



Peter Biddulph: The Story of an Australian Settler

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From my earliest days to the present time I have been gradually climbing up the ladder towards a comfortable berth on the top; and if a ratlin has given way beneath my feet, I always have had a firm hold above my head. The first step I took was off the mud on to dry ground. I can recollect nothing clearly before that time. I was born on board a river barge, and never left it, winter nor summer, till I was fully six years old. One day the barge took the mud, which is not surprising, considering that I was the only person on deck. I ran to the helm to turn her head off the shore, but it was too late—there she stuck hard and fast. My mother was below, tending my father, and he lay dying. It was the barge's last voyage, and his too. Both had seen much service. The barge never moved again, but went on rotting and rotting till the owner sold her and she was broken up. Father died that night, and a boat came and took mother and me on shore, with father's body, and such property as we possessed—not much, I fancy,—a kettle and pot, some plates, and knives, and cups, and a few clothes,—we hadn't wanted furniture, and with these mother and I had to begin the world. She said things might have been worse, for she might have had a dozen children instead of one, and debts to pay—and she didn't owe a farthing, which was a great comfort in her affliction.



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