The Flight into Egypt.

BY REV. FRANCIS MARONEY (FATHER PROUT)

There's a legend that's full of a gipsy who dwelt
In the land where the Pyramids be;
And her robe was embroidered with stars, and her belt
With devices, right wondrous to see:
And she lived in the days when our Lord was a child
On his mother's human ate breast;
When he fled from his foes—when to Egypt exiled,
He went down with St. Joseph it is hinted.

This Egyptian hell converse with magic methinks,
And the future was given to her gaze;
For an obelisk marked her abode, and a sphinx
On her threshold kept vigil always.
She was pensive and ever alone, nor was seen
In the haunts of the dissolute crowd;
But communed with the ghosts of the Pharaohs, I ween,
Or with visitors wrapped in a shroud.

And there came an old man from the desert one day,
With a maid on a mule, by that road;
And a child on her bosom reclined—and the way
Led them straight to the gipsy's abode:
And they seemed to have travelled a wearisome path,
From their home many, many a league—
From a tyrant's pursuit, from an enemy's wrath,
Spent with toil, and o'ercome with fatigue.

And the gipsy came forth from her dwelling, and prayed
That the pilgrims would rest them awhile;
And offered her couch to that delicate maid,
Who had come many, many a mile;
And she fondled the babe with affections caress,
And she begged the old man would repose:
Here the stranger, she said, ever finds free access,
And the wanderer balm for his woes.

Then her guests from the glare of the noonday she led
To a seat in her grotto so cool;
Where she spread them a banquet of fruits—and a shed,
With a manger, was found for the mule;
With the wine of the palm-tree, with the dates newly culled,
All the toil of the road she beguiled:
And with song in a language mysterious she lulled
On her bosom the way faring child.

When the gipsy anon in her Ethiop hand
Placed the infant's diminutive palm,
Oh 'twas fearful to see how the features see scanned
Of the babe in his slumber so calm!
Well she noted each mark and each furrow that crossed
O'er the tracings of destiny' line:
"WHENCE CAME YE!" she cried, in astonishment lost,
"FOR THIS CHILD IS OF LINEAGE DIVINE!"

"From the village of Nazareth," Joseph replied,
"Where we dwelt in the land of the Jew
We have fled from a tyrant, whose garment is dyed
In the gore of the children he slew;
We were told to remain till an angel's command
Should appoint us the hour to return;
But till then we inhabit the foreigner's land,
And in Egypt we make our sojourn."

"Then ye tarry with me!" cried the gipsy in joy,
"And ye make of my dwelling your home:
Many years have I prayed that the Israelite boy
(Blessed hope of the Gentiles!") would come."
And she kissed both the feet of the Infant and knelt,
And adored him at once; then a smile
Lit the face of his mother, who cheerfully dwelt
With her host on the banks of the Nile

MOONDYNE!

Book Fifth.

The Valley of the Vasse.

BY JOHN BOYLE O'REILLY.

III.

WALKING IN THE SHADOW.

There was nothing apparent in the possibilities of Alice Walmsley's new life to disturb the calm flow of her returning happiness. Even her wise and watchful friend, Sister Cecilia, smiled hopefully as she ventured to glance into the future.

But when the sky was clearest, the cloud came up on the horizon, though at first it was 'no larger than a man's hand.'

The visits of *Mr.* Wyville to Farmer Little's pleasant house were frequent and continuous. Mr. Little's colonial title was Farmer; but he was a gentleman of taste, and had a demesne and residence as extensive as an English duke. He was hospitable, as all rich Australians are; and he was proud to entertain so distinguished a man as Mr. *Wyville*.

Gravely and quietly, from his first visit, Mr. Wyville had devoted his attention to Alice Walmsley, and in such a manner that his purpose should not be misunderstood by Mr. Little or his wife. Indeed, it was quite plain to them long before it was dreamt of by Alice herself. From the first, she had been treated as a friend by these estimable people; but after a while she began to observe something in their manner that puzzled her. They were no less kind than formerly; but they grew a little strange, as if they had not quite understood her position at first.

