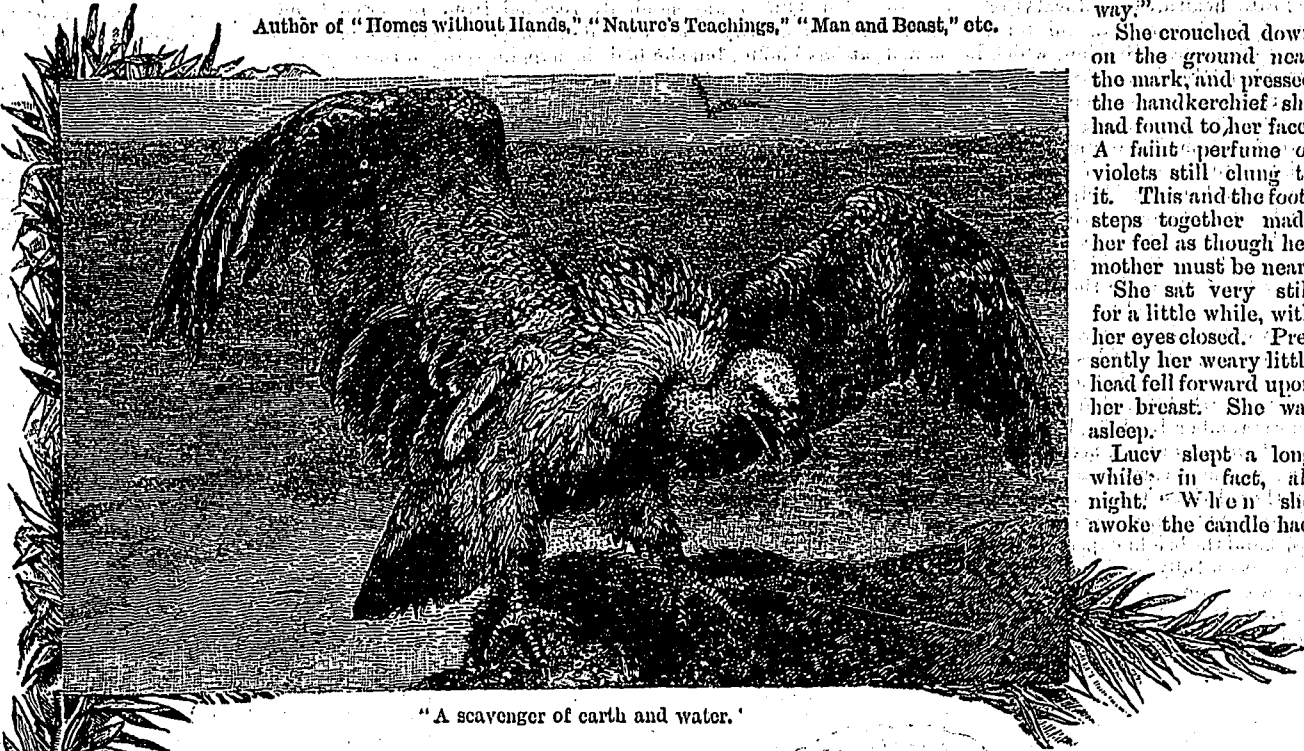


## THE LIFE OF A DEAD CAMEL.

BY THE REV. J. G. WOOD, M.A.,

Author of "Homes without Hands," "Nature's Teachings," "Man and Beast," etc.



"A scavenger of earth and water."

"I die daily," wrote the Apostle Paul, nearly two thousand years ago. The context shows that he used the words metaphorically, but even in the outward sense they are strictly and literally true.

In those days, it was impossible that the writer could have known the fact, but we now know that, as far as the material body is concerned, every creature into whom God has breathed the breath of life, dies daily. Every breath which is exhaled from our lungs carries away some particles of the body, and even the lifting of a finger or the winking of an eyelid entails a loss of tissue.

