



"A pile of driftwood was collected with which to build a fire."

CHINNA.

BY MRS. HOBART-HAMPDEN,

Author of 'The Secret Valley,' etc., etc.

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WITH each hour that passed the sick man had grown stronger, for faith in his own cure had acted as a most powerful medicine. And, as soon as it was certain that the tigress had taken her departure, he set off to his own house to prepare a bundle of food, for the journey would probably take a couple of days, he said. And also he promised to satisfy the curiosity of any of the villagers who might question him, and to persuade them to let the little party depart in peace. Doors could be heard now opening and shutting down the length of the village street, and the voices of women, chattering shrilly together.

The man was gone some time, and, when he returned, he brought not only provisions with him, but also the news that the village was fairly divided for and against Chinna. There had been no fresh cases of sickness; but, on the other hand, there had been no more marvellous cures such as his own. And there were those who insisted that Chinna had worked this one miracle merely to save himself from punishment, and not because he was of the class of the good wonder-workers; and that, therefore, he still deserved to be slain. Chief among these was the jealous priest; but the more sober among the elders were inclined to let Chinna depart in peace. These had helped with gifts of food, which had swelled the bundle the man carried.

'But I think 'twere well to be gone quickly,' he said, 'ere the evilly-disposed conquer the others. 'Tis the same where the children are concerned. Some believe they are white in truth, and some believe it not, and call me fool because I go with you. I did not speak of the reward,' he added, with a twinkle in his eye, 'lest all should call me wise, and all wish to share it.'

And so Chinna, and Mrs. Chinna, and the children, and their guide, whose name they found was Shib Ram, sallied forth into the sunshine. Towards the open country on the further side of the village they went, passing first down the village street, and then doubling back again. The villagers watched them from their doorways with mingled wonder and hostility. But the better-disposed kept the more truculent under control, and no attempt was made to detain them. It was a relief, nevertheless, when the village was left behind, and Shib Ram announced that a clear road home lay before them. Presently they would come to the big river, he said, which apparently twisted in such fashion that it could be reached by a short cut, which would halve the distance they had to travel.

For a while they plodded on, and then, all at once, they remembered the goat. Brian had tethered her in the hut on the previous night, but she could not be left thus to starve to death, or to fall a prey to some savage creature. And Chinna bade the rest of the party wait in the shade of a big tree until he had made his way back to the clearing, and brought the goat with him. It took him a couple of hours at least; but the delay was welcome, for it allowed the children and Mrs. Chinna to rest. They all slept soundly indeed until they were awakened by Chinna and the goat together. And then they were ready for the food Shib Ram had

collected, while Chinna told the tale of such adventures as had befallen him.

'Well below the village I turned into the track,' he said, 'lest any of those black-hearted ones should see me. And I found the marks of the feet of the tigress. To the lake she had gone to drink, and then she had turned to the head of the water, that she might thus return to that part of the forest which is her special kingdom. But it is likely that to-night she will return, and frighten those people of the village still further. Then they will be punished indeed, and suffer for their treachery as is but fit.'

And Chinna chuckled joyfully as he thought of the tigress nightly haunting the village, and the villagers with no little hunter to come to their aid. And the children and Mrs. Chinna shared in his enjoyment. The only person who did not entirely appreciate this prospect was Shib Ram, since the village was his home. He decided hastily that he would stay with his brother until it was likely that the tigress had forgotten her lost mate, and finally abandoned her search.

And now, when all had eaten and rested sufficiently, the journey was resumed. Across rough scrubby country the road passed; or, rather, the track, since road in the usual sense there was none. The ground under foot was loose and sandy; and because of this, and because of the time that had been lost while Chinna fetched the goat, it was near sunset ere a blue streak ahead announced the nearness of the river. That river down which the children had been carried so very many years ago, it seemed; yet it was but a few days merely, though it was difficult to credit this.

'I had hoped to reach a cattle station where live some cousins of mine,' Shib Ram explained. 'But since already it is late, it were better to shelter in a cave for the night. There are caves in plenty along the river-bank.'

And without much difficulty a suitable cave was found, and a pile of driftwood collected with which to build a fire. There was planed and sawn wood among it, which had once perhaps formed part of the bridge. So the children at least thought and said as they watched the dancing flames, and talked of the breaking of that bridge, and of all that had happened since.