Alice could discover no reason for any change; so she went on quietly from day to day. Mr. Wyville always drew her into conversation when he entered there; and with him she found herself as invariably talking on subjects which no one else touched, and which she understood perfectly. It seemed as if he held a key to her mind, and instinctively knew the lines of reflection she had followed during her years of intense solitude. Alice herself would have forgotten these reflections had they not been brought to her recollection. Now, they recurred to her pleasantly, there are so few persons who have any stock of individual thought to draw upon.

She took a ready and deep interest in every plan of Mr. Wyville for the benefit of the convicts; and he, seeing this, made his purposes, even for many years ahead, known to her, and advised with her often on changes that might here and there be made.

One evening, just at twilight, when the ladies of the family were sitting under the wide verandah, looking down on the darkened river, Mrs. Little pleasantly but slyly said something that made Alice's cheeks flame. Alice raised her face with a pained and reproachful look.

'There, now, Alice,' said the lady coming to her with a kind caress; 'you mustn't think it strange. We can't help seeing it, you know.'

'What do you see?' asked Alice in bewilderment.

'Mr. Wyville's devotion, dear. We are all delighted to think of your marriage with so good and eminent a man.'

Alice sank back in her chair, utterly nerveless. It was so dark they did not see her sudden paleness. She held the arms of the chair with each hand, and was silent for so long a time that *Mrs. Little* feared she had wounded her.

'Forgive me if I have pained you, Alice,' she said kindly.

'O, no, no!' said Alice, with quivering lips; 'I thank you with all my heart. I did not know—I did not think—'

She did not finish the sentence. Mrs. Little, seeing that her rallying had had quite another effect from that intended, came to Alice's aid by a sudden exclamation about the beauty of the rising moon. This was successful; for ten minutes every eye was turned on the lovely crescent that rose, as bright as burnished silver above the dark line of forest. In the midst of this admiration Alice slipped away from the happy group, and spent the evening alone in her own room.

A few days later she sat in the arbor of the convent garden, while Sister Cecilia watered her flowerbeds. Sitting so, her mind went reaching back after one memorable incident in her life. And by some chance, the already vibrating chord was touched at that moment by the little nun.

'Here is my first rosebud, Alice,' she said, coming into the arbor, 'see how pretty those two young leaves are.'

Alice's eyes were suffused with tears as she bent her head over the lovely bud. It appealed to her now, in the midst of her happiness, with unspeakable tenderness of recollection. She held it to her lips, almost prayerful, so moved that she could not speak.

'Only think,' continued Sister Cecilia, 'for nine months to come we shall never want for roses nor buds. Ah me! I think we value them less for their plenty. It's a good thing to visit the prison now and again, isn't it, Alice? We love rosebuds all the better for remembering the weeds.'

Alice raised her head, and looked with eloquent assent at Sister Cecilia.

'I love all the world better for the sweet rosebud you gave me in prison,' she said.

Sister Cecilia seemed puzzled for a moment, and then she smiled as if she recalled something.

'It was not I who gave you that rosebud, Alice.'

Alice's face became blank with disappointment; her hands sank on her knees.

'O, do not say that it was left there by accident or by careless hands. I cannot think of that. I have drawn so much comfort from the belief that your kind heart had read my unhappiness, and had discovered such a sweet means of sending comfort. Do not break down my fancies now. If you did not give it to me, you prompted the act? You knew of it, Sister, surely you did?'

'No. I did not know of it until it was done. I should never have thought of it. It was thought of by one whose whole life seems devoted to others and to the Divine Master. Do not fear that careless hands put the flower in your cell, Alice. It was placed there by Mr. Wyville.'

'By Mr. *Wyville*.'

'Yes dear; it was Mr. Wyville's own plan to win you back to the beautiful world. I thought you knew it all the time.'

'It was nearly five years ago; how could Mr. Wyville have known?' There was a new earnestness in Alice's face as she spoke.