The human body has been well compared to a whirlpool, which retains its shape, though the particles of which it is made are incessantly changing. From earth we came, and, sooner or later, directly or indirectly, we return to earth, who reclaims her own.

I must here repeat the aphorism on which I have frequently insisted: That there is no waste in Nature. Whenever any being has done with the whole or any part of its structure, other beings are always waiting for it. Various means are employed for the attainment of this end, some being conspicuous and self-evident, while others are invisible, obscure, and only to be detected by the aid of chemistry and other cognate sciences.

Chemistry, for example, has taught us that the carbonic acid gas which saturates every breath which is exhaled from our lungs, and which is deadly poison to us if again inhaled, is the breath of life to plants. These inhale it by means of their leaves, which are equivalent to our lungs, and exhale it in the form of oxygen, which is the breath of life to us; and so the cycle of nature rolls its ceaseless round.

As long as life informs the bodily frame, these silent and invisible forces are quite sufficient to aid earth in resuming her own property. But when any animal lays aside the whole of its body, additional agencies are needed. As an extreme case, I select one which is of too frequent occurrence, *i. e.*, a camel that has broken down and been abandoned to death.

Now we come to another point in the economy of nature. He who has expended such infinite pains in putting together the numberless particles which constitute the earthly body, and in holding them together as long as they are needed, never loses a moment in taking them asunder as soon as their former borrower stands in no further need of them.

No sooner is the breath out of the body, than disintegration commences. Ordinary decomposition would, at a certain temperature, achieve this end, but the process is a slow one, and it has therefore to be supplemented by other agencies of quicker action.

First, there come the correlative scavengers of earth and water, namely, the hyenas and the vultures; the terrestrial scavengers, apparently learning the presence of their prey by means of the nostrils, while the aerial scavengers appear to be guided almost wholly by the eye. Perhaps, as we shall presently see, the eye also may assist in guiding the terrestrials.

Let us first take the vultures. These birds soar every morning to almost incredible heights, and from their vantage point survey a vast expanse of earth, their wonderful eyes acting like telescopes. Humboldt mentions that when he was on the Cordilleras of South America, at an elevation of fourteen thousand feet, he saw above him the great condor-vultures—birds whose wings measure some twelve feet from tip to tip—sailing at such an elevation that they looked like mere specks in the sky. Their height above the level of the sea was estimated at more than twenty thousand feet, and it is said that the birds can attain the height of nearly six miles. The vultures know every tree, bush, or stone in their district, and a dead rat could scarcely escape their observation. The sight, therefore, of so large a creature as a camel, lying down and unaccompanied by a human being, is quite enough to inform them that a plentiful banquet is at hand.

(To be Continued.)

## THE GREAT CAVE.

BY JULIA K. HILDRETH.

(Continued.)

She passed through many long passages and great rooms, and at last she began to feel as though she must be walking right into the centre of the earth.

After a while her candle burned down so low that she was obliged to light another. This made her think that she must have been walking a long time, and, besides, she now began to feel very tired.

As she lighted the second candle she was surprised to hear a rippling sound close by. Looking down quickly, Lucy saw a wide stream of water directly before her, and at the same time she perceived something white at her feet. Picking it up, she found that it was her mother's handkerchief. This alarmed her so that she sat down near the edge of the swift dark water, and began to cry.

Lucy put her candle in a crevice of the rock by her side and looked hopelessly about. The once thick and beautiful book was almost used up; the covers flapped loosely in her hand, and now this stream barred her way. What could she do?

At that moment her eye fell upon a distinct foot-print in some sand upon which the light shone.

"That is ever so much bigger than mine," said Lucy, looking at it closely, and drying her eyes. "I am sure it must be mamma's,

and she has not fallen into the pond, for the toe points the other way."

She crouched down on the ground near the mark, and pressed the handkerchief she had found to her face. A faint perfume of violets still clung to it. This and the footsteps together made her feel as though her mother must be near.

