LA TROBE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
3 2934 9651 9923 7

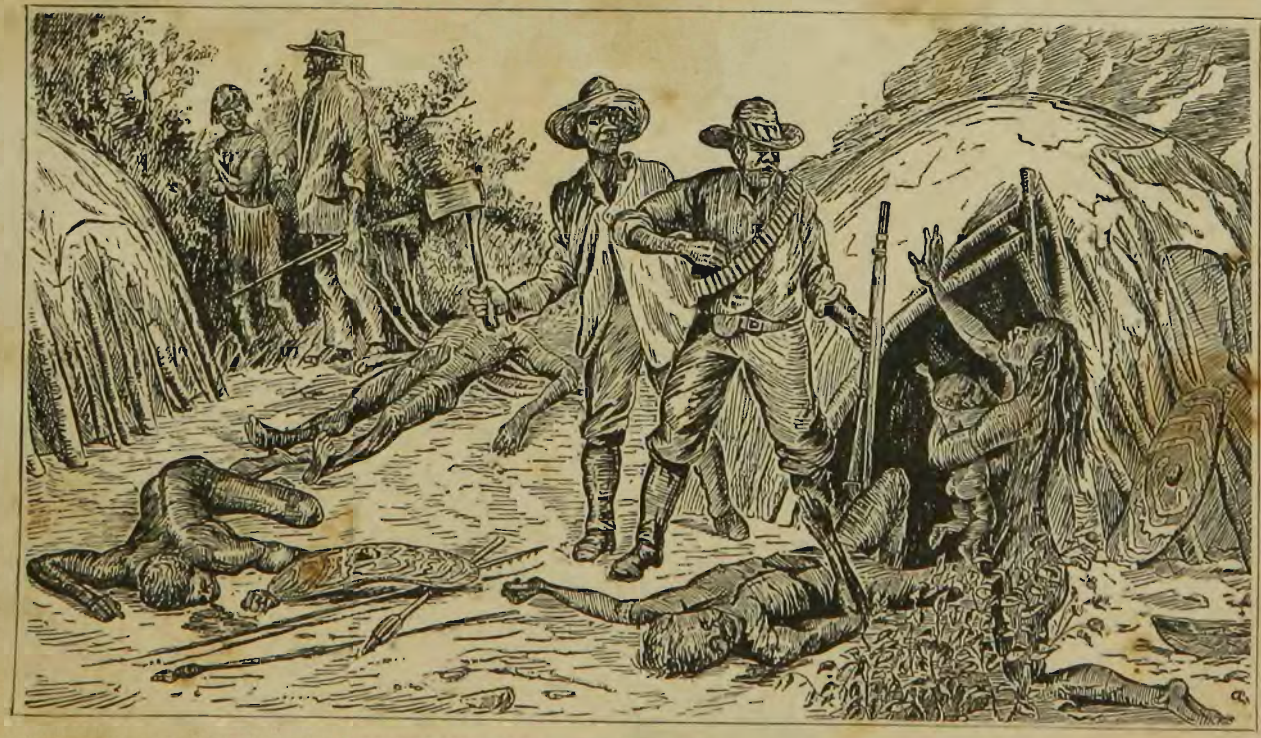
WITHDRAWN

General Assembly
Library, N.Z.
Number: 113652
Class: F
Loc.: V877

LA TROBE UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY

WITHDRAWN
Date 2-1-11

$35
3
B



QUEENSLAND SQUATTERS "DISPERSING" ABORIGINES. [*Frontispiece.*

√90

THE BLACK POLICE.

A STORY OF MODERN AUSTRALIA.

N 857

BY

A. J. VOGAN.

WITHDRAWN
Date: 11/7/1

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS AND MAP BY THE AUTHOR

LONDON:
HUTCHINSON & CO.,
25, PATERNOSTER SQUARE.

[*All rights reserved.*]

A823.2
V877b

LA TROBE UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY

TO MY READERS.

IN the following story I have endeavoured to depict some of the obscurer portions of Australia's shadow side.

The scenes and main incidents employed are chiefly the result of my personal observations and experiences; the remainder are from perfectly reliable sources.

ARTHUR JAMES VOGAN.

TAURANGA, NEW ZEALAND.
September 1890.