'He had learned your history in Millbank from the governor and he became deeply interested. It was he who first said you were innocent, long before he proved it; and it was he who first asked me to visit you in your cell.'

Alice did not speak; but she listened with a look almost of sadness, yet with close interest.

'He was your friend, Alice, when you had no other friend in the world,' continued Sister Cecilia, not looking at Alice's face, or she would have hesitated; 'for four years he watched your case, until at last he found her whose punishment you had borne so long.'

'*Where* did he find her?' Alice asked, after a pause.

'He found her in the jail of your native village, Walton le Dale.'

'Walton le Dale!' repeated Alice in surprise; 'he took much trouble, then, to prove that I was innocent.'

'Yes; and he did it all alone.'

'Mr. Sheridan, perhaps, could have assisted him. He was born in Walton,' said Alice, in a very low voice.

'Yes Mr. Sheridan told me so when he gave me the package for you at Portland; but he was here in Australia all the years *Mr.* Wyville was searching for poor wretched Harriet. But come now, Alice, we will leave that gloomy old time behind us in England. Let us always keep it there as our Australian day looks backward and sees the English night.'

Soon after Alice started to return to her home. She lingered a long time by the placid river, the particulars she had heard recurring to her, and much disturbing her peace. In the midst of her reflections she heard her name called, and, looking toward the road, saw Mr. Wyville. She did not move, and he approached.

'I have come to seek you,' he said, 'and to prepare you to meet an old friend.'

She looked at him in surprise, without speaking.

'Mr. Sheridan has just returned from Adelaide,' he said, 'and you were the first person he asked for. I was not aware that you knew him.'

There was no tone in his voice that betrayed disquiet or anxiety. He was even more cheerful than usual.

'I am glad you know *Mr.* Sheridan,' he continued; 'he is a fine fellow; and I fear he has been very unhappy.'

'He has been very busy,' she said, looking down at the river; 'men have a great deal to distract them from unhappiness.'

'See that jagged rock beneath the water,' he said, pointing to a stone, the raised point of which broke the calm surface of the river. 'Some poet likens a man's sorrow to such a stone. When the flood comes, the sweeping rush of enterprise or duty, it is buried; but in the calm season it will rise again to cut the surface, like an ancient pain.'

Alice followed the stone with eye and mind.

'I did not think you read poetry,' she said with a smile, as she rose from her seat on the rocks.

'I have not read much,' he said—and his face was flushed in the setting sun—'until very recently.'

As they walked together toward the house Alice returned to the subject first in her mind. With a grave yet quite voice she said:

'Mr. Sheridan's unhappiness is old then?'

'Yes; it began years ago, when he was little more than a boy.'

Alice was silent. She walked slowly beside Mr. Wyville for a dozen steps. Then she stopped as if unable to proceed, and laying her hand on a low branch beside the path, turned to him.

'Mr. Wyville,' she said, 'has Mr. Sheridan told you the cause of his unhappiness?'

'He has,' he replied, astonished at the abrupt question; 'it is most unfortunate, and utterly hopeless. Time alone can heal the deep wound. He has told me that you knew him years ago; you probably know the sad story.'

'I do not know it' she said, supporting herself by the branch.

'He loved a woman with a man's love while yet a boy,' he said; 'and he saw her lured from him by a villian, who blighted her life into hopeless ruin;'

'Does he love her still?' asked Alice, her face turned to the darkened bush.

'He pities her; for she is wretched and—guilty.'

At the word, Alice let go the branch and stood straight in the road.

'Guilty!' she said in a strange voice.

'Miss Walmsley, I am deeply grieved at having introduced this subject. But I thought you knew—Mr. Sheridan, I thought, intimated as much. The woman he loved is the unhappy one for whom you suffered. Her husband is still alive, and in this country. I brought him here, to give him, when she is released, a chance of atonement.'

A light burst on Alice's mind as Mr. Wyville spoke, and she with difficulty kept from sinking. She reached for the low branch again; but she did not find it in the dark. To preserve her control, she walked on toward the house, though her steps were hurried and irregular.