She sat very still for a little while, with her eyes closed. Presently her weary little head fell forward upon her breast. She was asleep.

Lucy slept a long while in fact, all night. When she awoke the candle had

they could perceive her, and also the danger which they had just escaped.

"My little girl," said her father, "hold the light up, and I will swim across, and bring you to this side."

"Then we can all starve together," said her aunt.

"Oh no, aunty," said Lucy; "we shall not have to starve, because I know the way out."

"Are you sure?" asked her father, in surprise.

"Certain," replied Lucy, "for I tore a big book up, pictures and all, and sprinkled the pieces on the ground in a long streak from the opening of the cave to just where I am now. When I picked up mamma's handkerchief I found that the book was almost used up. Then I sat down and cried, and I guess I went to sleep."

"Was there ever such a darling?" said her mother.

"Where did you find the handkerchief?" asked her father.

"Where I am standing now, papa," said Lucy.

"Then it is plain to me," replied the father, "that we have been on that side of the stream some time during our wanderings. If you will walk along your side of the water, Lucy, we will follow on this side, until we find the place where we crossed."

Holding her candle high above her head, to give as much light as possible to the people on the other side, Lucy walked slowly by the side of the black water, until she came to a place where the rock formed a natural bridge over the stream. In another moment she was clasped in her mother's arms.

After she had been kissed and praised by each one in turn, her father said,

"Now, Lucy, take us home, for we are all hungry and tired."

"Yes, papa," said Lucy, running forward. "Come, mamma: come, aunty."

She held the candle close to the ground, and moved quickly onward. The track of paper lay along the ground like a narrow white ribbon, and led them safely to the entrance. But before they reached it they were joined by Mr. Adams, who came from a dark corner, rubbing his eyes, and looking very much bewildered. He had just awakened from a long nap.

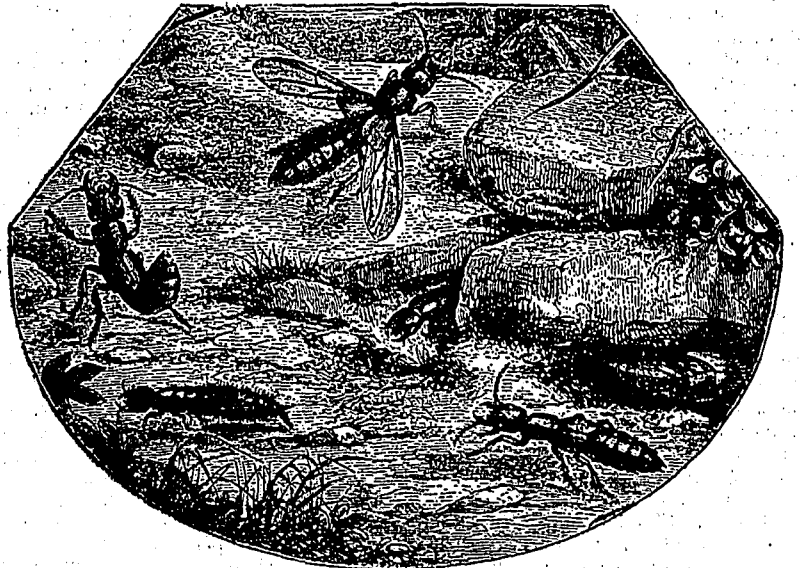
Lucy learned that he had only missed the candles when the light in his lantern grew dim. He went to look for them, telling the party to remain where they were until his return; but the light went out before he reached the opening, and he had lost his way.

He said that "Lucy must add him to her list of rescued people, for he felt sure he would never have found his way out in the dark."

In a little while the tired party found themselves standing on the sun-lit grass before the cave in which they had passed such a dismal day and night.

As they hurried home through the woods they were met by a number of neighbors who had started out in search of them.

When they heard what Lucy had done they called her the smartest and bravest little girl in all Virginia, and carried her home in great triumph.—*Harper's Young People*



"Their bodies are very long and slender."