

**THE AUSTRALIAN BABES
IN THE WOOD, A
TRUE STORY TOLD IN
RHYME FOR THE YOUNG**

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The Australian Babes in the Wood, a true story told in rhyme for the young by Sarah Maria Fry

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SARAH MARIA FRY

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FRONTISPIECE

THE
AUSTRALIAN BABES IN THE WOOD

A TRUE STORY

TOLD IN RHYME FOR THE YOUNG

BY

THE AUTHOR OF 'LITTLE JESSIE,' ETC.

Illustrated by

HUGH CAMERON, A.R.S.A., J. M'WHIRTER, G. HAY, J. LAWSON, ETC.,

AND ENGRAVED BY R. PATERSON.

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DEDICATION.

*To you, my children, I these lines address—
A simple story told in simple phrase,
Yet with a moral worthy not the less
Of imitation than of gen'rous praise.
Nor is the story merely one of thought :
Spun out the brain to please thy little ears—
Nay, it is truth—by sad experience bought—
A record of a family's hopes and fears.
Thus, while you trace the weary wand'ers through,
Oh, be it yours to learn the faith divine,
That, like a star, while darkness darker grew,
Did 'mid its glory still more brightly shine ;
And when on earth your journeyings are o'er,
'Twill bear you safe Death's darksome Jordan
through,
And bring you 'mong the hosts on Salem's peaceful
shore.*

[We think it right here, as we have already hinted in the Dedication, to mention that the principal incidents in the following story are literal fact. These incidents have been gathered from the *Melbourne Argus* of the latter end of 1864, from which we also learn that the three children lived with their parents in the district of the 'Mallee Scrub.' The manner in which they were lost is preserved in the text; and the scarcely credible statement that for 'nine long days and eight long weary nights,' these children, of from five to nine years, wandered the dreary heath without a morsel of bread to allay their hunger, or a drop of water (save *once*) to quench their thirst, forms to our mind one of the most amazing acts of Divine preservation which we ever had brought under our observation.

It was afterwards ascertained that they had travelled upwards of sixty miles—having exceeded twenty the first day after being lost, and gradually diminishing the number, till on the last they only managed two or three.

The touching fact that little Jeanie, every evening, before laying themselves down on the desolate heath, repeated the well-known child's prayer, 'Gentle Jesus,' etc., 'for them all,' teaches a lesson not to be heedlessly thrown aside: 'Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise.'

The large sum of £226 was subscribed in Melbourne, Ballarat, and Geelong, soon after the recovery of the children, that they might receive a better education than their parents were able to afford. And no doubt they will long be remembered by those whose anxiety and sympathy were aroused at the time they were lost and recovered.]



Part First.

THE sun had sunk, and golden bands
Link'd sky and earth in one ;
And sweetly lay the landscape fair
In gentle undertone.
The bleating sheep were still, and hush'd
The songsters of the grove :
All nature seem'd in calm repose,
The earth and heaven above :

As round the hearth a father drew
His little children three—
One on his right, one on his left,
One perch'd upon his knee—
(While busy hands the mother plied
All needful works to do)—
And simply o'er the story told
I now will tell to you :

How three sweet children lost themselves
Amid a wilderness
Of yellow broom and bursting flowers,
In all their loveliness ;
And who for weary days and nights
Wander'd the desert o'er,
That they might spy amid the scene
Their father's cottage door.

'Twas thus the story he began,
In accents sad and low :—
My children, oft-times you have heard
(Which made your tears to flow)
Of the pretty babes left in the wood
By their wicked uncle's will ;
And how they fed on blackberries,
And drank the sparkling rill ;

Who, when the evening star appear'd,
And day had waned away,
How, weary of their wandering,
On grassy couch they lay,



And twined their little arms around
Each other's necks in love ;
And how they never woke again
Till in the realms above!