Mr. Wyville thinking that her emotion was caused by painful recollections, accompanied her without a word. He was profoundly sorry that he had given her pain. Alice knew, as well as if he had spoken his thought, what was pausing in his mind.

As one travelling in the dark will see a whole valley in one flash of lightning, Alice had seen the error under which Mr. *Wyville* labored, and all its causes, in that one moment of illumination. Then, too, she read his heart, filled with deep feeling, and unconscious of the gulf before it; and the knowledge flooded her with sorrow.

At the door of the house Mrs. Little met them with an air of bustle.

'Why, Alice!' she exclaimed, 'two gentlemen coming to dinner, and one of them an old friend and you loitering by the river like a school-girl. Mr. Wyville, I believe you kept Alice till she has barely time to put a ribbon in her hair.'

Mr. Wyville, with some early turn of the subject, covered Alice's disquiet, and then took his leave, going to Perth, to return later with Sheridan and Hamerton.

'Dear Mrs. Little,' said Alice, when his horse's hoofs sounded on the road, 'you must not ask me to dine with you to-night. Let me go to the children.'

There was something in her voice and face that touched the kind matron, and she at once assented, only saying she was sorry for Alice's sake.

'But you will see Mr. Sheridan?' she said. '*Mr.* Little says he was very particular in asking for you.

'I will see him to morrow,' said Alice; 'indeed, I am not able to see any one to-night.'

An hour later, when the guests arrived, Alice sat in her unlighted room, and heard their voices; and one voice, that she remembered as from yesterday, mentioned her name, and then remained silent.

IV.

THE MEETING.

With the first warm flush of morning Alice was away on her favorite lonely walk by the river. The day opened like almost all days in Western Australia, with a glorious richness of light, color and life. The grand shadowy stretches in the bush were neither silent nor humid, as in tropical countries. Every inch of ground sent up its jets of color, exquisite though scentless; and all the earth hummed with insect life, while the trees flashed with the splendid colors of countless bright-necked birds.

Alice breathed in the wondrous beauty of her surroundings. Her heart, so long unresponsive, had burst into full harmony with the generous nature of the Australian bush.

Down by the river, where the spreading mahogany trees reached far over the water, she loved to walk in the early morning and at the close of the day. Thither she went this morning; and an hour later some one followed her steps, directed where to find her by Mrs. Little.

That morning, as she left the left the house, Mrs. Little had told her that Mr. Sheridan was to call early, and had asked to see her.

'I shall be home very soon,' Alice said, as she went out.

But she did not return soon; and when Mr. Sheridan called, much earlier than he was expected, Mrs. Little told him where Miss Walmsley usually spent her mornings, and he, leaving his horse in the stable, walked down through the bush toward the river.

The shadows and the flowers and the bright winged birds were as beautiful as an hour before, but Will Sheridan, though he loved nature, saw none of them. He walked rapidly at first, then he slackened his pace, and broke off a branch here and there as he passed, and threw it away again. When he came to the river and stood and looked this way and that for Alice, all the determination with which he had set out had disappeared.

But Alice was not in sight. He walked slowly by the river bank, and a few minutes he saw her coming toward him beneath the trees.

He stood still, and waited for her. She walked rapidly. When within ten yards of where he stood she turned from the river, to cross the bush toward the house. She had not seen him, and in a minute she would be out of sight. Sheridan took a few paces towards her and stopped.

'Alice,' he said aloud.

She turned and saw him standing, with an eager face, his hands reached out towards her. Every premeditated word was forgotten. She gave one look at the face, so little changed—she felt the deep emotion in voice, and act and feature, and her heart responded impulsively and imperatively. She only spoke one word.

'Will.'

He came forward, his eyes on hers, and the eyes of both were brimming. Without a word they met. Alice held out both hands, and he took them, and held them, and after a while he raised them one after the other to his lips, and kissed them. Then they turned towards the house and walked on together in silence. Their hearts were too full for words. They understood without speech. Their sympathy was so deep and unalterable that it verged on to the bounds of pain.

