails; but we got a big stone, and we used our knives, and Munro worked away that patiently that at last down came the shutter, and we had the little bit of a window open in no time after that. We made little Joe get through first, and we laughed and said we felt just like real housebreakers, but we thought we'd keep our jokes until we had had something to eat. Before Joe had well unbarred the door—for it was fastened up as if it was never meant to be opened again—Munro and me had settled that he should make some flap-jacks as soon as ever we could get the fire to burn; that is, supposing there wasn't any bacon or mutton lying about.

"The minute Joe opened the door with a cheery "Here you are," we looked round us like so many hungry wolves, and the first thing we see is a fine big shoulder of mutton on the floor. Well, it was easy to see how it had got there, for there were marks of rats' teeth and feet too, all over it Davis hadn't been long gone that was easy to see—not more than a few hours likely, though he plainly intended to be away for some time by the way he'd fastened up everything; but still it was very neglectful of him not to have flung that shoulder of mutton outside before he went, because you see ma'am, in a day or two it would surely be very unpleasant. A neat man was Davis—a very neat man—and when we'd prized open his cupboard made out of old gin-cases, we found his couple of tin-plates and pannikins, and his tea and sugar, and his flour and his matches, and his salt, all as tidy as tidy could be, and there was a big packet of "Vermin Destroyer" too, open and half used. We gave that a wide berth, however, as you may fancy; but we had some sticks in the fire-place and the kettle on to boil before you could say "Jack Robinson."

This phrase meaning "very quickly" is an English saying that has been in use since as early as the 18th century (Gary Martin, "Before you could say Jack Robinson," Phrase Dictionary – Meanings and Origins, <http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/jack-robinson.html>, last accessed July 2012).

We found half a loaf of bread also in the cupboard, which we concluded to eat, lest it should get stale by the time Davis came back, and we told Munro we'd have his flap-jacks for second course. "Here's a capital Christmas dinner after all," said Joe; and he picked up the meat carefully off the floor, and blew the dust off, and we sat down to the table with that shoulder of mutton before us; and all I can tell you, ma'am, is, that long before the kettle boiled—and it had a good fire under it too—there wasn't a scrap left on the bone. Cooked! in course it was cooked; you don't think we was going to eat raw wittles on Christmas Day. No, no, ma'am, we weren't such cannibals as that! Davis had baked it as nice as could be, but it seemed uncommon funny that he should have taken so much trouble for nothing. However, there it was, or, I *should* say, there it wasn't, for we had eaten it up, every bite; and we told Joe Smelt to get the tea out of the cupboard, and throw a couple of

handfuls into the kettle, which was beginning to boil. Joe got up, saying, "I haven't half done yet; I'm just as hungry as ever I can be;" and he went to the cupboard and began to rummage among the things in it. "Don't give us any pison by mistake, Joe," said Munro, joking. Just as he said the words, Joe turned short round, his face looking as white as death underneath all the sunburn and freckles, his very lips white, and his eyes open wider than I thought mortal eyes could open; and he said in a dreadful voice—a sort of whisper, and yet you might have heard it all over the place "That's where it is, we're pisoned!" With that Munro and I jumped up from table, and we gasped out, "Pisoned, Joe!" but we needn't to ask we couldn't speak if we wished. Joe pointed to the bare mutton bone, and held out the half-used paper of the poison in the other, and never a word did he say but " Rats."

"We guessed it all then. Davis must have been fairly bullied by the impudent hungry critturs, and he had taken the trouble to cook for 'em, as if they had been Christians, and then he'd quite likely as not rubbed an ounce or two of strychnine

Strychnine is a type of rat poison (*Merriam Webster Dictionary*, online edition, last accessed July 2012), as in the "Vermin Destroyer" mentioned on page 294.

into that shoulder of mutton, and left it where the rats could get at it, and we'd been and eaten it all up instead o' they. Yes, ma'am, it's all very well to laugh,' said Bob, taking his hat off, and wiping his head with the handkerchief stowed away in its crown, looking into the hat afterwards as if he saw the scene he was describing pictured there—it was the werry roughest moment of all *my* life. To be pisoned like a rat, and in a lonely gully, where no one would ever pass. Most likely we shouldn't even be found before Davis came back. It was lucky Davis didn't come back, though—not at that moment, I mean—for I'm certain sure that if he stood in his own doorway just then we'd 'a set on him and killed him without so much as saying "with your leave or by your leave." We couldn't have been whiter than Joe, not if we'd tried; but we was white enough no doubt Munro was a good man, so he was the bravest of the lot, and he said, or he tried to say, for he couldn't speak very clear," The will of God be done, my poor Jeanie!" and with that he threw himself down on Davis's bed and hid his face.

