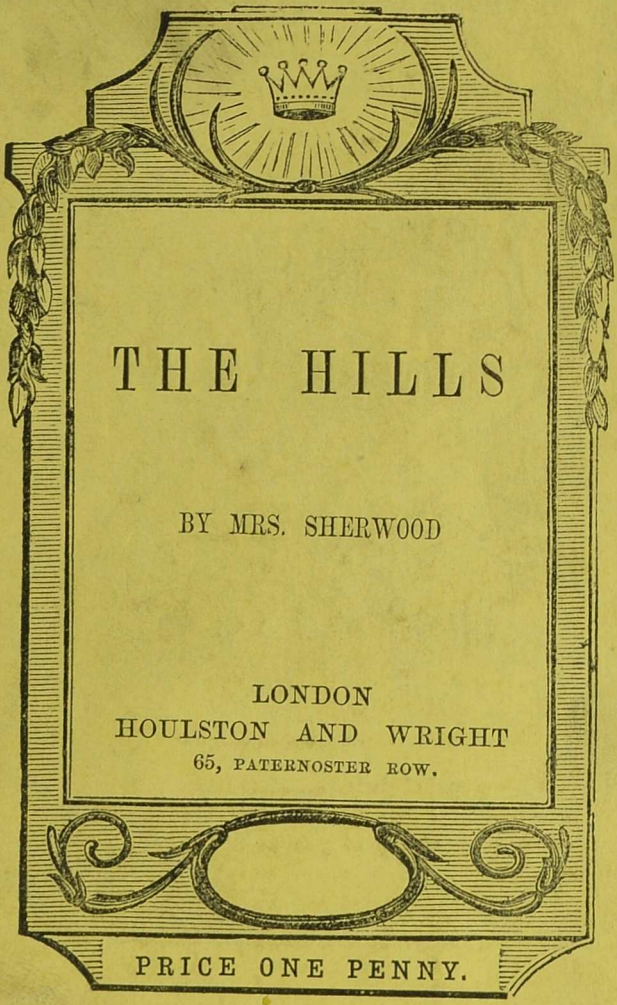

THE HILLS

BY MRS. SHERWOOD

LONDON
HOULSTON AND WRIGHT
65, PATERNOSTER ROW.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

"They spread their breakfast on the grass, and refreshed themselves. Here were many trees, such as few of you have ever seen."
—p. 12.

THE HILLS

BY MRS. SHERWOOD

AUTHOR OF

LITTLE HENRY AND HIS BEARER, ETC., ETC.

NEW EDITION

LONDON
HOULSTON AND WRIGHT
65, PATERNOSTER ROW

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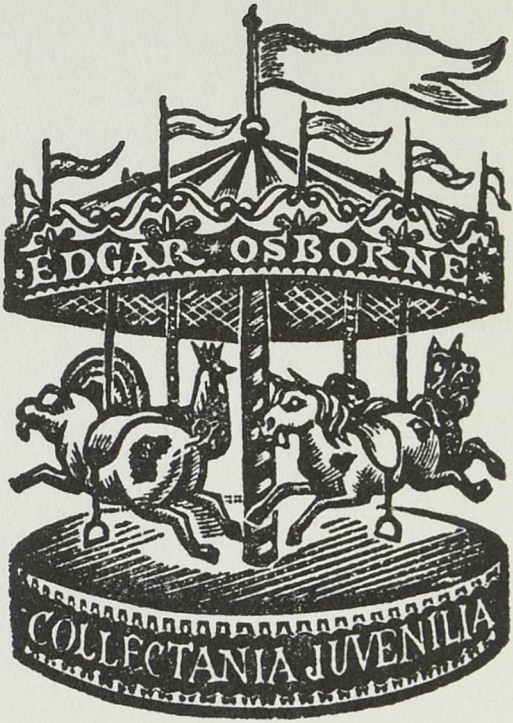

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THE HILLS.

MR. SEABRIGHT's small neat house stood where palm trees grow, where there are orange-groves, and where the brooks and fountains sparkle under a southern sun.

