

# The Bush Boys (History and Adventures of a Cape Farmer and His Family)

## **The Bush Boys (History and Adventures of a Cape Farmer and His Family)**

**Mayne Reid**

This historic book may have numerous typos and missing text. Purchasers can download a free scanned copy of the original book (without typos) from the publisher. Not indexed. Not illustrated. 1884 edition. Excerpt: ... been speaking of the hyena as if there was but one species. For a long time but one was known,--the common or striped hyena (*Hyena vulgaris*),--and it was about this one that so many false stories have been told. Perhaps no other animal has held so conspicuous a place in the world of mystery and horror. Neither vampire nor dragon have surpassed him. Our ancestors believed that he could fascinate any one with his glance, lure them after him, and then devour them; that he changed his sex every year; that he could transform himself into a comely youth, and thus beguile young maidens off into the woods to be eaten up; that he could imitate the human voice perfectly; that it was his custom to conceal himself near a house, listen until the name of one of the family should be mentioned, then call out as if for assistance, pronouncing the name he had heard, and imitating the cries of one in distress. This would bring out the person called, who, of course, on reaching the spot, would find only a fierce hyena ready to devour him. Strange as it may seem, all these absurd stories were once very generally believed; and, strange as it may seem in me to say, not one of them but has some foundation. Exaggerated as they are, they all owe their origin to natural facts. There is a peculiarity about the glance of the hyena that has given birth to the notion of his possessing the power to charm, or fascinate; there are peculiarities about his conformation that have led to the belief in a change of sex; there is a peculiarity about the animal's voice that might well gain him credit for imitating the human voice, for the simple reason that the former bears a very near resemblance to the latter. I do not say that the voice of the hyena is like the

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