"I don't rightly know what poor little Joe did, for I felt desperate mad. I caught sight of half a bar of soap stowed away at the back of the cupboard, and I seized it as if it had been a life-buouy, and I'd been a drowning man. I couldn't have gripped it harder or held it tighter if it *had* been a buouy,' said Bob, shaking his head meditatively. 'And I runs down to the creek with it. I don't know why I went there, unless it was to be handy to the water to gulp it down with. Well, ma'am, I had picked up my knife off the table as I passed, and I cut great junks of that bar of soap, and bolted 'em, whole. I seemed to remember having heard some one say that soap was good as a hemetick:

"Hemetick" seems to mean here "emetic" which is a substance taken to cause a person to vomit (*Merriam Webster Dictionary*, online edition, last accessed July 2012) – here used in the hope that it will expel the rat poison.

and so I found it; for by the time I had swallowed half of the bar I felt desperate sick, and joyful I was to feel it, I can tell you; but still I wasn't bad enough to please myself, so I drank some water and had three or four slices more, and that about finished me, and I lay down among the tussocks by the water side; and what with the fright, and the early rising, and the long walk, and the heat of the sun, joined to the murmur-like of the creek, I went off into the comfortablest sleep as I ever had, and it wasn't till the sun had got right behind the high hills to the westward that I woke up. I reckon it was the barking of Munro's dog that woke me, for the poor beast found he had more than he could do to manage the mob of sheep. They must have been feeding some time, and now wanted to be off up the hill to their camping ground; for you must know, ma'am, that sheep never settle for the night on low ground They always travel up as high as they can conveniently get, and camp on the top of a hill.

"The poor beast seemed quite joyful to see it was me coming to help him, as he thought, but I couldn't give my mind to the sheep, not just yet. I was rather empty and a bit weak, but as well as ever I felt in my life. I remember I took off my hat, and looked up to the sky and thanked God in my own rough fashion for saving my life all along of that bar of soap, and I give you my word, ma'am, I meant it, even when I found out my mistake. I thought I'd look up Munro and the other little chap, but I was more than half frightened to go and see about 'em, for at that time, you see, I thought I was wot you may call the sole survivor. However, the others were survivors too, and a very good job for 'em *that* was. Munro had pegged away into a bag of salt until he must have reg'larly *cured* his inside in more senses than one, whilst Joe had hemeticked himself by shoving his fingers down his throat. Poor Joe! he must have been desperate bad too. Well, they'd been to sleep as well as me, and there we stood staring at each other, awful pale and haggard-looking, but still safe and well so far.

"Munro was the first to recover himself, and he said, "Them sheep 'll be off before we can count ten," so with that we went to help the dog, who was barking hisself off his legs. Joe Smelt hung back a bit at first, for he said he'd heard as how exercise caused pison to work, but Munro called out, "Do your duty, Joe, and never

mind the pison."

"So we got the sheep together, and we brought 'em down to the homestead, and right glad the boss was to see 'em. When I told him the story of the shoulder of mutton, he went nearly as white as we did, and he said he'd send for the doctor and tell him to bring proper hemeticks along, but we felt we couldn't stand no more not just then, and Joe says, says he, "It wouldn't be no manner of use, sir, not till we'd had some supper." With that the boss laughs and tells the manager to give us each a glass of hot grog; and very comfortin' it was. That's all, ma'am," concluded Bob, getting up from his hencoop and making me a bow.

"No, no, Bob," I cried, 'that isn't all; I must know the end.'