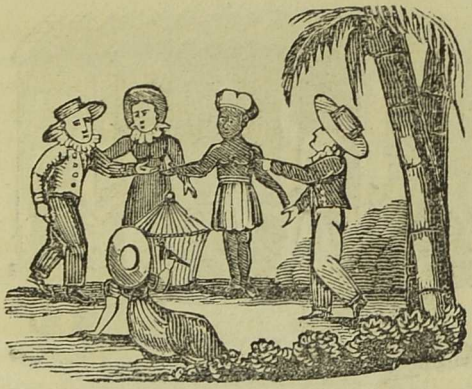
It was but a thatched cottage in which that happy family dwelt; for Mr. Seabright had a pious, gentle wife, and four young children—Charles and Marten, Clara and Eliza; but there was a fair porch covered with jessamine before the door, and far beyond certain green and fragrant fields in the front of the house, was a range of lovely hills, whose tops seemed to mingle with the clouds.

Mr. Seabright had often promised his little children that he would take them to those hills, to spend a day in one of the little woods on their sides; and it was now fixed for the next birth-day of Charles, as that

anniversary occurred in the pleasantest season of the year.

One morning, when Charles was near his tenth birth-day, while the children were playing together before the door of the cottage, a little black boy (for there were many black people in that country) came into the lawn, carrying a large wicker basket or cage, in which was a beautiful dove. "Little massas and little misses," said the black boy, "come and buy pretty bird—very pretty bird! dress all in silk, and gold, and silver! buy pretty bird, little massas and misses. He sing to you every day! he cry *coo! coo!* he very gentle; he no bite—no scratch! buy little bird, good massas and misses: for two silver sixpence I sell him—for one silver sixpence I sell him!"

The children were soon gathered round the little black boy, and in a few minutes they had made their bargain—a sixpence for the bird, and a sixpence for the cage; and, while the black boy went off rejoicing in his two silver sixpences, the little brothers and sisters were delighted with their beautiful bird in his wicker cage. Her breast was white as snow, and her wings and back were covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold: her eyes were lovely, though sad. But she refused all food; for



the children had hastened to place water, and rice, and crumbs of bread within the cage. "Poor thing!" said Charles: "I dare say that she is afraid of us. We will hang the cage in the porch, and get out of sight, and then, perhaps, she will eat and drink."

So they hung up the cage, and, retiring to a little distance, stood looking at the dove: but she never moved from her sad posture, and never raised her gentle head, but uttered a low complaining note, as if she would express the sadness of her heart.—"She is not happy," said Clara, "poor little thing! What can we do for her? would she like fruit, Charles, do you think?"

Charles and Marten ran immediately to gather fruit for the dove; and they were scarcely returned, when Mr. Seabright, who had seen and heard all that had passed from the open window of his chamber, came into the porch, and said, "I am glad, my dear children, that you have bought that unhappy little bird, because now you will be able to shew the tenderness of your hearts."

"Yes, papa," said Clara, "we will be kind to the poor little dove: she is very unhappy now, we see. She hangs her head, and will not eat; but we will teach her to love us, and then she will be happy."

"Perhaps, in time," said Mr. Seabright, "she might learn to be contented in that

cage. But ah! how different must that confinement be to the lovely hills and woods to which she has been used! and doves, my dear children, are accustomed to live in pairs; and now is the season in which they have young ones. That beautiful dove may be grieving for her mate and for her little ones far away. Nothing that you can do will make her happy in this confinement; and you may, perhaps, have the pain of seeing her pine and die: but if you will open her cage and give her liberty, you will have the delight of beholding her spread her golden wings and fly back to her mate, her little ones, and her native hills!"

There was a delay of a moment, during which the tears stood in the eyes of the children: at length, Charles said, "I am willing to let the dove fly!" "And I!" "And I!" "And I!" said the rest. "Come, papa, help us to take down the cage, and let us go to the mound, (which was a little hillock at the end of the garden,) and then we will let out the dove, and see her fly."

It was all settled that moment. Mr. Seabright took down the cage, and walked, in the midst of his children, to the top of the mound; where, taking a station which looked towards the east, they had a full view of the mountains, on which the morning was

still spread, for the sun had not yet risen from behind them. "And now, my children," said Mr. Seabright, "wish good speed to your lovely dove, and a happy meeting with her mate and her little nestlings, for I have opened the cage-door."

For a moment the affrighted dove did not observe that liberty was offered her; but the next minute she dropped from her perch, stepped into the wicker doorway, expanded her golden plumes, and rose in the air.

