



Bushland Stories

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BUSHLAND STORIES

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CONTENTS

THE WAVE	7
THE ANGLER	16
THE DISCONTENTED STREAM	27
THE BIRDS CONCERT	37
THE CHRISTMAS BELLS AND THE HOLLY BUSH	51
THE GREEDY SHAG	62
THE WHITE HERONS	72
THE TALE OF TIBBIE	82
THE BIRDS' ALPHABET	93
THE FLOWER FAIRIES	115
THE LION AND THE KANGAROO	122
THE THREE HEROES	134
THE BIRDS' CHRISTMAS TREE	141
THE LITTLE BLACK DUCK	156
THE PROPER WAY	167
THE LEAF THAT LONGED TO BE RED	175
THE STORY OF THE TURPENTINES	183
THE GALLANT GUM TREES	193

THE WAVE

OUT ON the depths of the deep blue ocean a Wind went wandering. He crept gently over the sleeping water, scarcely disturbing it as he passed. He was looking for some Waves to play with, but there were none to be found. The ocean's face was as smooth as a millpond, without one ripple to break its surface. The first rays of the rising sun stole up over the rim of the distance, but still the Waves slept on.

"Lazy things," said the Wind to himself. "I think I'll wake them."

So he puffed out his cheeks as far as he could, and, choosing a spot where the sea was bluest, he blew with all his might.

Instantly a dozen tiny Waves sprang up, wide awake.

"What are you doing?" they asked, crossly.

"Come and play," said the Wind.

"No, it's too early. We're going to sleep," and they turned slowly over and went to sleep again.

All except one little Wave. She had never seen the Wind before; for, indeed, she had only just been blown into life. Before the Wind had breathed upon her, she had been sleeping peacefully beneath the ocean, and had never been to the top; but now she had come right to the surface into the fresh air, and she wanted to stay there. So

she did not lie down again with the others, but stayed and looked at the Wind.

She saw that he looked disappointed when the others turned over and went to sleep again, and she was such a gentle, happy little Wave that she did not like to disappoint anyone. So she said, shyly, to the Wind: "I'll play with you if you like."

The Wind looked at her for a moment, thinking how small she was. Then he said: "You are a very tiny Wave, but I believe I can soon make you big enough to play with."

So he blew upon the Wave, at first gently, and then gradually with more force, until he had lifted her high up from the surface, and she was quite a large Wave.

The Wind looked at her with approval, for, indeed, she was a Wave to admire. She was all of a bright sea-green, with a tinge of blue, which broke into a crest of snow-white foam as she raised her head.

"I think you are big enough now to play with," said the Wind, "and I am quite sure you are pretty enough."

The Wave smiled with delight, and curled over with a joyful gurgle. "Come on, then; come and catch me," she called, and in a moment she was racing over the ocean with the Wind behind her.

"Oh, this is joy!" cried the Wave, as she felt the Wind behind her blowing her forward, ever forward. "To think that I should have been sleeping at the bottom of the ocean all this time, when I might have been playing here! Dear Wind, how can I thank you for waking me?"

"Don't try," said the Wind. "Just play with me, and I shall be satisfied."

So on across the ocean's face they went, chasing and

catching, jumping and falling, while the Wave danced and bubbled with joy.

The sunbeams saw them, and came to join the fun, and they darted through the Wave, flashing and sparkling as they moved.

“Oh, you pretty things,” cried the Wave, jumping up to catch them. They never rested for a moment, but darted backwards and forwards, laughing all the time.

She was such a young and happy Wave that it was no wonder that everyone wanted to play with her. The little fishes came up to the surface, and swam through her, leaving a tiny ripple behind them as they passed. The sunbeams saw the fishes, and darted after them, and the Wave laughed with glee at the sight.

Then a beautiful white bird came sailing along, and he sank down gently on to the Wave.

“Oh, you beauty!” she said, as she rocked him gently to and fro. The bird was so contented that he wanted the Wave to stay and nurse him all day.

