



"THE TRAVELLER'S TREE" OF MADAGASCAR.

tries that seem to supply almost everything that man needs for his subsistence."

"Tell us of them, uncle, please," cried Ted, who had been an eager listener. "Are they big apple-trees like ours?"

"No, my boy; they bear something that may not be quite so toothsome, but it is much more precious than a sweet apple. Humboldt," continued Uncle John, "mentions a tree he saw in South America, and which he calls the cow-tree. It is a tree so called because it takes the place of a cow in supplying the people with milk."

"How funny to think of wooden cows that give real good, sweet milk!" cried Ellie.

"Yes," continued the traveller, "these trees grow out of the rocks. They have large, wood roots, and the leaves are dry and leathery. For several months of the year no rain falls to moisten the leaves

and the branches look dry and dead; but when the trunk is pierced, a sweet and nourishing milk oozes out. The best time for milking, the natives say, is at sunrise, and at that hour they go out with bowls and calabashes to pierce the wooden cows. They make incisions in the branches, and soon have the bowls overflowing with nice, fresh milk, which some drink on the spot, while others take it home to the little ones."

"But does it taste like real milk, uncle?" asked Tom, incredulously.

"So I gather from what travellers say. The smell is pleasant and the taste agreeable."

"There is surely no other plant like it in the world," said Ted, in wondering tones.

"Wrong, my boy. There are others, but they don't give milk. There's a remarkable tree in the island of Madagas-

car, called the 'Traveller's Tree.' The branches don't grow out of the trunk, but spring out in a line, like the spokes of a wheel. Each branch grows at the end a big broad leaf, which spreads out like a fan. Under the branches a dew collects in the evening in a myriad of drops that form little streams which run down the lower side of the branches. At the base of the branch is a cuplike hollow, where the dew gathers, and thirsty travellers have just to poke something between the branches and hold a cup or jar under, and it is speedily filled with sweet, refreshing water."

"Another illustration of how our Heavenly Father provides for His creatures in all places," remarked mamma from the sofa.

"Yes; all trees are useful in some way or other," responded uncle, "but there are some whose every leaf, branch and fibre are valuable in various ways. The cocoanut is one of these; its fruit yields oil, a sugary milk and solid food, while from its rind or shell are made spoons, cups, bowls, and even tables. The bark of the tree is made into twine, cloth, and mats; the tender young buds are eaten, and the sap makes capital sugar. The tough, leathery leaves are used for sails for boats, for sacks, for baskets, and thatch for cottages."

"Well!" exclaimed the deeply interested group, "surely no other tree can be so useful."

"Ah, but the bamboo in China is even more so," was the smiling reply. "It grows about eighty feet in height, and has neither blossom nor fruit. Its leaves are short and slender, but many of its canes are thicker than your papa's arm. The biggest stems are used for pillars of buildings and for rafters and planks, and its leaves are woven as thatching for the roof. The fibre makes mats for the floor. In many Chinese houses the bamboo is made into bedsteads, tables and chairs, and workmen also turn it into umbrellas, hats, baskets, cups, brooms, shoe-soles, pipes, bows-and-arrows, and sedan-chairs. The finer fibre is spun into twine, and the shavings are used for stuffing pillows. Its leaves make a capital cloak for wet days, and the chopsticks, which you have seen Chinamen use instead of knife and fork, are also made out of its stems. But that isn't the whole: its tender shoots are boiled and eaten and the pulp is transformed into paper, and the pith into pickles and sweatmeats. Boats, floats, sails, cable, rigging, fishing-rods and fishing-baskets are all made from the same tree. Chinese farmers have it in the form of carts, wheelbarrows, ploughs, wheels and fences. In fact, I might go on for an hour telling you about this remarkable tree which is everywhere used by the Celestials. If there is a more useful plant on the globe, I have never heard of it."