CONTENTS.

THE BLACK POLICE.

CHAPTER I.

A PENNY FOR BAD NEWS.

"STAR! Ev-en' Star! Full account o' the fi-re!" echoes shrilly on all sides from the throats of bare-legged, paper-laden urchins, who after the manner of their kind are actively engaged in supplying the passing public of Auckland, New Zealand, with the second edition of the evening paper.

Queen Street, the principal thoroughfare of the city, is crowded at this hour of the afternoon. Business at the banks and offices is over for the day, and the hot pavements are crowded with homeward-bound pedestrians of many varieties. Pale-faced daughters of the

city's *nouveaux riches* are there by dozens. Many are accompanied by healthy-looking female cousins from the agricultural Waikato, and if the former do congratulate themselves at the contrast between their own gaudy plumes and their country relative's more sober feathers, what of that? It is an odd fact too, worth mentioning, that these young ladies always require to do their shopping about this time in the day. But look at the crowd again. There stalks a stately Maori chief, with dark, tattooed, thoughtful face, surmounted with the incongruous "long-sleeved hat" of Europe. Others of his race are also there rubbing noses, and weeping with long-lost friends, or holding consultations with sharp-eyed lawyers, who, spider-like, are sucking the unfortunate natives' ancestral estates into the insatiable and unscrupulous maws of pakeha landsharks.

On hurries the crowd, and somebody points out Auckland's richest man. "Entirely devoted to Art," says our informant, adding that the object of our attention "has found gin-spinning pay better than feeling the pulses of hypochondriacs."

Bustling past comes a knot of loud-voiced, white-waistcoated mining agents. One of these turns for a moment to buy a paper. Like minnows at a worm, a shoal of newsboys make a dive at him, tumbling over each other, and crying aloud their *alto* battle-cry in the strange vernacular of their kind: "Star! Ev-en' Star! Full account of the fi-re! Death of an Australian explorer!"

A young man, who with riding-whip in hand is standing close by on the curb, turns at the last sentence, and hurriedly buying a paper, glances eagerly at it.

"So it is true, after all," he murmurs half aloud, and remains for a moment or two in deep thought. As we want our readers to know him when they meet him again, here is a brief description of Mr. Claude Angland. As he stands there before us in a loosely-fitting Norfolk jacket and Bedford cords, his dark-brown, wide-brimmed felt hat—light as gossamer—thrown back from his honest, sunburnt face, he looks the *beau idéal* of what an intelligent, active pioneer in a new country should be. Old ladies would call him "a fine young man to look at;" younger members of the female persuasion, although denying his right to be termed handsome, would naturally turn to him in trouble or in danger, in preference to many a more showy individual.

Our new friend does not stand long in thought; he suddenly glances again at the paper, and then at his watch, and turning on his heel is soon lost to view in the crowd.

The news that has apparently so interested the young man is in the latest telegrams' column of the evening paper.

"(*By special wire.*)

"CAIRNS, QUEENSLAND.

"News has just been received from Georgetown confirmatory of wire sent you last week respecting death of Dr. Dyesart. Whilst exploring the country near the Mitchell river he met with a severe fall, and died three days afterwards. His sole companion, a black boy named Billy, who has accompanied him during all his later expeditions, reached Murdaro station with the news ten days since. An attempt will be made to find the body,

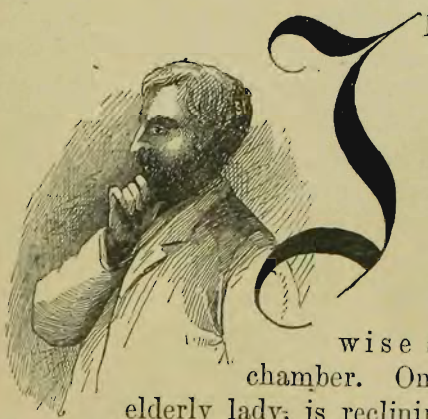
when the boy, who was also badly hurt, is sufficiently recovered."

In smaller type, below the telegram, a few brief editorial notes appeared eulogising the deceased explorer, and giving a short outline sketch of his life.

CHAPTER II.

ΣΚΥΤΑΛΗ.

"No more by thee my steps shall be
For ever and for ever."