'Only a little while and we shall be home again,' they concluded, happily. And began to picture their return in detail, and to imagine what they would say, what Mr. and Mrs. Galbraith would answer; all the excitement, all the joy of it, until at last they were too sleepy to talk any more, and settled down in a corner of the cave. And soon Mrs. Chinna and Shib Ram slept also, until only Chinna remained, crouched on his heels, his head almost on his knees, staring into the heart of the fire. The sounds of the night, the scent of the night—so wild, so wholly different from the sounds and scent of the day—brought back to the little man, with cruel vividness, the life he was leaving behind him. And he thought of the clearing in the forest which had stood to him for home, and of the stricken tree he had tended so carefully. And again he wondered for what reason the spirits had turned against one who had served them so truly and so loyally. And, still puzzled, he questioned for the last time the reality of that anger.

'They killed the tree. They turned the hearts of the villagers against me. Yet, perchance, at the last they repented and sent the tigress to my aid,' he argued. If only he might know certainly in what light the spirits regarded him.

He, too, grew sleepy at last, and rose to throw another piece of wood on the fire before he sought the shelter of the cave. And, as he did so, from the darkness beyond a sound came creeping towards him which froze him motionless, head bent forward a little, listening intently.

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FRUITS FROM ACROSS THE SEAS.

II.—THE BANANA.

AFTER the Orange and the Lemon, I suppose the most common over-seas fruit is the Banana. Nearly all varieties of it are tropical plants. The banana is a most useful and nutritive food, and in fact in tropical lands it is almost as valuable as our wheat or potato, forming one of the chief foods for millions of people. Its Latin name is *Musa sapientum*. There is a near relative, plantain, which is very like it, so like that it is often sold as the banana! Plants of banana and some of its near relations are often grown in hot-houses in England, but only for their foliage, for the fruits require so much heat that they never, or very rarely, 'set' here.

Now to tell you of its growth. It is not quite certain where its original home was. The East Indies is the most likely place, but it is now grown in all tropical lands, that is, in countries where it is hot enough. It grows at a tremendous rate, a tree being fully developed in a year; it is then about eighteen feet high. It has the appearance of being a tree with a 'trunk' (fig. 1), but really there is no true woody trunk. That apparent trunk is composed of the clasping, sheathing stalks of the leaves. The roots are what are termed in botany 'rhizomes'—that is, under-ground stems. (Solomon's Seal and Iris are common examples of this form of root.) These under-ground stems spread and throw up shoots which are clusters of leaves; the stalks sheath and grow very rapidly; the trunk is formed by the remains of the earlier leaves. This you can plainly see in my illustration. You see much the same thing happen with many of the palms which we have in English houses; there is no real trunk, but the lower parts of old leaf-stalks seem to be bound together with string-like fibres, which split away from the sides of the stems.

The leaves of the banana are often as much as ten feet in length and two feet wide. They have a strong mid-rib and many veins running from it to the margins where they are netted together. They are of a glorious clear green in colour, and form a graceful rosette at the top of the 'trunk.'

The flowers, which are blue in colour, rise right from the rhizome to the crown of leaves tightly wrapped in a sheath. The cluster is gradually pushed right up the tube formed by the sheathing leaf-stalks. When the cluster arrives at the top it stands upright at first, but as soon as the fruits begin to form, which they do very quickly, the cluster by its weight is forced to hang down as seen in the illustration.

These clusters of flowers contain a great number of individual blooms, and the fruits develop in succession from the lower part of the cluster first. (Of course you understand, the cluster as you see it in the illustration is really upside down, because it has had to hang down.) When a fair number of fruits have formed, the owner, if he wishes to produce really fine fruits,

will cut off the remaining flowers. This is why you never see a complete cluster of fruits. If you take note of the great bunches there are hanging in our shops, you will find the bottom of the cluster is missing, and you can see where the stem has been cut through. By the way, just notice that the individual bananas *do not hang down* when growing, as you would expect them to do, but turn up, so to speak. Curious, is it not?

When bananas are to be packed for exportation, they are picked quite green; in fact, you generally see them still green in the shops! There again I have no doubt that the flavour must be much finer when the fruits ripen on the trees! The packing for exportation has to be done very carefully, for the banana is a fruit which bruises very readily, and bruised fruits are nearly worthless.

