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First published in 1904, this book is the last of Lady Mary Anne Barker's memoirs of her life in several of Britain's colonies in the nineteenth century. Barker (1831–1911) was born in Jamaica and educated in England and France. In 1865, she moved to New Zealand with her second husband, Sir Frederick Broome, and spent three years living on a sheep station. She then lived in South Africa, Mauritius, Trinidad, and Western Australia following the various political appointments of her husband. During her travels she began her successful writing career and published several memoirs and housekeeping guides. In *Colonial Memories*, she recounts her life as a colonial wife, detailing her experiences in far-flung locales. The book also includes chapters on birds, interviews, General Charles Gordon (whom she met in Mauritius), and her servants. Several of the chapters were initially published as articles in London magazines.

Colonial Memories

Mary Anne Barker

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COLONIAL MEMORIES

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BY

LADY BROOME

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NOTE

My cordial thanks are due—and given—to the Editor of the *Cornhill Magazine*, within whose pages some of these "Memories" have from time to time appeared, for permission to re-publish them in this form. Also to the Editor of the *Boudoir*, where my "Girls—Old and New" made their *début* last season.

M. A. B.

October 1904.

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A PERSONAL STORY

ALMOST the first thing I can remember is listening with fascinated interest to an old gipsy woman, who insisted on telling my fortune one summer afternoon on Cannock Chase long, long ago. I was very reluctant to undergo what seemed to me a terrible ordeal, but I was encouraged to do so by my nurse, to whom she had just promised "a knight riding over a plain." However, my Sibyl only touched on two points. First, she looked at my little hand and said: "I see a stream of gold flowing through your palm. Sometimes it runs full and free, sometimes scant and slow, but it is *never* quite dry." Then she doubled up my childish fingers and went on, "But this hand cannot close on money: you'll never be rich"—an utterance which has come exactly and literally true, and the remembrance of which has often been a comfort to me in hard times. Then she insisted on looking at the sole of my foot, and pronounced that it would "wander up and down the earth; north and south, east and west, to countries not yet discovered." She concluded by crying dramatically: "Earth holds no home for you, earth holds

no grave; you'll be drowned." Now, as I must have made something like forty ocean voyages in the course of my life, I may be said to have spent it in tempting my Fate. However that may be, the old woman's prophecy was written down at the time, and, so far as the wandering part of it goes, no one who reads these pages can question its truth.

Born in Jamaica, where my father was the last "Island Secretary,"—a Patent Office, held in conjunction with the late Mr. Charles Greville of Memoir fame, and long since divided into four parts—I began to wander to and from England before I was two years old, and had crossed the Atlantic five times by 1852 when I married Captain (afterwards Sir George) Barker, K.C.B. I lived in England for the next eight years, whilst he served all through the Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny. I joined him at the first possible moment after the Mutiny, and arrived in India at the close of 1860. He was then commanding the Royal Artillery in Bengal, with the rank of Brigadier-General, a position held at this moment by our eldest son.

The tragic events of that terrible time were fresh in our minds, the struggle having just closed; and as I was brought in contact immediately with many of the principal actors, I naturally wished to hear details of the thrilling scenes through which

they had just passed, but I found that no one wanted to talk about them. We started directly after I arrived in Calcutta on a sort of Military Promenade with the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Hugh Rose (afterwards Lord Strathnairn), and joined his camp at Lucknow. We stayed with friends there whilst our tents, &c., were being procured, and I remember that the walls of my vast bedroom were riddled with shot! There I also met ladies who had behaved in the most heroic and splendid way all through the siege; but I found to my amazement that they wanted to hear any little English chit-chat I might have to tell, instead of saying one word about those historic days or their share in them. If this reticence had arisen from any dread of re-awakening sleeping memories, I could have understood and respected it, but it really seemed to me at the time as if they had positively forgotten all they had just passed through, or did not deem it of sufficient interest to talk about, wanting only to hear what was going on "at home." It must be remembered how far away England was in those days—forty odd years ago. Few newspapers, no telegraph, hardly an illustrated paper even—so it was perhaps no wonder that they were all suffering from what Aytoun calls—

"The deep, unutterable woe
Which none save exiles feel,"

and always wanted to talk of the dear distant land of their birth.