IN a long, ceilingless room, half kitchen and half parlour, two figures are seated near an enormous fireplace, in which a glowing heap of wood ashes illuminates that end of the otherwise somewhat gloomy chamber. One figure, that of an elderly lady, is reclining in an easy chair. Her brain is evidently busy with anxious and even painful thoughts, the object of which is made evident as she turns her moist eyes, from gazing at the scintillating wonderland amongst the embers, to glance from time to time at the form opposite to her.

The lady's *vis-à-vis* at the fireside is a well-built, athletic young man, to whom we have already been introduced. In the rough garments of a working

farmer, he lies sleeping there in his chair just as he came in from ploughing twenty minutes before.

The sleepy god, however, has apparently less power over the youth's brain than his body. The twitching mouth and hands, the murmured words, show that the anima is busy, if the body is not. The sudden barking of a sharp-voiced collie outside the house presently causes the sleeper to open his eyes. They turn immediately to meet the smile of the lady opposite.

"Well, you have not had a very good sleep after all, Claude," murmured the latter. "I think Dick is back. It was Bob's barking awakened you."

"Ah," returned the still dozy young man, "that's all right. The old chap's rather late, isn't he? D'you know," he added slowly, "I've been dreaming about my trip to Queensland." Here Claude rose, and, taking both the lady's hands in his, continued, "I've made up my mind, mother, to run over to Queensland, and find out the particulars of Uncle Sam's death. I'm not superstitious, but I'm sure there's something odd about it. I've dreamed a dozen times since we saw that horrible telegram in the paper that poor uncle was calling me to come to him."

"Nonsense, my boy, nonsense," gently returned the lady, "you know we can't spare you. It's right you should wish to go, Claude, but we can't spare you. It's a fearful place, that Queensland."

"Oh you! Mollie wouldn't be alone. Would you, Mollie?" Claude remarked in a louder voice, as a pretty young girl tripped into the room, bearing a lighted lamp in her hands.

"Don't be silly, Claude," answered the fair one,

smoothing down a spotless white cloth upon a table standing in the centre of the room. "Dick is back, and he'll be so famished. Do run away and get ready for tea."

"Oh, of course, it's Dick is hungry now," laughed the young man; "your poor brother is second fiddle in the domestic orchestra since the arrival of the young Irishman." As one door bangs with the exit of the last speaker, another leading on to the verandah opens and quickly closes, showing in the interval a brief picture of fiery sunset behind dark fir-trees. A fresh figure is in the room. It is that of a jolly-looking individual, whose plan of construction, so to speak, is more inclined to squareness than height. The younger of the two women is soon helping the new-comer to empty his pockets and shoulder-bag of letters and papers, chattering all the time. "Oh, Dick, haven't you got a letter for me?"

"Nary a one, ducky; but I've got an important one for Claude. D'you know, Mrs. Angland, it's from the Queensland police. They sent it here to Inspector Goode, and he gave it to me just before I left town. Maybe now it's something about poor Dr. Dyesart." Here Claude re-enters the room.

"Well, old man, glad you're back safe. How did the mare go? She was bound to be a bit skittish after the long spell she's had. I hope you've had her shod? Have you any news of the Doctor?"

"*Taihoa* (wait a bit), old chap," interrupts Dick, with his fingers to his ears to illustrate histrionically the pain such rapid questioning is giving him. "Why, Claude, you're getting as bad as your sister. Here's a letter for you, which you needn't apologise for

opening at tea. I myself beg to move that we do now partake of what our black brethren here call 'kai,' *alias* 'tucker.'

The little circle now gathered round the white-clothed table consists of an English lady, her son and daughter, and a friend,—a young man from northern Ireland. They had left the old country together, some four years before the time when our story opens, to settle upon a farm in New Zealand.

The youth from the Emerald Isle had, some time before leaving his native land, determined in his own mind that as long as he could settle down close to his friend Claude's pretty sister, he would remain perfectly contented anywhere. Our friends had not been "out" long enough to feel homesick; the many novelties of life in a new country had not yet lost their charms. The rough life was almost like one long picnic. The lovely climate made up for many hardships; and if it would rain a little less at times, and if a market could be depended upon for fowls when fattened and cheese when made, the life of a New Zealand farmer was one, they all agreed, to be envied.