The children uttered a shout of joy, exclaiming, "A happy journey, fair dove! and a pleasant meeting with all you love!"

The voices of the children urged the dove

to her utmost speed, and in the next minute she was beyond a bow-shot.

"To the hills! straight to the hills! to the eastern hills! I knew it would be so," cried Marten. "Her home is among the hills!"

"I did not doubt it," said Mr. Seabright. "Well, we hope to visit her among those hills in a few days, my beloved children; and we shall have the more pleasure, on that day, from the remembrance of the kind action you have done this day."

Charles's birth-day took place three days after the adventure of the dove, and the happy little party set out that morning before sunrise to the hills, the nearest range of which was about eight miles from Mr. Seabright's house.

They travelled in a four-wheeled carriage, such as they use in that country; and they took with them a basket containing cold meat, and bread, and fruit, to regale them upon the hills; and an old black man, Mr. Seabright's servant, went with them on the outside of the carriage. They did not go along a turnpike-road, such as we have in England, with hedges on each side, and cultivated fields beyond those hedges, but across a wide plain, where were herds of cattle feeding, and no inclosures; and they passed by huts, in which black people lived,

and clusters of palm trees, and bamboos, and plantains. At first, they could distinguish nothing very clearly upon the hills; but as they came nearer to them, they perceived that their sides were covered with a rich carpet of grass, and adorned with clusters of very lovely trees: they also saw valleys between the hills, and many falls of water sparkling in the sun. About seven in the morning they were at the foot of the nearest mountain. They stopped at the door of a little hut, and the old black man took the horses from the carriage, and turned them loose to feed on the grass before the hut; and then Mr. and Mrs. Seabright, with their children, began to climb the hill, resolving to stop in the first pleasant shade to take their breakfast. They walked along a green path shaded on either side by tall trees, and at length, coming to a convenient place, they spread their breakfast on the grass, and refreshed themselves. Here were many trees, such as few of you have ever seen; but what pleased the children most, was a cluster of cocoa-nut trees, at the very top of which was a company of little black monkeys, who had climbed there to gather the nuts.

As the power of the sun became very great towards midday, Mr. Seabright sought for them a valley, where the shade of the

hills on each side kept off the rays of the sun. A pure stream of water fell from a rock into the bottom of this valley, which had, in the course of time, formed itself a bason in the hard stone. This bason was in part shaded, and in part reflected the rays of the sun through the branches and leaves of the trees above.

"Stand still," said Mr. Seabright, "stand still and listen. Do we not hear the cooing of doves? Who knows? may not our own dove be joining her note?"

"See, papa!" said Marten, "look towards the bason!"

The whole party looked as Marten directed; and behold, in the foam of the water-

fall, or near to it, were two beautiful doves washing themselves, and fluttering their plumage in the cool, deep shade, uttering, at the same time, those soft and tender cooings which expressed their pleasure.

"O, papa! how lovely!" said the children: "surely one of them is our own fair dove. How glad we are that we did not keep her confined in a narrow cage, far from her mate and her happy home!"

"I now wish," said Mr. Seabright, "to ask you some few questions concerning a subject I have often talked to you about. I mean the subject of emblems. What are emblems, my dear Charles?"

"Emblems, papa, are representations, by some natural object, of certain qualities or persons: as, the sheep, in Scripture, is an emblem of a disciple of Christ; and the bush which Moses saw enveloped in flames, was an emblem of the Church in its trials and dangers."

"True, my dear son: and so mountains or hills are the emblems of Churches, or of religious establishments whether good or bad; and Mount Zion is the emblem of the Universal Church. Some hills are dry and barren, and represent Churches on which there is no divine blessing. Others have springs of water, are covered with verdure,

and abound with groves of trees bearing fruit and spices: these are emblems of Churches endowed with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which descend upon them as the dew on Hermon.

"The dove is emblematical of the Holy Spirit, and of all conformed to his likeness. A converted soul is compared in the Bible to a dove—*Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes.* (Sol. Song i. 15.) And as our captive dove moaned, and was in bitterest affliction, when separated from her native hills; so is the converted soul as a dove separated from its mate when compelled to dwell in the company of worldly men."

Thus the day upon the hills was as happily finished as it was begun; and before the last rays of the sun had departed from the summits of the hills, Mr. Seabright and his family were again beneath the roof of their happy cottage.

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