My own stay in India hardly lasted eight months, but I saw a great deal of the country in our four months marching through it. The camp broke up in March at the foot of the Himalayas just as the hot winds were beginning to make tent-life disagreeable. We then went up to Simla, and "Peterhof"—afterwards greatly enlarged and made into the Vice-regal residence—was taken as the headquarters of the R.A. staff.

In that beautiful spot the first great sorrow of my life came to me. I lost my kind, good husband there; and returned to England after less than a year's absence.

For the next four years I lived quietly with my two little sons among my own people, but in 1865 I met Mr. Napier Broome, a young and very good-looking New Zealand sheep farmer, who persuaded me to change the whole course of my life and go back to New Zealand with him! Certainly the influence of that old gipsy woman must have been very strong just then; and I often wonder how I could have had the courage to take such a step, for it entailed leaving my boys behind as well as all my friends and most of the comforts and conveniences of life. But at the time it seemed the most natural thing in the world to do, and we sailed merrily away

directly after our marriage in the summer of that year.

I tell elsewhere,[1] as well as in the following pages, the story of the three supremely happy years which followed this wild and really almost wicked step on our parts. The life was full of charm and novelty, though so venturesome; but at first it seemed as if love was not to be allowed to "be lord of all," for a crisis in the affairs of the Colony came just after the great snowstorm, and from one cause and another the value of real estate as well as of wool sank terribly. It was, therefore, with sadly diminished means we returned to England early in 1869, to be met by a chorus of "we told you so" from all our friends! However, we felt full of hope and courage, and set about at once seeking for some other means of livelihood.

My husband had always been very fond of literature, and had tried his hand more or less successfully at poetry. Still it was with great diffidence that he walked into Messrs. Macmillan's office one fine June morning in 1869 and asked to see the editor of *Macmillan's Magazine*. Mr. (afterwards Sir George) Grove received him at once and was both kind and encouraging, promising to look at a little poem called "Sunset off the Azores." This interview, which resulted in the immediate acceptance of the verses, three of which

[1] "Station Life in New Zealand." Macmillan.

are given below,[1] led to a life-long friendship, not only with dear Mr. Grove, whom to know was to love, but also with Mr. Alexander Macmillan, who was always kindness itself to both of us, and was responsible for putting the idea of writing into my head. At his suggestion I inflicted "Station Life in New Zealand," as well as several story-books for children, on a patient and long-suffering public.

Almost at the same time an introduction to Mr. Delane of the *Times* led to Mr. Napier Broome's

[1] "Now under heaven all winds abated,
The sea a settling and foamless floor,
A sunset city is open-gated,
Unfastened flashes a golden door.
Cloud-walls asunder burst and brighten
Like melted metal in furnace blaze;
The lava rivers run through and lighten,
The glory gathers before my gaze.
. . . . . .
Eastward an isle, half sunken, sleeping,
Crowns the sea with a bluer crest;
Vine-clad Terceira!—but I am keeping
A tryst to-night with the wondrous west.
What there is wanting of purple islands,
Lo! golden archipelagoes,
Coasts silver shining, and inner highlands,
Long ranges rosy with sunny snows.
. . . . . .
All glowing golds, all scarlets burning,
All palest, tenderest, vanishing hues,
All clouded colour and tinges turning,
Enrich, divide, the double blues;
O'erleaning cliffs and crags gigantic
And in the heart of light one shore
Such as, alas! no sea Atlantic
To bless the voyager ever bore."

being taken on the staff of that paper as special correspondent and reviewer, in fact, a sort of general utility man. How well I remember the anxiety and care with which my husband wrote his first review, and the pride and joy with which he showed me a charming little note from Mr. Delane, in which, referring to a hope on Mr. Broome's part of getting a clerkship in the House of Commons, he said : " Do not take any definite post at present, for you have an estate in your inkstand." And indeed so it proved, for work flowed in only too fast. As *Times* Special Correspondent he had many interesting experiences, amongst them being a visit to Petersburg to describe the late Duke of Edinburgh's marriage.