Claude, to the surprise of his mother, quietly finished his tea before opening the letter. There it lay by his plate in tantalising proximity to her hand, containing, perhaps, news of that poor brother of hers,—long estranged from all his family through no real fault of his or hers, to wander in a barbarous country, and die at last in the wilderness he had braved so long. Tea is cleared away, Dick and Mollie go out into the verandah,—to look at the stars probably,—and in the room the purring of the "harmless necessary cat" upon the hearthrug, and the *click click* of Mrs.

Angland's knitting needles, are the only sounds. Claude has taken a seat at the lamp-lit table, and lays the envelope, marked O. H. M. S., and bearing the Queensland postmark, before him upon the red cloth.

He feels instinctively his uncle's presence in that letter. There is no particular sign by which an ordinary observer could tell it from a letter of ordinary importance. Yet Claude knows, and it puzzles him to think how he knows it, that an answer to his dreams is before him. The truth of the theory of animism never appeared clearer to him than at present. The envelope is addressed to Claude Angland, Care of the Superintendent of Police, Auckland, N.Z. Below this direction is a note to the effect that the writer will be glad if the aforesaid Claude Angland can be found without delay, and handed the enclosed letter and packet. Inside the envelope is a brief note from some official at Cairns, informing Claude that a small packet, enclosed, having been brought to the station of a Mr. Giles by the late explorer's black boy, that gentleman had forwarded it to the writer, who took the present means of sending it to Mr. Angland, hoping the simple address, as copied from the packet, would find him. A few words expressive of the regret the writer, in common with all colonists, felt at the loss of such an able explorer as Dr. Dyesart closed the letter.

The packet referred to by the unknown correspondent at Cairns, whose hieroglyphic signature looked more like the shadow of a delirious spider than the name of a human being, now attracted Claude's attention. It was about the size of a large walnut, and its outer covering consisted of a piece of soiled linen rag, tightly

F V877 113652

bound with fine fishing line. In irregular and almost illegible blue-black characters, the same address as that upon the envelope had been scrawled upon it by aid of an indelible ink pencil. The covering removed, —Claude saw at once it had at one time formed part of the lining of a coat,—an empty revolver cartridge was discovered, tightly plugged at one end with wood, the joints and cap-end being smeared over with a kind of resinous, dark-coloured gum.

Claude's strong but trembling fingers are not long in removing the wooden stopper, and in his hands is a carefully folded piece of paper, which he recognises on opening it as a leaf from a sketching block. The same handwriting that had attracted the young man's attention upon the linen wrapper of the packet has covered one side of the opened paper before him.

With head on hand, Claude sits without moving aught save his eyes, poring over the letters. At last, half turning in his chair, his voice pitched in a slightly higher key than usual, he speaks :—

"Mother, here is my summons. I knew I should get one. Come and see poor uncle's letter."

Mrs. Angland rises quickly, and stooping over the table, her right hand on her son's broad shoulder, gazes with filling eyes at the well-known writing on that crumpled paper lying there. The writing is small and somewhat obliterated, and from the varying character and style of the different sentences the same have evidently been written at intervals. One could easily imagine that a wounded man, who required to rest often from his task, would write such a letter.

"Read it to me, my son, I cannot."

He reads as follows :—

"To my nephew, Claude England, of Auckland, New Zealand.

"I am dying before my work is completed. It rests with you to allow me to rest in peace after my death. I wish to make reparation to those I have neglected too long. I have tried to bury the past in science and in work. Your mother will explain all to you at the proper time. Come to where I now lie. You can trust Billy, whom you will remember with me in England. I believe he will get out of this. Come here alone with him, and at once. Good-bye to all. I hope you keep up your chemistry. Beware of squatters and police. This note will be hard to read, but read the whole of it.

"Samuel D. Dyesart."

"What does he mean?" muses Claude out loud, after a pause,—inadvertently speaking as if the writer was still alive, so difficult was it to believe that the hand that had guided the pencil that traced those shaky letters was fast turning into its original dust.

Mrs. England comes of a practical stock, and sees the letter only as it is.

