

FRIDAY.

BY FRANCES.

CHAPTER VI.

At the end of the garden behind grandmother's house was a high brick wall. This represented the bounds of the known world, and beyond it were travels. The wall was Ultima Thule, and the other side was Terra Incognita.

Hitherto, Friday's wanderings had been restricted to walks in the dusty lanes round the village, and there was very little adventure to be met with in them. His greatest journeyings had been an occasional walk with George, and though, of course, it was a most honorable and distinguished thing to walk with George, still there was an inequality in legs that George was apt to forget, and the panting and scurrying might be set down more to the glory of the thing than the pleasure of it. As for Martha's escort, you went out of everyday iron gates, you trailed up the lane behind her, without any opportunities for exploration; at the toll-bar you generally turned back; she said you straggled behind all the way home, and drove you before her through the iron gates to tea in the schoolroom.

There were no dragons in the lane, no unicorns, none of that mysterious race of "men with one leg" only, yet of great "swiftness," no people with "tayles," no strange fowls called "Roch, of incomparable bigness," no Lady of the Land, no El Dorado, no ice-pack, not a sign of the White Island. But the wall at the end of the garden suggested something beyond, and the one door in it, always locked, made adventures really probable. Friday used to stand before it and think about it, until he ached to go through. But it was always fast; and not possessing a key, one can only bid a lock open by magic, and so far Friday had not found a suitable enchantment, wide as had been his researches in the very oldest books in grandmother's house. Once he asked Zachary what was on the outside of the door, and thought he could have nothing left to desire if it should be the kingdom of Prester John, where there are so many marvels that it were too long to put in a book. But Zachary said, "Why, sir, only the wood."

Friday was rather older now, and scarcely expected promiscuous kingdoms to lie so very contiguous to grandmother's grounds, but still there are things in woods, which nobody can deny.

And the mere fact of the locked door gave the wood a travelly atmosphere that Friday yearned to breathe. He felt that the wood explored, he should be fitted to undertake a voyage very soon.

One day, in the long drowsy afternoon, Friday came slowly down the garden, looking for Zachary. He carried Crusoe in his arms, and wore no hat, because the peg in the passage was rather high for short legs. Up and down the walks he rambled, and among the shrubs, but no Zachary was to be found. He was not in the rose-arbor, he was not immersed to the waist in the cucumber-frame, he was not even behind the scarlet runners. Perhaps he was under the warm wall? Friday went to see. No, he was not, but!—Friday stood transfixed, and involuntarily embraced Crusoe until he howled for very anguish.

"Crusoe, it's open!" said Friday. It was indeed. Only a few inches, but that was no matter. "We'll look!" said Friday, thrilling with excitement; and stealing on tip-toe, he pushed the door a little further, and Crusoe and he peeped into the wood. It did seem remarkable like the place where Zachary got the leaf-mould for the potting-house; and perhaps that accounted for his prosaic view of it, but to Friday it was a vision of delight.

The trees were beeches, springing in all their grace up the side of a high bank, and a little path straggled up the slope between the underwood and broad flakes of fern. Friday stood on the threshold of his travels, and looked, until the mystery of the wood crept into his soul. He took a step forward and stood under the trees. To Crusoe the air was decidedly rabbit, and he sniffed it with growing excitement. Friday set him down on the ground; and Friday, wandering on in a beautiful dream, and Crusoe in the van rolling up the path, like a woolly barrel, they set out on their travels.

It was a charming little wood indeed. The arms of the beeches crossed overhead, and the fern at their feet rose waist high. There were rabbits below and squirrels above, and birdseverywhere. The pigeons were cooing in the heart of the copse, and a white butterfly flitted between the smooth boles, and seemed to beckon Friday forward. He went on and on, because it was too lovely to be hurried over, in an enchanted land where Mrs. Hammond and Martha, and tea and bed, were all left behind and forgotten. Crusoe was enjoying it too, in a somewhat low and earthy manner; his bodily self was not visible, but his course could be traced by the agitation of the waving fern, as he madly smelt hither and thither. They went up the path; Friday, a quaint little figure in a summer linen suit, taking slow steps, one by one, now wading in the fern till only his head could be seen, now emerging as the path twisted, blinking through his long eyelashes at the chequered lights as they played on his uncovered hair and upturned face.

But before Friday reached the crest of the slope he heard the garden door bang in the distance, and somebody come running up the path. And then the somebody called from behind, "Hullo, little 'un, what are you doing here?"

The spell was broken. Friday turned round; George was striding up the slope.

"I say, what are you doing here?" "We only came to look," said Friday, "Crusoe and me."

"Well, Crusoe and you must go back. You must not stop here."

"Oh, George!" said Friday.

"No, you must not. I am going through the wood, and I can't stop with you. And you must not stay by yourself. Sir John is shooting here."

"He won't shoot me, George."

"There might be an accident. I daren't let you stop, Friday. Come, cut back to the garden, like a good little chap!"