"There wasn't no more end than that, ma'am; leastways when Davis turned up, which he did by chance next day, at the home station, we worry nearly made an end of him when he lets out that there never had been no pison on the shoulder of mutton at all. He said he'd cooked it, meaning to take it in his swag for his supper that night, and was fine and mad when he found he'd forgotten it. Mr. Vans-start, he said we ought to be downright thankful to Davis when we found he hadn't let us in for his pison, but we couldn't see it in that light no how, and we give Davis, one and all of us, a bit of our minds, and Joe Smelt offered to fight him the very next Sunday for five pounds a side. Poor Davis! he made us mad by the way he laughed, and he tried to comfort us by telling us that if the "Vermin Destroyer" did us as little harm as it did the rats, we needn't to have cried out. "Why, they thrive on it," he said. "I lets 'em have it pretty often, and they comes about more than ever arter a dose on it."

"Bob's story took a long time in the telling, for he told it very deliberately, and enjoyed a long word, or any pet expression, such as his life-buouy, so intensely that he repeated it over and over again, rolling the words in his mouth as if they were good to taste. By the time he had finished, the valley was in deep shadow, and the delicious crisp feeling in the air, which always follows a summer's day in our New Zealand hills, made us feel inclined for a change of occupation. The quoits were got out, and the iron pegs stuck in the ground, and some of the shearers were soon hard at work pitching the heavy circlets through the air.

This refers to an old English game called Quoits that, as described here, is not unlike the game of horseshoes. (The Online Guide to Traditional Games, "Quoits – History and Useful Information," <http://www.tradgames.org.uk/games/Quoits.htm>, last accessed July 2012).

Another group were putting the stone or the hammer, whilst a few made themselves very hot by running races or having hopping matches. The constant open-air exercise, keeps men of all grades in New Zealand in such good condition that, even in such rough primitive sports as these were, I have seen far more surprising feats of strength performed by athletes who had had no other training than their daily hill-walks and frugal, wholesome fare, than in the *champ-clos* of a fashionable arena in the old country.

"But to-morrow's work must begin with the dawn, so whilst there was yet light to see their way home across the rolling downs which stretched like a green sea before us, the good-nights were said. I stood in the porch and shook hands with each guest as he passed, though the performance of this ceremony entailed deep blushes on the part of my stalwart company. 'Here's wishin' you the best o' luck, mum,' was the general adieu; but when they all got to the bottom of the paddock, they consulted together and gave a ringing hearty cheer, which woke up the valley's quiet echoes, may be for the first time since it emerged from the water-world. 'One more for Old Father Christmas' were the last words I heard, as I turned indoors, leaving the joyous sounds to die gradually away into the deep perfumy silence which hung over that lonely valley of the Malvern Hills."

## Appendix: Reviews of 'A Christmas Cake in Four Quarters'

### "Christmas Books." The Times, London. 25 Dec. 1871

Transcription of relevant section of "Christmas Books." The Times, London. 25 Dec. 1871: par. 3.

Transcription of relevant section of "Christmas Books." The Times, London. 25 Dec. 1871: par. 3.

"In A Christmas Cake in Four Quarters, by Lady Barker (Macmillan) we pass from Lewis Carroll's delectable mountains of shining nonsense to a happy valley of light and bright narrative of "things which actually happened," as the children say. Whether, indeed, these stories of four Christmas days in four quarters of the world (which is the interpretation of the title of the book) are in all respects true is more than we can vouch for, but at least they wear the garb of truth, and truth itself could not make them more charming and acceptable to their young readers. "Once upon a time" – so runs the first sentence of the book – "there was a lady who liked telling stories to children, and once upon a time – which time exists up to this very moment – there were a great many children who liked listening." Many an admirably written tale has been rejected by young readers because its writer is over-fond of playing, or rather acting – for it is not play at all – the part of an admonisher of youth. It may safely be said that those story books which attempt to teach children most, teach them least. Lady Barker does not ostensibly profess to teach them anything; but she knows how to gain an affectionate hold upon the attention of her little listeners, how to make them forget they are hearkening to a

grown up person, how to induce that unguarded mood in which the lightest and most passing word spoken in earnest is like an arrow shot into the centre of their hearts. "The Christmas-day in England" is compounded of an amusing ghost and several capital episodes, and the "points" are all well within the comprehension of children. How Jim Hollenby, the village boy, was stuffed in Mr. Owen's kitchen, and then trusted to take a sumptuous Christmas dinner to poor Widow Barnes, and how, by mistake, he took it to poacher Barnes and his vagabond family instead ("They was a bit surprised at first, but thanked you kindly all the same, and Daddy Barnes said you was a regular brick" was the message which Jim brought to the aghast donor); how on a certain Christmas-eve a certain lady mistook the waits for burglars; how one ghost made many; – all this and much more is told with the same power of easy and natural description to which *Station Life in New Zealand* and *Stories About* owe so much of their popularity. Perhaps the best, however, of the four Christmas-days is that spent in New Zealand. It is full of anecdotes of the rough life of that colony, some exceedingly amusing, and some of the strange and thrilling adventure."