"I suppose, poor fellow," she says, speaking slowly and softly, "he liked to think that some one he had loved in life would visit his lonely grave out there in those fearful wastes. He was very fond of you, Claude, even from the time he first saw you, a mere baby. But don't go, Claude," she adds beseechingly; "that horrible Queensland that has cost me a brother shall not take my son."

"Mother," interrupts Claude at this point, "you don't understand what I mean. Let me read the letter to you again." The letter is re-read. Presently Mrs. England breaks the silence.

"Perhaps he wants you to finish his work—his horrid exploring. God forgive me if I am wicked when I think it was wrong of your uncle to tempt you away from me. But perhaps he was wandering in his mind rather. Poor fellow, what he must have suffered! How odd of him to think of your chemistry. 'I hope you keep up your chemistry,' quoting from the letter. "Fancy his thinking of that when so near death."

Claude is listening in silence; but when Mrs. Angland speaks of his uncle's mention of chemistry, he rises quickly, and, seizing the letter, holds it to the light, and then proceeds to carefully examine the remainder of the packet, including the cartridge case, etc. He is rewarded by finding the single word that heads this chapter scratched upon the tarnished brass of the latter. "Hidden," he murmurs, for luckily he knew a little Greek. "Hidden, what is hidden? and falls to poring over the letter once more.

WITHDRAWN
Date:

CHAPTER III.

EUREKA.

"I had a vision when the night was late."

OUTSIDE on the verandah a happy couple are sitting enjoying the hay-scented night wind as it blows in gentle gusts up the valley. Dick and Mollie are in that delightfully idiotic frame of mind known to the vulgar as "being spooney." A great silver moon is shining down, as only a New Zealand moon can shine, over the forest-clad Hunua ranges in the distance and the neighbouring dewy pastures, where white-backed cattle can be seen resting for the night. The weird-voiced *weka* calls from the dark fern-hill on the right, and a couple of night-jars, called

"More Pork" by the colonists, from their peculiar cry, are proclaiming at intervals their carnivorous desires from the grand Puriri tree by the stockyard. The youth and his betrothed are thinking of anything but the letter that is engaging the attention of the people indoors, and Claude's voice calling loudly upon Dick is by no means a welcome sound.

"Dick," comes the summons again.

"Here I am," answers the owner of the one-syllabled cognomen. A parting squeeze, and he opens the door, and walks into the room rubbing his eyes.

"Look here, Dick," says his friend, without raising his head from its bowed position over the letter upon the table. "Here's the summons I expected from the poor Doctor. But it's an enigma, I'm certain. I'm bothered if I can get at its meaning. Read it, and find out its hidden signification, there's a good fellow."

Dick's face is generally a smiling placid one, but it is curious to notice how it changes, and becomes thoughtful and determined, as its owner catches sight of Claude's knitted brows and anxious, worried look.

Both young fellows remain seated at the table in silence for a time, till Claude somewhat sharply asks,—

"Well, what do you make of it?"

"Humph," grunts his friend, "I think I'll postpone my decision till to-morrow." Here he glances towards the verandah door, round the jamb of which flutters the white edge of a female's dress. "The letter has a secret meaning I've little doubt. By-the-bye, I didn't notice these figures before."

"Oh, I did, but I don't think they are part of the letter."

"You bet they are, Claude. I wonder what I, cross,

six, nought, double l,—or is it H?—two, nought, can mean."

Claude leans forward, and seizing the other's arm said, "I didn't understand myself till you read them."

"What do they mean then?"

"They are chemical symbols for iodine mixed with water. Yes, $I_{60}H_{20}$ can mean nothing else."

Nothing more can the youths make out of the hidden meaning of the letter, if hidden meaning there was. Before long all save Claude retire to rest. That individual, believing that no sleep will come to him that night, sits in front of the fireplace, puzzling over what part iodine—if iodine is meant by the symbols—can play in unveiling the secret message that he believes lies in the letter. The kerosene lamp is turned down low; and the room, lit only from the great fireplace, becomes darker each minute. Claude, having thought his active brain tired, is almost dropping off to sleep, when a sudden noise occurring in the room causes him to spring from his chair. A few shrill squeals in the dark corner of the room denote that the cause of the disturbance is the black cat Te Kooti, who has caught a mouse. Half-a-dozen books have fallen from a shelf by the door, as evidence of her prowess. After several vain attempts to get the blind side of Mr. Mouse, the feline namesake of the Maori patriot has employed a literary ambush to aid her in her plans, and with perfect success.