Perhaps the episode which stands out most clearly before me is a certain *tour-de-force*, as Mr. Delane himself called it, springing out of the Commune riots at the close of the siege of Paris. We had been paying a visit in Staffordshire in the early autumn of that tragic year, and reached home one Saturday evening just in time for dinner, and to find the well-known *Times* messenger seated in the hall with three or four large blue bags around him. He handed my husband a note from Mr. Delane, explaining that these bags contained a heap of miscellaneous printed matter taken from the "Cabinet Noir" at the sack of the Tuilleries, and requiring a series of articles to be made out of them.

Well, it was already late, and the papers had to be sorted, translated, and the first article written by Monday morning. So we set to work directly after dinner. It took all that night merely to sort the papers and reduce them to an orderly sequence. Much of the material before us had to be rejected as being either uninteresting or of a private and personal nature below the dignity of the *Times* to notice. The whole of the next day—with only pauses for our meals and hasty toilets—was devoted to arranging the papers into separate parts for three consecutive articles of three columns each which Mr. Delane had asked for. Then came the work of translation, which I undertook, supplying my husband with hastily scribbled sheets from which he wrote his article. The printer's boy appeared about midnight and dozed in the hall, occasionally tapping at the door for the large envelope full of MSS. which he sent off by cab. All Monday and Monday night as well as all Tuesday did the work go on. It was too interesting and exciting to think of sleep, and it was something like two o'clock on Tuesday night, or rather Wednesday morning, when, the third and last article being finished, my husband took it himself down to Printing House Square for the sake of the drive, and I crawled up to bed! It was literally crawling, for I remember I sat down on the stairs and had

a good cry, which I found most refreshing and comforting.

I too was asked to write many of the *Times* reviews of novels, and as I was invited the next year to be the first Lady Superintendent of the National School of Cookery, and I became also the Editor of a Magazine, we both had plenty of agreeable and congenial work, as well as the satisfaction of earning between us a comfortable income.

This busy but very pleasant London life went smoothly on until 1875, when the gipsy took us once more in hand I suppose, for, quite unexpectedly, my husband received an offer from the then Secretary of State for the Colonies, the late Lord Carnarvon, to go out with Sir Garnet Wolseley[1] to Natal as his Colonial Secretary. It required a good deal of courage to again suddenly and violently alter our mode of life, especially as only a few hours could be allowed for decision, but both Mr. Delane and the late Duke of Somerset[2] strongly advised my husband to accept the offer. The Duke had been the Chairman of the Royal Commission on Unseaworthy Ships, of which my husband was the Secretary, and ever since they had been thus brought into contact the Duke had honoured the clever young *Times* writer with a

[1] Now F. M. Viscount Wolseley.
[2] 12th Duke of Somerset.

steady and delightful friendship, and had always shown the keenest interest in his career.

So once more our pretty and pleasant home in Thurloe Square was broken up, and my husband started before the week was out for Natal, with Sir Garnet Wolseley and his brilliant staff. I could not break off the threads of my own work so rapidly as all that, and I did not go out to Natal until six months later. My stay there only lasted a little over a year, and I brought my two small boys back again early in 1877, settled them in England, and then joined my husband in Mauritius, where he was Lieutenant-Governor, in 1880. My own happiness as well as usefulness there was sadly marred by ill-health, which finally drove me home in 1881, and I had to remain in England until Mr. Napier Broome was appointed Governor of Western Australia in 1882. By that time I had recovered sufficiently to go round by Mauritius in one of the fine boats of the Messageries Maritimes, which then ran between Marseilles and Australia, and pick him up and go on to South Australia, from whence we had to retrace our steps across the Great Australian Bight to King George Sound. That was in the first days of June 1883. The next year he was made a K.C.M.G., and came to England in 1885, when he gave a lecture at the Royal Colonial Institute on "Western Australia," at which H.R.H. the Prince of Wales