### **"Christmas Books." The Examiner, London. 16 Dec. 1871**

Transcription of relevant section of "Christmas Books." The Examiner, London. 16 Dec. 1871: par. 8.

Transcription of relevant section of "Christmas Books." The Examiner, London. 16 Dec. 1871: par. 8.

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"One of the best children's books of the season is Lady Barker's *Christmas Cake in Four Quarters* (Macmillan), which would have been noticed by us a week or two ago, had it not been stolen from our table and secreted in the nursery, there to be devoured at leisure, by a small critic, who found in it a solution of the old impossibility of eating a cake and having it too. This is Lady Barker's best book. It gossips, in the pleasantest way possible, about the Christmas experiences, in England, Jamaica, India, and New Zealand, of a lady, who certainly must be the authoress, who "used to be constantly surrounded by boys and girls in a chronic state of story-hunger, but, who, fortunately, never seemed to tire of telling all that they wanted to hear." The stories here told consist mainly of illustrations of emigrant and native customs in the colonies, and are all very interesting, and, save for an occasional touch of horror, very wholesome."

### **"Current Literature." Daily News, London. 22 Dec. 1871**

Transcription of relevant section of "Current Literature." Daily News, London. 22 Dec. 1871: par. 5.

Transcription of relevant section of "Current Literature." Daily News, London. 22 Dec. 1871: par. 5.

"Of Christmas books for the amusement of young folk we can heartily praise Mr. Knatchbull-Hugessen's *"Moonshine"* (Macmillan), containing a dozen marvellous or comical stories, pleasantly told as one would talk to the children one loves, and conceived in a healthy and happy spirit. The like favourable verdict is to be passed on Lady Barker's *"Christmas Cake Cut in Four Quarters"* (Macmillan), which has an interesting tale from or of each of the four quarters of the globe – saving that Africa is left out, and Polynesia, represented by New Zealand, occupies its place."

### **"More Children's Books." The Pall Mall Gazette, London. 8 Dec. 1871**

Transcription of relevant section of "More Children's Books." The Pall Mall Gazette, London. 8 Dec. 1871: par. 2.

Transcription of relevant section of "More Children's Books." The Pall Mall Gazette, London. 8 Dec. 1871: par. 2.

"Lady Barker's success as the writer of *"Station Life in New Zealand"* has no doubt induced her of late to try her hand frequently at the craft of author. She has a pleasant style, some sense of humour and of the picturesque, great skill in describing what she has seen, a large store of information, and a ready pen. What wonder then that she should make frequent use of these gifts? Two of Lady Barker's volumes are on our table, *"Travelling About over New and Old Ground"* (Routledge and Sons) and *"A Christmas Cake in Four Quarters"* (Macmillan and Co). In *"Travelling About"* the author, by the help of well-known books, from which she has skilfully extracted the cream, and by the help in one or two instances of personal knowledge, has produced for young people "an abstract and brief chronicle of some chapters of modern travel." Here, for instance, the sad story is retold of *"Wills' Exploration of Australia,"* here the best recent works of African travel are laid under contribution; Lord Milton's and Dr. Cheadle's fascinating account of *"The North-West Passage by Land"* is recapitulated, so also is *"Head's Story of the Pampas,"* so also is Mr. Hinchcliff's *"Experience in South America."* Indeed, the writer carries her readers with her to every quarter of the globe, and, whether they be young or old, it would be difficult to make this grand tour with a pleasanter companion. Such a book, as instructive as it is entertaining, is well fitted for a Christmas present to an intelligent boy or girl who has knowledge enough to appreciate the gift. Upon young or dull children it would be thrown away. Lady Barker's

other venture, "A Christmas Cake in Four Quarters," is extremely entertaining, and contains stories about Christmas-day in England, in Jamaica, in India, and in New Zealand. We may add for the information of the children that the book opens, as is fitting, with a ghost story."