"Confound the cat!" growls the awakened one; "get out of the room, you brute. Wonderful, women always will have them in the house!"

Having ejected the poor discomfited animal, who was making her way towards him to be congratulated,

as usual, upon her prowess, Claude turns to pick up the fallen books.

He has replaced all but two, when he stops short, for the feel of the smooth, cold cover of one of them now in his hand has made him thoughtful again. Strange what a host of memories will crystallize into shape, one after another, in the brain, like the scintillating colours of the kaleidoscopes,—all arising from a simple keynote set buzzing by some slight passing circumstance. The book he held in his hand was a rough copy-book, so dilapidated that he had hesitated to pack it in his boxes when coming to the colony. In it, when a boy at school, he used to keep his notes upon the science lectures delivered once a fortnight to the assembled scholars. He remembered, in the semi-darkness, how fond he was of those lectures. He recollected, as if it had occurred but yesterday, that he was holding the book just in that position when, at the end of one lecture, he rose in exceeding trepidation to ask a question relative to biblical science that caused an awful hush to fall upon the schoolroom. There before his mind's eye was the picture of the professor —who was small, and rather nervous amongst boys— as he blushed, stammered, and finally refused to answer "a foolish question," to the delight of the boys, his pupils, and the glorification of Claude in the playground by-and-by.

Claude turns up the light, and glances through the pages covered with his long-past schoolboy scrawl. His whole attention is however presently directed to a note on a scribbled memorandum, which relates, as a fact, that iodine can be employed to determine whether certain infusoria, in water taken from a pond

or ditch, belong to the animal or vegetable kingdom. "The former," says the note, "do not contain starch and remain unaltered in colour; the latter turn blue upon coming in contact with the iodine."

Just as the thoughts, roused by reading these words, are shaping themselves for action in Claude's brain, a step is heard on the stairs, the handle of the door rattles, and Dick enters the room. He is in his pyjamahs, just as he has tumbled out of his bed.

"I guessed you'd be grinding away at your letter," he roars, "so having had a bright idea I thought I would come and lend you a hand. Cryptography's the answer to the doctor's puzzle, and your iodine will do something towards bringing the secret to light."

"Well, we'll try, without wasting further time," and Claude, going out of the room, presently returns with a wine-glass half full of light brown liquor.

"It's mighty strange that you should have hit on what I believe is the answer to the puzzle just as I had done the same thing." Here the speaker pushes the manuscript book towards Dick, who, sitting on the table, is cutting some tobacco for his pipe off a rough roll of Maori-prepared leaf, called *torori*.

Claude now pours some of the liquid, which contains about forty per cent. of iodine, into a plate, and proceeds with some hesitation to moisten a corner of the letter with the same. Both young men watch the result breathlessly. There is no result. Claude's face clouds over with a disappointed look; but he nevertheless plunges half the sheet beneath the surface of the liquor.

As if by magic a change immediately begins to make itself apparent upon the surface of the paper.

At right angles to the pencil writing there gradually appears, after the manner of a photographic negative that is being developed, a series of parallel lines of disjointed dots and dashes, of a faint blue colour. These markings grow stronger each minute. The letter is wholly immersed, and presently withdrawn and held to the lamp. A hitherto hidden message, written in fairly distinct blue-green characters, is now visible. It runs as follows :—

"I am writing this with rice water. Proceed at once to Sydney, see Winze and Clinskeen, Mining Agents, Pitt Street. There await you valuable papers. You can trust Winze entirely. Find Billy and take out Miner's Right. Come up here and follow directions map other side paper. Billy does not know of reef. Obliterate your tracks. You may be watched in Sydney perhaps for other reasons. Travel incognito."

On the other side of the paper, which had appeared blank before the application of the iodine, a roughly-drawn map now appeared, ornamented with dotted lines and arrows. From it, it appeared that if a certain direction was taken—shown by a dotted line—from a point indicated by a cross, a creek would be crossed running through a gorge. This creek followed up for a mile would be found to cut through a region marked "the golden cliffs."

"It is plain," remarked Claude after a few moments, "that I must first find Billy."

"That," replied his friend, who was smoking off his excitement, "that is clearly an important preliminary."