The quantity of fruit produced by a single plant is extraordinary, for often the bunches from a single tree will weigh as much as a hundred and twenty pounds! A single tree will carry two or three clusters.

After the fruits have ripened—that is, at the end of about a year—the whole tree withers to the ground, but the rhizomes constantly throw up new shoots which follow the same round of events. It seems strange to us to hear of a tree of such a size finishing its existence in something like a year; but you must remember that in the tropical climates where the banana grows, the rate of growth is much faster than in our temperate lands. We, after all, have many plants which make much growth in a single season, and then die, as, for instance, the sun-flower, maize (an even better example), the hollyhock, and many others.

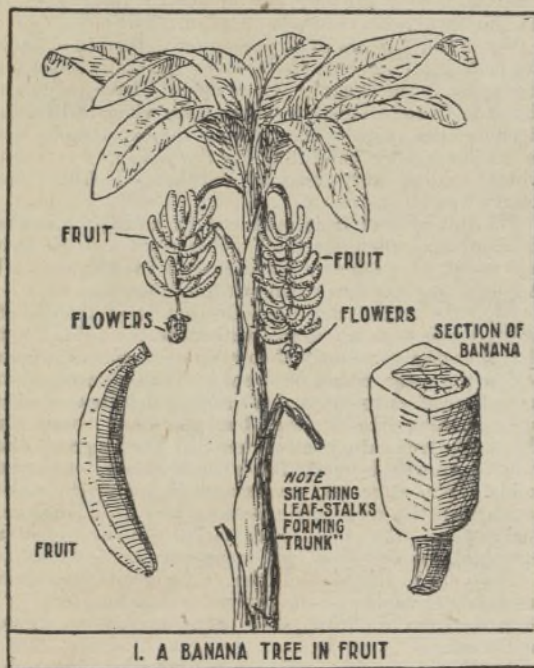
The young shoots and the unripe fruits are often used as vegetables by the natives, and a form of meal is made from the fruits, which they dry, cut in slices, and crush.

Another favourite over-seas fruit is the Pineapple. Its proper name is *Ananassa sativa*. Nearly all the members of its family are tropical; the pineapple was originally a native of the north-east parts of South America, but of course it is now grown in both the East and West Indies. It is not a tree but a low-growing rosette of large, very prickly leaves. Do you know the Aloe? It is a very prickly plant; it has long fleshy leaves with strong prickles at the ends. People grow aloes in pots as ornamental plants. Well, they are very like pineapple plants. The fruit got its name, 'pineapple,' from the fact that the form of the fruit suggested the shape of the pine cones of certain kinds of pine-trees. In fig. 2 I show a drawing of a stone pine cone, and you will, I am sure, agree that it is very like a picture of a pineapple with its top-knot cut off! But my sketch is of an object only about the tenth of the size of a pineapple!

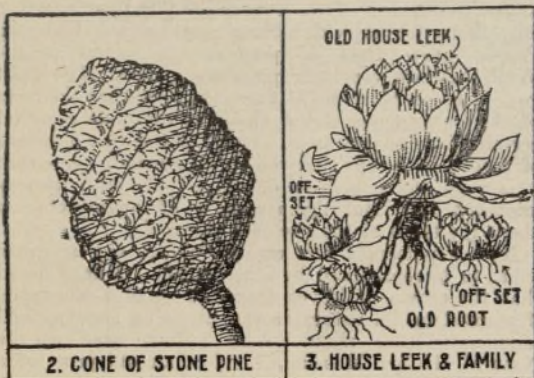
Now, a pineapple very rarely produces any seeds, so it has to be reproduced by other means. I have heard that the crown of leaves from the top of a pineapple, if planted in its natural soil, will go on growing and produce another plant. Also I have seen at the Natural History Museum, London, an old print of a very prolific pineapple plant, which had a whole colony of smaller plants all round it like a house-leek; you know how a house-leek will form off-sets. Well, in case you do not, I will give a sketch of one of its family (fig. 3).