graciously took, for the first time in the history of the Institute, the chair. It is impossible to estimate the good effect that lecture had in attracting attention to the Cinderella of the Australian colonies, or the deep gratification of the colonists themselves at His Royal Highness' kindly interest. It was quite the first step on Western Australia's road to progress and prosperity, and I do not believe that at least this generation will ever cease to be grateful to their Sovereign for helping them by his presence and patronage when they were indeed "poor and of no account."

In 1890 we left Western Australia amid heart-breaking farewells, in order to enable the Governor to see the Bill for giving Responsible Government to the Colony (which had been thrown out the Session before) through the House of Commons. That proved a most interesting and exciting summer, necessitating Sir Frederick's constant attendance before the Select Committee. But his efforts, aided by those of two other delegates,[1] were successful, and the Bill was triumphantly carried through to the great advantage of the Colony.

I have often thought since, that those seven years were perhaps the happiest part of my very happy life. The climate, except when a hot wind was blowing in summer, was delightful, the Govern-

[1] The late Sir Thomas Cockburn Campbell, Bart., and the Hon. H. Parker, K.C.

ment House, an excellent and comfortable one, stood in beautiful gardens, and the life was simple and primitive, for no one was rich in those days, and the society was small and friendly. Sir Frederick worked hard for the development of the vast Colony, which held a million square but sandy miles within its borders, finding his task congenial as well as deeply interesting. I worked too in various little ways, and amongst other plans I collected all the girls in Perth on Monday afternoons and read aloud to them for a couple of hours whilst they worked. We began with Green's "Short History of the English People," and went on to Justin M'Carthy's "History of our own Times," and then Motley's "Dutch Republic," and "Thirty Years' War." It was only an experiment at first, but it succeeded splendidly, thanks to the thirst for knowledge which all these pretty and charming girls displayed. No weather ever prevented their coming, and it would have been hard to decide who enjoyed those afternoons most, the reader or her very attentive and intelligent audience.

I can answer for myself that it was a terrible wrench to leave that dear home to which we had both become so truly attached; however, the gipsy's weird utterances had to be carried out, and a fresh home was soon started in Trinidad, to which part of the "Bow of Ulysses" my hus-

band was appointed Governor in 1891. There the life was, of course, very different, and so was the climate and the surroundings. Still the interesting work went on, but there had to be a brief visit to England—often only lasting three weeks—every year. Unlike most other Governments there was no rest or change of air possible in the Colony itself, so the English visit became a necessity for health besides affording an opportunity for settling many questions of local importance.

Our time there was drawing to a close in 1896, and already a movement was on foot (as had been the case in Western Australia) to petition the Secretary of State for an extension of Sir Frederick's term of office, when, like a bolt out of the blue, came an illness full of suffering which speedily put an end to a career of great promise, and to his life three months later.

Since 1896 I have therefore ceased wandering up and down the face of the globe, and, except for short trips abroad and a long and delightful visit to America last summer, I may be said to have settled down to a less roving life; but I feel the gipsy prophecy still holds good, and that no doubt my present little home will one day change its ground.

As it is, I often wonder which is the dream—the shifting scenes of former days, so full of interest as well as of everything which could make life

dear and precious, or these monotonous years when I feel like a shipwrecked swimmer, cast up by a wave, out of reach of immediate peril it is true, but far removed from all except the commonplace of existence. Still it is much to have known the best and highest of earthly happiness; to have "loved and been beloved," and to have found faithful friends who stood fast even in the darkest days. Among these friends I would fain believe there are some unknown ones, who have perhaps read my little books in their childhood, and to whom I venture to address these lines explaining as it were my personal story, with an entreaty for forgiveness if I have made it *too* personal.