CHAPTER IV.

PADDY'S MARKET.

THE newly-arrived traveller in Sydney is generally pestered by the urbane and well-meaning citizens of that London of the South by three or more questions. Until he has answered these, and done so to their satisfaction,—and the correct reply is the "Open Sesame" to their hospitable homes and hearts,—his polite inquisitors will look coldly upon him. This knowledge is worth much to those of our readers who intend visiting Sydney for the first time; and we highly recommend such persons to study what we have to say upon this highly important subject.

Many a time have we seen the learned scholar, the gallant soldier, and the wealthy globe-trotter turned back from the very gates of that Antipodean Paradise, the inner circle of Sydney society, from an inability to pass this curious test. As often we have seen the artful "new chum," who has received a clear hint

from his friends, and acted upon such, glide without exertion into the Elysium fields of Elizabeth Bay and Pott's Point.

The principal of these questions, and the first one generally asked, is, "What do you think of our beautiful harbour?" (Time being precious in Sydney, the aspirate is seldom sounded in this case.)

The second screw of the interviewer's mental thumb-smasher is, "What do you think of the Post Office carvings?"

The third query is generally, "Have you been to Paddy's Market?"

Now experience has shown us that to the first two questions the simple words "Awfully jolly, bai Jove!" especially if accompanied with a long drawl, will put the knowing if unscrupulous candidate upon his way rejoicing. That he may be able to answer the third in a satisfactory manner, we ask him to follow our story through the wastes that lie over against Cambell and Hay Streets.

It is a curious and interesting fact that no one, whatever command of language he may possess, can describe a place, or thing, successfully to another, if his auditor has never had personal experience of something similar. Who could picture up in his mind the ocean in a storm, or a cavalry charge, from a mere verbal or written description?

The best literary effort would be thrown away upon a man of no experience. Such an individual would, after reading or hearing of the glories of the sea, probably still have only a vague idea that it was in appearance something similar to an animated potato-bed of a green colour.

We trouble our readers with all this in order that they may assist us in picturing the scene we are about to describe, by conjuring up "in the mind's eye," one of the flaring midnight markets of the Old World, —Petticoat Lane, Seven Dials, Deptford, the more ancient parts of the Cité, Paris, or the like.

The best admirers of Sydney—and it rightly has many of these—will scarcely proclaim it as a moral city. The unlimited license granted to its youth of both sexes and every class, by the custom and habits of the community, is fraught with those dangerous elements that encourage the growth of the worst sorts of crimes. Monied and unscrupulous blackguards are to be found here, as elsewhere in the world; and nowhere can they have their fling—that every devil's dance—to better advantage than in Sydney.

Paddy's Market is one of the hunting-grounds of this class of individuals.

As evening draws over the city vast crowds are to be seen hurrying homeward past the glaring shops and brilliantly-lighted hotels. Now dodging red- and green-eyed steam-trams, as they screech and rumble along the handsome but narrow streets; and anon dashing in open order like frighted sheep across the bus-covered squares, the migratory sojourners of the city flock nightly outwards from the business centres.

Let us allow ourselves to be carried down George Street in the human stream "Southward Ho!" till Cambell Street is reached. Here in the slack-water of the comparatively deserted footpath of a side street we can look around us. A vacant space of ground surrounded by a white railing is on the opposite side of the way, and we become aware of a Chinese quarter

being at hand from the acrid stench that reaches us from up the street.

The open square in front of us is being appropriated for the night by a noisy crowd of itinerant ragamuffin "entertainers of the public," of various callings.

There are the usual Try-yer-weight, Balm-of-Gilead, and Try-afore-yer-buy rascals, and others of like kidney. These, with the dirty evangelists of Kings-of-Pain and Quack-doctors, are busy erecting various machines and tables for the night's work. The place is busy with moving figures and the Norse-alphabetical rappings of twenty hammers, and gay with the crowd-attracting glories of red paint and bright brass-work. The gloaming gradually sinks into night, and flaring lamps appear in all directions; and four long buildings, that during the week have formed the Covent Garden of Sydney, begin to light up as the numerous stall-holders within commence business. Most of these are Jews of the lower classes; but here and there the child-like smile of a quarantine-flag-coloured follower of Confucius, or the merry, black, oily face of an African, breaks the monotony. At one stall half-a-dozen under-sized Chinamen are fingering some shoddy clothes; at another a "young man from the country" is hurriedly purchasing some indecent photographs from a dealer in church pictures and altar decorations, looking around him nervously the while, lest "his people" should see him. Close by, a lump of human flesh, in black oily ringlets and an astoundingly ample dress of vivid green, is showing off the glories of a ruby-coloured velvet skirt to two fragile "daughters of the public" by holding it against her majestic base. Near this last group, seated upon the only empty show