Friday rarely if ever stooped to entreaty; and to him a thing said was a thing meant. He only made one appeal.

"George, need I?"

"Yes, you need. Cut back at once before you get into a row," said George. And Friday went without another word.

"That's a good little 'un," said George encouragingly; "take Crusoe with you."

"May I stop and call him?" asked Friday.

"Yes, of course."

"May I wait till he comes?"

"Yes; but you will go back to the garden?"

"Yes, George."

"And you won't go a step farther into the wood?"

"No, George."

"On your honor?"

"On my honor," said Friday, and turned round and began to descend the path.

George ran on through the trees, and presently his foot-falls died away. So Friday went back on his steps down the woodside.

His eyes were full of tears, but he would not let himself cry, from a sense of duty, only he went very slowly and quietly, with his head bent. Half-way down the bank he called Crusoe, but his voice was not in very fine order, and Crusoe did not come, so Friday went on down the slope, with a swelling heart, and a trembling lip.

"It was so very nice," he said to himself, "and I wasn't being naughty."

His feet dragged dreadfully over the last few yards, but he reached the door. It was shut, George had banged it behind him. The wood on this side the wall was lower than the garden, and not even by the utmost stretch of which Friday's tip-toes were capable, could he touch the latch.

"I'll wait here for Crusoe," he said, and sat down on the ground.

It was not a very easy thing to sit at the edge of that beautiful wood, and look into its trees, and hear its birds—and have no bar between. And yet it was barred to Friday as effectually as if he had been on the other side of the wall. He was not exactly sure that he fully knew what "on my honor" meant, but he believed it was the most promising promise a person could make.

"It makes me feel naughty to look at the wood," he said, sighing, "I might look at the wall."

So he turned his back on temptation, and

established himself cross-legged, with his face to the wall, so close that he could follow out the markings of the bricks with his forefinger, by way of something to do.

"It was so very nice," he kept saying to himself; "but I said on my honor."

He wished the door were open. It was better in the garden than being here where he might go no farther. It would even have been better if Crusoe would have come. But Crusoe was lost in the heart of the copse, and there was nothing for Friday to do but to wait for him, and then to wait till George came back.

And so he waited and waited, and thought about the time when, being a grown-up explorer, nobody would send him back, be it in a wood or on a sea. But he waited a long time, and no George came, and truant Crusoe had forgotten him. And then the stable-clock struck, and it occurred to Friday that George might have passed through the wood and gone out by the other way. Perhaps he had better knock at the door; Zachary might be at hand within. So he knocked until his knuckles were sore, but Zachary did not hear, and there was no sound but the echo of his own knockings.

"I am rather tired here," said Friday sadly; "I wish I had a book. I will think about all the shut-up people I can remember."

Here was quite a wide field for research—all the travellers who had been shut up, and unable to escape. First, there were all the people on desert islands, but very often they made boats, and they always had something to do. The cases were scarcely parallel.

(To be Continued.)

CUNNING GULLS.

An example of the cunning of gulls was observed at Tacoma, when several alighted on a bunch of logs that had been in the water for a long time, with the submerged sides thick with barnacles. One was a big gray fellow, who seemed to be the captain. He walked to a particular log, stood on one side of it close to the water, and then uttered peculiar cries. The other gulls came and perched on the same side of the log,

which, under their combined weight, rolled over several inches. The gulls, step by step, kept the log rolling until the barnacles showed above the water. The birds picked eagerly at this food, and the log was not abandoned until every barnacle had been picked.

THE BABY HIPPO.

I have just been, writes a London correspondent, to pay my respects to the "baby" in the hippopotamus-house, and a wonderfully fat and pink and healthy infant he is. His ride from Antwerp in a box was attended with no bad after effects, and he has made himself quite at home in his new apartments, where the tapirs have heretofore lived, and seems to be bearing up well over the separation from his mother. Though only a trifle over ten months old, he weighs an odd six hundred pounds, and is in every particular save size the very image of the old female in the next room. However, he is much livelier, and is every inch a youngster in curiosity and mischievousness. The sparrows that come in through the window to pick up considerable crumbs amuse him greatly, and he runs after them with evident expectation of catching them, and is surprised that he fails. Sometimes, too, when he is not particularly hungry, he enjoys chasing the keeper out of the cage, though usually they are on the best of terms, and he allows his gums and recently-cut teeth to be rubbed with impunity. His food is given him thrice a day only, and his allowance at present consists of two quarts of milk, a two-gallon porridge of bran and barley, and a bucket of finely-chopped grass at each meal. This he eats from a large wooden bowl, which the keeper holds to prevent his overturning it.

Notwithstanding the many naps he indulges in during the day he stays a-bed all night as well—sometimes his couch is straw litter and sometimes the tank. On a cold night the water is the warmest place, and with the end of his nose only above the surface he will sleep as soundly as any other baby in its cradle.