The pineapple, as we know it, is produced from the centre of the rosette of sword-like leaves. When a

plant intends to fruit, the first thing which happens is that the middle of the plant begins to rise. The small leaves appear on a stalk, and below the leaves a green, fleshy cone appears with very numerous scale leaves. Here and there later are seen a number of bluish flowers, which fall rather quickly. The cone



goes on swelling and swelling, and eventually turns to that lovely orange gold which we know so well as the colour of a ripe pineapple. As a matter of fact, all pines are not this colour, for I have some brought to me from abroad sometimes which are of



a sort of olive green in colour. There are of a particular variety, called King Pines, very beautiful in flavour, but not nearly so attractive to look at!

Now, if you carefully examine the next pineapple you meet, you will find it is composed of a number of angular sections, each with the remains of a scale on it.

Each of those sections represents a flower. The pineapple is really a great cluster of flowers which have become succulent, and if you cut open a pineapple you can pull those sections apart. In fig. 4 I show you a sketch of a pineapple plant with a pine growing; I also give you several details. A plant has to be from a year to a year and a half old before it gives any signs of throwing up for fruit, and the fruit takes nearly a year to ripen. So you cannot be surprised that pines are a little expensive, can you? Of course, they are very



numerous in their own lands, but the difficulties of transport are the trouble.

If you go to Kew Gardens, in the hot-houses you can see pineapples growing: they came to England something like two hundred years ago. We read that this fruit was to be seen on the King's table in the reign of Charles the Second, and there is an old picture in existence which shows a gardener presenting a pineapple to the King, but I do not think it was grown in England.

E. M. BARLOW.

GYP.

A Page from a Dog's Diary.

I AM a big brown and white collie. My name is Gyp, and I am really very handsome. My young master brushes me every day, and every member of the family loves me.

We are a big family: there are six children. Babs, the youngest, is two, and Miss Ethel, the eldest, is sixteen. She seems quite young and lively, in spite of



"I just jumped in and fetched him out."

being such an age; but I suppose human children live longer than dogs. My mother lived to be fifteen, and every one thought it to be a great age. 'Poor old thing, don't worry her, she's *very* old.' That's what master used to say to say when the children tried

to get her to play with them. But though I love the family, I must own that there used to be some things that they were very obstinate about. I did my best to train them, but they only misunderstood me and said I was a spoilt dog. I say 'used' because things are

better now. But that's just what I am going to tell you.

There were two things I wanted more than anything else in the world. The first was to be allowed to sit by that hot-red thing that people keep in a cage in their rooms (I think it's called a fire). I expect you know the thing I mean. But my family always said: 'No, Gyp, we can't have doggies in the dining-room. You must lie in the hall.' So in the hall I had to stay, cross, cold, and uncomfortable.

The other thing I always wanted was a collar like Miss Ethel's. It was silver, such a pretty crinkly pattern; but it was too big for her neck; so she wore it round her middle. She called it a 'belt' and she called her middle her 'waist.' However, names don't matter, it was the collar itself I liked so much. But I couldn't make any one understand that I wanted one, so I had to go on wearing my shabby old leather one.

Well, one day I was out for a walk by the river with Nurse and the four youngest children. We were romping and playing and having such a jolly time, when suddenly Babs slipped and fell into the water. You never heard such a noise as there was! Nurse and the children screamed and screamed, and instead of swimming to the bank, as any ordinary little puppy would have done, Babs simply began to drown.

Of course I could see that he was a little duffer, but I was fond of him and couldn't let him drown; so I just jumped in and fetched him out. When I laid him at Nurse's feet she began to cry with joy, and then she threw her arms round my wet neck and kissed me.

We all raced home to tell Mother and Father and the other children what had happened. Such a fuss! There was every one running from Babs to me and then back to Babs again. 'Oh, the darling!' they cried, 'he's saved the angel's life. Come and dry your dear wet coat by the drawing-room fire.' See! I was to sit in front of the red thing in the *drawing-room*. No one said, 'Go out at once, sir! Your place is the hall.' No, only nice, lovely things. They even seemed quite pleased when the water ran off my coat on to the best pink carpet. 'How wet the poor dear is,' said Mother, when she brought me a basin of warm milk. Then Jimmy, my young master, said, 'Gyp must have a real silver collar, in memory of having saved Babs' life.' They all agreed, and in a day or two it came. It was such a beauty, quite as good as Miss Ethel's, and it fitted me, too; I don't have to wear it round my middle as she does hers.