But the Wind was growing impatient, and cried out: “Come along, little Wave. There are many things to be seen, and we must make haste.”

So the Wave said good-bye to the white bird, and danced off with the Wind.

As they travelled along they met many more birds and fishes, and the sunbeams went with them all the time, brightening the heart of the Wave, till she felt so happy that she thought there could be nobody in the whole world so glad as she. And she thought that the whole world was made up of birds and breeze and sunbeams and little fishes. She was soon to learn that there were other things than

these in the world.

Above the voices of the sea-birds there came a new sound, strange to the ears of the Wave. "Swish-swish, swish-swish," it came across the water, and the Wave stayed still to listen.

"What is it?" she asked.

"A boat," replied the Wind.

"What is a boat?"

"The thing that Humans use to come upon the sea."

"I want to see it," said the Wave.

"Well, come and I'll show it to you." The Wind helped her along, and they travelled so quickly that the little fishes were left behind. But the Wave was too excited to notice that. She was most curious to see this new thing, which the Wind called "a boat." As she moved along she could hear the "swish-swish" growing louder and louder, till at last she could hear nothing else.

"Look now," cried the Wind, and lifting her head the Wave saw a large white boat coming towards her. It had four long white feelers, two on each side, which moved rapidly all together, dipping in and out of the sea all the time. It was these things which made the "swish-swish." It looked like a great big animal with four long legs, and the Wave felt frightened, for she had never seen anything so big before. She thought she would run away, but before she had time to move, the nose of the boat was right up beside her. It did not hurt her, but gave her just a sharp push that tickled her and made her laugh aloud. She was just curling round to feel it again, when she heard a voice say: "Oh, what a darling Wave!"

She looked up quickly, and there, leaning over the edge

of the boat, was the prettiest sight she had ever seen. Three children were looking down at her, with their heads close together, their bright curls dancing in the breeze, and their faces shining with delight. They clapped their hands, and she tried to jump up to catch them. But she was not big enough to reach the top of the boat, so she danced along beside it.

“That’s the prettiest Wave I’ve ever seen,” said one child.

“Oh, I like the ones on the beach best,” said another.

“Yes, the waves at Bondi are the prettiest in the world,” said the third. Then they went on to talk of how the waves broke up on the beach at Bondi and washed round their feet when they paddled, and rolled them over on the sand when they bathed, and they all agreed that Bondi was the most beautiful place in the world, and they wished they could go back there.

The Wave listened to all they said, and she longed to see this wonderful Bondi of which they spoke, where the waves rolled the children over on the beach. She had enjoyed playing with the fishes and the birds, but now that she had seen these pretty pink and white children she had lost interest in her first playmates, and only wanted to play with children.”

“Where do these children come from?” she asked the Wind.

“From that land over there,” said the Wind.

She looked to where he was pointing, and saw, for the first time, a distant shore with green hills sloping down to the sea.

“Is that Bondi?” she asked eagerly.

“Oh, no; Bondi is a long way from here.”

“How do you get there?”

“You must travel on and on for miles and miles. It is right across the ocean,” replied the Wind.

“Have you ever been there?”

“Oh, yes; often.”

“Did you like it?”

“Yes; I think it is one of the most beautiful places in the world. And I have such fun there, blowing the people’s hats off and puffing their hair into their eyes. There are lovely waves there, too, and the children swim in them. Would you like to go there?”

“Oh, yes, yes,” cried the Wave. “Could you take me?”

“Yes, if you would not grow tired on the way.”

“Oh, no; I will not tire. Do take me, dear, dear Wind.”

“Very well,” said the Wind. “Let us start at once.”

So off they went.

The Wind puffed out his cheeks till they looked as if they would burst, and blew upon the Wave to help her along. She lifted her foam-crowned head into the air, and raced along before him. Over the ocean they went at such a rate that even the sunbeams could scarcely keep up with them. Some wild sea eagles saw them and came rushing along to look, shouting “Go on, Wave, you’ll win,” for they thought it was a race. A crowd of porpoises heard the sea eagles, and also began to applaud, waving their fins wildly in the air as they rolled over. They looked so funny that the Wave could hardly run for laughing.