On the verandah Alice turned to him with the same full look she had given him at first, only it was clear as a morning sky, and with it she gave him her hand. Sheridan looked into the cloudless depths of her eyes, as if searching for the word that only reached his senses through the warm pressure of her hand.

It was a silent meeting and parting but it was completely eloquent and decisive. They had said all that each longed for, in the exquisite language of the soul. As Sheridan was departing he turned once more to Alice.

'I shall come here this evening.'

She only smiled, and he went away with a satisfied heart.

On that morning Mr. *Wyville* had started early for Freemantle, his mind revolving two important steps which he meant to take that day. Since the arrival of the ship he had been disquieted by the presence of Draper in the colony. *He* questioned his own wisdom in bringing him there when he might have let him go.

But, in his wide experience of men and of criminals, Mr. Wyville had never met one who was wholly bad; he had discovered, under the most unsightly and inharmonious natures, some secret chord that, when once struck, brought the heart up to the tone of human kindness. This chord he had sought for in Draper. *He* had hoped that in the day of humiliation his heart would return to her he had so cruelly wronged.

There was only one step more to be taken—to release Harriet, and, if she would, let her seek her husband and appeal once more to his humanity.

On this day, Mr Wyville intended to issue a pardon to Harriet Draper. The Government had awarded to Alice Walmsley, as some form of recompense for her unjust suffering, a considerable sum of money; and Mr. Wyville held this money; at Alice's request, for the benefit of *Harriet*.

Arrived a Freemantle, he proceeded to the prison, and signed the official papers necessary for the release. The money was made payable to Harriet at the bank of Freemantle. He did not see her himself, but he took the means of letting her know the residence of her husband; and he also provided that Draper should be informed of her release.

He watched her from his office window as she was led to the prison gate. And as she took the pardon in her hand, and turned toward the outer world in a bewildered way, the utter misery and loneliness of the woman smote Mr. Wyville's heart.

'God help her!' he murmured; 'she has no place to go but to him.'

This done, Mr. Wyville set his mind toward Perth, where, on his return that day, he was to enter on another act of even deeper personal importance. Somehow, his heart was heavy as he walked from the prison, thinking of the next few hours. He had been more deeply impressed than he thought, perhaps, by the wretched fate of the poor woman he had just released.

At the stables where the horses were put up, he found Officer Lodge, who, with Ngarra jil, he sent on to Perth in a light carriage before him. He followed on horseback. As he rode through the town, he passed the bank. In the portico sat a woman on a bench, while her head bent low on her hands. He was startled by the attitude; it recalled to his mind the figure of the unhappy Harriet, as he had seen her in the lock up of Walton le Dale.

Something induced him to look at the woman a second time. As he did so she raised her face, and smiled at a man who came quickly out of the Bank, pressing something like a heavy pocket book into his breast. The woman was *Harriet*; and the man was Draper who had just drawn her money from the Bank.

Mr. Wyville was in no mood to ride swiftly, so he let his horse choose its own pace. When about half way to Perth, however, he broke into a canter, and arrived shortly after the trap containing Ben Lodge and his native servant.

Mr. *Wyville* had not occupied the official residence of the Comptroller General, but had kept his quarters at the hotel, a very comfortable establishment. As he dismounted in the yard, Ben Lodge held his horse, and seemed in garrulous humor.

'Mr. Sheridan was here, sir,' said Ben, 'and he asked after you. He said he were going to Mr. Little's tonight and he hoped to see you there.'

Mr. Wyville nodded to Ben and was going toward the house, but officer Lodge looked at him with a knowing look in his simple face, as if enjoying some secret pleasure.

'He's found her at last, sir,' he said.

Mr. Wyville could only smile at the remark, which he did not at all comprehend.

'He were always fond of her. I've known him since he were a boy.'

Still Mr. Wyville did not speak; but he seemed interested, and he ceased to smile. Old Ben saw that he might continue,

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