I often say to dogs who are friends of mine, how funny that such an ordinary thing as that should make such a difference to people. I am treated quite differently now! I have a silver collar, and don't have to lie in the hall any more. In fact, I am allowed to do pretty well what I like.

WANDERERS IN THE WAR.

By A. A. METHLEY.

(Continued from page 259.)

BOTH the boys were rather silent and thoughtful that morning, and Roger wished more than ever that he could speak French, and thus talk over all that had happened with his companion. There were so many things that he wanted to know, and that Jules could

have told him if only they had been able to understand each other's speech. What had the old woman at the inn said, when she tried to drive them away from her door? What had Jules seen in the hollow tree and afterwards among the bushes at its foot? And why had the man with the scarred face and the woman with the blue eyes been so angry about nothing? However, it was no good wishing, and not much good wondering, so Roger made up his mind to forget the various mysteries for the present, at least, and enjoy this glorious woodland tramp to the full.

By mid-day the boys were not very far from St. Denis—Jules had ascertained this from an old charcoal-burner, and he managed to explain directions and distances to Roger—but they lost themselves again in the afternoon trying to take a short cut, and it was near sunset when at last the old castle and graceful church spire of the little town were seen in the distance.

When first they had started out on their journey, Jules had shown Roger on the map the place where they must part, but to-day, after the meeting with the charcoal-burner, the little French boy, spreading out the map again on the smooth stump of a large tree, had announced that he intended to accompany his friend all the way to St. Denis, and from there go on eastward towards the frontier fortress where he hoped to find his soldier brother.

Roger was delighted at this change of plan, and determined that Jules should stay the night at the school and be provided with a good stock of provisions—and money, too, if he would take it—before setting out on his solitary journey. 'It's a splendid idea,' he said to himself; 'for Jules will be able to talk properly to Val, and she can put it into English. I shall be able to find out all about everything.'

In the meanwhile Val, in the great empty school, had found the days pass even more slowly than they had done before Fräulein's departure, for still no letters came; there was very little news, and Suzanne seemed strangely depressed, and was a far from cheerful companion.

To tell the truth, the old woman was at her wits' end, for the railways remained disorganized, and the rumours that she heard about the War were very vague. There was nobody to consult, and although she knew quite well that Val ought to be sent home to England, it was impossible for her to do anything without instructions either from Madame Martin or from the child's own relations.

Poor Suzanne felt quite weighed down with the burden of responsibility, and to this was added anxiety about her soldier grandson.

She did her best to make her little charge happy by cooking innumerable dainty dishes, letting her amuse herself in the sunny kitchen and serving picnic meals under the trees in the garden, but it was difficult to smile and gossip as if there were nothing amiss.

Val noticed the change in Suzanne, although she did not understand its cause, and her own high spirits began to flag as one dull monotonous day followed another and there still seemed to be no chance of getting away from St. Denis.

Early on Wednesday evening, three days after Fräulein Heinz had gone, the little girl was sitting on the steps outside the big front door with an unopened story-book on her knees, feeling lonely, rather cross, and

bored to distraction. 'I wonder if anything is ever going to happen again,' she said to herself with a weary yawn, and then suddenly she saw two small figures appear in the distance, far away at the end of the long avenue.

Here were visitors at last. But who were they? And what could be their errand? Val stood up, all her boredom forgotten, and shaded her eyes with one hand against the level, blinding rays of the setting sun.

The new-comers were getting nearer now, and she could see that instead of being men they were boys. The taller of the two had a knapsack on his back, and the smaller was closely followed by a little white dog.

Boys! What could boys be doing in the grounds of a girls' school? What a strange thing! And yet it seemed to Val that there was something vaguely familiar about the taller figure. And now he saw her, recognised her, and raced forward.

'Val!'—'Oh, Roger, Roger!'

The little girl stumbled down the wide steps, giving her weak ankle a bad wrench as she did so, and when old Suzanne hastened out of the kitchen at the sound of her charge's cry of welcome, it was to see her fling both her arms round the neck of a strange and very dusty boy, and kiss him again and again.