“Wait a minute, Wind,” she cried, and she stopped running, and gurgled slowly past the fat porpoises, tickling them as they passed.

Then on they went again, rushing and tearing. They

passed many things on the way that the Wave had never seen before, although they were all old friends to the Wind. Big steamers came ploughing up the sea, frightening the Wave at first, till she found it was fun to slap up against them; big ships with white sails came gliding over the water, and she liked them better, and stayed to play around their bows, while the Wind whistled through their sails.

But the ships and steamers passed upon their way, and so the Wind and the Wave went travelling on again. Once they passed a boat like the one the children had been in, and the Wave danced up to look if there were any children there. But all she saw were two brown-faced fishermen, so she hurried past.

At last they came to an island, and as the Wave had never been close to land, they went to look at it. There were rough rocks all along the sea's edge, and a couple of men fishing.

"Where is the beach? Where are the children?" asked the Wave.

"There is no beach here, and no children—only grown-up men."

"Then we won't wait," said the Wave, "for I do not like the look of those rough rocks."

"You are right. Those rocks are rough, and would tear you to pieces if you went too near them."

"Then let us hurry past them," said the Wave; so they ran as hard as they could till the island and the rocks were left far behind.

But although they saw so many things that were new and strange, the Wave was not much interested in them. All she could think of was the long white beach at Bondi

where she could roll the children over in her arms. Only that morning she had never heard of a beach or of children and she had been perfectly happy and contented; but now she knew that nothing would satisfy her but that beautiful beach of which those three children had talked.

“Is it very far now?” she asked the Wind, as the sun was beginning to travel down the western sky.

“No,” replied the Wind. “We shall soon be there now.”

They journeyed on again in silence for a little while; then the Wind said:

“Do you see that dark line at the edge of the sea?”

The Wave lifted her head, and looked across the water to where a long blue line rose into the air.

“Yes, I see,” she said.

“That is Australia, and Bondi is straight before us. If we hurry we shall get there before sunset.”

The Wave bubbled with excitement. “Sing to me, dear Wind,” she said. So the Wind sang, and she danced along before him.

As they drew nearer, the blue line became more and more distinct, and they could see trees and cliffs, and long white lines between the cliffs.

“Those are the beaches,” said the Wind, “and that long one with the low ground behind it is Bondi.”

The Wave danced more quickly than ever.

“Oh, come on,” she cried. “I can see children,” and on they went.

The beach was quite near now, and they could see men and women walking along, and at the water’s edge ever so many children playing, and the Wave saw that there were many other Waves now, all running up to the beach.

“Oh, the beautiful beach and the dear children!” she cried. “If only I can hold those children in my arms, and kiss that beach, I shall die happy. Help me, good Wind.”

Then the Wind puffed out his cheeks wider than ever, and, bending low behind the Wave, blew hard and lifted her high. With arms outstretched and foam-hair flying, she raced along before him. In a minute she had reached the other Waves, all running to the shore but she ran fastest of all. Higher and higher the Wind lifted her, and she felt herself growing stronger. The weight of water below and behind seemed to be urging her forward; just in front she could see a group of children paddling, and behind them lay the beautiful shining white sand. She stretched out her arms still wider, lifted her head still higher, and with one leap reached the shore. Straight up she stood in a clear green wall, with a crest of white foam. For a second she seemed to stand still, then she hurled herself forward upon the group of children. Laughing and screaming, they tumbled along the sand beneath her, as she rolled them over with her arms. She wanted to wait and play with them, but she was moving too quickly to stop. On she went, up the white beach. Her heart was aching with joy. Tenderly and softly she kissed the sand as she passed, but each kiss seemed to leave her weaker, and as she reached the highest watermark the joy of lying on the dear beach was too much for her, and her heart broke.

Then slowly and gently the mother sea drew her back down the beach, till she was lost again in the deep blue ocean. And the Wind sighed sadly for the loss of his dear little companion, who had only lived for one short day.