

THE RECOLLECTIONS
OF
GEOFFRY HAMLYN.

CHAPTER I.

THE FIRST PUFF OF THE SOUTH WIND.

ANEW heaven and a new earth!¹ Tier beyond tier, height above height, the great wooded ranges go rolling away westward, till on the lofty sky-line they are crowned with a gleam of everlasting snow. To the eastward they sink down, breaking into isolated ^aforests, fringed peaks, and rock-crowned eminences, till with rapidly straightening lines they ^bdisappear gradually into broad grey plains, beyond which the Southern Ocean is visible by the white ^creflection cast upon the sky.

All creation is new and strange. The trees, surpassing in size the largest English oaks, are of a species we have never seen before. The graceful shrubs, the bright-coloured flowers, ay, the very grass itself, are of species unknown in Europe; while flaming lorries² and brilliant parroquets fly whistling, not unmusically, through the

^a forests, fringed] forest-fringed
^c reflection cast] sea-haze

^b disappear gradually into] fade into the

gloomy forest, and over head in the higher fields of air, still lit up by the last rays of the sun, countless cockatoos wheel and scream in noisy joy, as we may see the gulls do about an English headland.

To the northward a great glen, sinking suddenly from the saddle on which we stand, stretches away in long vista, until it joins a broader valley, through which we can dimly see a full-fed river winding along in gleaming reaches, through level meadow land, interspersed with clumps of timber.

We are in Australia. Three hundred and fifty miles south of Sydney, on the great watershed which divides the Belloury from the Maryburnong, since better known as the Snowy-river³ of Gipps-land.

As the sun was going down on the scene I have been describing, James Stockbridge and I, Geoffry Hamlyn, reined up our horses on the ridge above-mentioned, and gazed down the long gully which lay stretched at our feet. Only the tallest trees stood with their higher boughs glowing with the gold of the departing day, and we stood undetermined which route to pursue, and half inclined to camp at the next waterhole we should see. We had lost some cattle, and among others a valuable imported bull, which we were very anxious to recover. For five days we had been passing on from run to run, making inquiries without success, and were now fifty long miles from home in a southerly direction. We were beyond the bounds of all settlement; the last station we had been at was twenty miles to the north of us, and the occupiers of it, as they had told us the night before, had only taken up their country about ten weeks, and were as yet the furthest pioneers to the southward.

At this time Stockbridge and I had been settled in our new home about two years, and were beginning to get comfortable and contented. We had had but little trouble with the blacks, ^aand, having taken possession of a fine piece of country, were flourishing and well to do.

We had never heard from home but once, and that was from Tom Troubridge, soon after our departure, telling us that if we succeeded he should follow, for that the old place seemed changed now we were gone. We had neither of us left any near relations

^a and,] ~

CHAPTER X.

THE GOLDEN VINEYARD.

ON a summer's morning, almost before the dew had left the grass on the north side of the forest, or the belated opossum had gone to his nest, in fact just as the East was blazing with its brightest fire, Sam started off for a pleasant canter through the forest, to visit one of their out-station huts, which lay away among the ranges, and which was called, from some old arrangement, now fallen into disuse, "the heifer station."

There was the hut, seen suddenly down a beautiful green vista in the forest, the chimney smoking cheerily. "What a pretty contrast of colours!" says Sam, in a humour for enjoying everything. "Dark brown hut among the green shrubs, and blue smoke rising above all; prettily, too, that smoke hangs about the foliage this still morning, quite in festoons. There's Matt at the door!"

A ^alean long-legged clever-looking fellow, rather wide at the knees, with a brown complexion, and not unpleasant expression of face, stood before the door plaiting a cracker^l for his stockwhip. He looked pleased when he saw Sam, and indeed it must be a surly fellow indeed, who did not greet Sam's honest ^bphiz with a smile. Never a dog but wagged his tail when he caught Sam's eye.

"You're abroad early this morning, sir," said the man; "nothing the ^cmatter; is there, sir?"

"Nothing," said Sam, "save that one of Captain Brentwood's bulls is missing, and I came out to tell you to have an extra look round."

"I'll attend to it, sir."

"Hi! Matt," said Sam, "you look uncommonly smart."

^alean long-legged] ~, ~, ^bphiz] face ^cmatter:] ~,