'Mademoiselle!' The old woman's voice was full of bewilderment and consternation, but another boy, a small, bullet-headed little Frenchman, who had now come up, explained the situation with a characteristic shrug of his shoulders and a flourish of two small, grimy hands. 'We have arrived,' he announced in tones of triumph. 'Monsieur Roger has come to fetch his sister back to England.'

CHAPTER X.

It was a very merry party that had supper in the kitchen that evening, for Val refused to have the meal laid in the big dreary dining-room, that seemed so strangely empty now that all the schoolgirls were away. Old Suzanne was well pleased with the plan, and she played the dual parts of cook and hostess, making one of her famous omelettes, bringing out all sorts of good things from the store-cupboards, and pouring out the coffee which she had brewed in a tall copper pot.

The old woman's spirits had revived wonderfully since Roger's arrival, for she considered that now he had charge of Val, and that all arrangements might safely be left in his hands.

Monsieur Roger, who had travelled all the way out from England to fetch his sister, seemed a very important person in Suzanne's eyes, and she treated him with a deference and respect that flattered the boy and amused Val immensely.

'Quite grown-up now, aren't you, Roger?' she whispered mischievously, and although Roger laughed too, he began to think that he really was grown-up, a man almost, and ready for any new experiences and responsibilities.

After supper the boys and the girl went out into the garden, for it was a hot, sultry evening, and then Val heard all about the journey; Roger giving his version in English, while Jules put in quaint remarks and explanations.

Later on, when the story of their joint adventures was finished, and Val had been told, too, about the midnight escape from the Rectory, and the voyage to

France, Roger remembered the many questions that he wanted to ask Jules. Then, with Val acting as interpreter, he learnt, at last, what the woman at the inn had said about her lodgers, and what the lodger had said in the strange encounter on the hill-top.

'I still don't understand why he was so angry,' was the boy's comment. 'For we hadn't done any harm. And he wasn't only angry, Val, he was frightened too; that was the funny part of it. How could any one be frightened by Jules and me? He was a savage-looking chap, that man, with staring blue eyes and a cut across his cheek that twisted his mouth. My word! He did shout and glare. Poor old Jules was quite funky.'

'What was the girl like?' asked Val. 'Did she glare and shout and shake her fist at you too?'

'Oh, she glared right enough, but she kept pretty quiet,' was the answer. 'And she had blue eyes as well. She was rather like the man. Blue eyes and a round face and a snub nose. She was fat, with big feet, and had yellow hair; lots of it, twisted up in thick plaits.'

Val burst out into a merry peal of laughter. 'Why, Roger,' she cried, 'it sounds exactly like Fräulein. Blue eyes, yellow plaits, snub nose, and everything. If Fräulein Heinz had not gone off to Berlin three days ago, I should think it was she that you saw in the wood.'

'I don't think much of your Fräulein if she was like that girl,' Roger retorted, and then he remembered another question that he wanted to have answered. 'Look here, Val, ask Jules what he saw in the hollow tree. He climbed up to see if he could find honey.'

Jules was getting rather sleepy by this time, and was beginning to nod as he sat on a wooden bench with Toto in his arms. Roger prodded him into wakefulness.

'What did you see?' began Val, in her pretty, tripping French.

Jules, when he had heard the question, looked up with a drowsy grin. 'There was no honey in the tree, Mademoiselle,' he said. 'No honey at all. When I climbed up and looked into the hole I saw wires, only wires.'

'Wires!' Val translated the word, and Roger repeated it incredulously.

'Yes, wires, that was all. There was a long one, going right down into the hollow trunk, and some one else had been up into that tree before me, Mademoiselle. I told Roger about it, but he could not understand. There were holes cut for the feet, and a piece of rope tied to a bough at a difficult place. That's why I could climb so quickly.'

'It's queer altogether, isn't it, Val?' Roger said, when this last speech had been translated to him. 'I wonder what the wires were for. Perhaps they had something to do with a lightning conductor; yes, that must be it; and afterwards, ask him why he kept poking about in the bushes at the bottom of the tree.'

This question called forth another long explanation from Jules.

'He says that there was another hole there,' Val explained. 'But it was filled up with a bundle of brushwood. He pulled away some of the sticks and peeped in.'

'Yes?'

'It was dark, and the bushes grew so thickly that he could not see much; but he thinks there were more wires.'

(Continued on page 278.)



"Monsieur Roger has come to fetch his sister back to England."