bench within sight, are two men. One, enveloped in a long, light dust-coat, and wearing a fashionable light felt hat, looks to the casual observer like what he once was, namely, a gentleman. His companion is a short, thick-set fellow, with the ever-restless eyes of a detective or a criminal. His otherwise stolid-looking features are those that mark him at once as a foreigner, probably a Wurtemburger. As far as can be made out, as he sits in the shadow, he is more anxious to avoid notice than is his companion, and is dressed in a suit of dark-coloured tweed. Both are apparently watching for somebody they expect in the column of men, women, and children, as with the orderly manner, characteristic of a Sydney crowd, it dawdles its long length past.

"I know he left the hotel, and I know he's not been able to see the firm to-day," whispers the man in the dust-coat, rising and striking a match upon his pants, and proceeding to light a cigarette. "I slung him a moral yarn or two about Paddy's Market that'll fetch him along."

"Why you not bring 'im mit you?" growls his companion.

"Because, my dear sir, if anything should happen to the young man, and I had been seen in his company, I might find it awkward; d'ye see, Grosse?"

The last speaker continues, after knocking the ashes off his cigarette with a delicate little cane he held in his gloved hands,—

"When I see him I'll touch your arm. Clear out then at once. And when you see us again—at, *you know where*—don't attempt to act if you don't hear me whistling 'Killaloo.'"

Here he of the cigarette whistled a bar of that melody for the benefit of his accomplice.

The two men continue for some time sitting moodily watching the faces of the crowd, till the one in the tweed clothes abruptly rises, and, pulling his hat well over his eyes, slouches off. His companion shortly after leaves his seat, and, settling his collar, strolls off in the opposite direction. His walk is slow and deliberate, and as his lack-lustre eyes gaze alternately right and left upon the busy stalls, more than one remark about "swell attire" reaches his ear. His face, however, remains a perfect blank, until he meets the eye of a gentleman going the other way, when it becomes suffused with the smiles and beams of gratified pleasure.

A few words of recognition pass between the two and they join company, and pushing onward are lost to our view. The latest arrival, as our readers have no doubt guessed, is the hero of this story. Regardful of all his uncle's instructions, save that clause concerning the risk he ran by using his own name in Sydney, he has just met a casual but delightful acquaintance, who is stopping at the same hotel that he has put up at. But before we follow the pair let us try and learn a lesson from, or rather philosophize over, the human panorama before us.

One of the first things that would strike a thoughtful observer of the *habitués* of Paddy's Market are the number of young people to be seen there,—that is, persons under twenty-one years of age. Of course anywhere in the Australian colonies, save, perhaps, in some parts of Tasmania, the balance of population will be found to be in favour of youth rather than age, but

here there are far more than one would expect to meet at such a place and at such an hour, for it is past eleven o'clock.

Numbers of these young people are pale-faced girls of tender age, who, earning their own livelihood at the big warehouses or millinery establishments of the city, laugh at the discipline of home (too often far away "up country"), and are rapidly following that easy path that, with ever-increasing declivity, will likely land them ultimately amongst the unfortunates of the pavements. The "pals" of these young damsels are also there by scores. Most of these have been "turned out" after one general pattern; and, to use another mechanic's term, are chiefly "wasters." The same disgusting, unnatural, and unhealthy manikin appearance surrounds all of them. There is hardly any sight more pitiful to behold than these youthful bodies, that have never known the youth which Coleridge describes as "the body and spirit in unity." These little weak-eyed, weak-kneed, man-like creatures are mostly addicted to sham meerschaums, "flash ties," and "blunderbuss" cut trousers, the bell-bottoms of which cover nearly the whole of their high-heeled "number nineteens."

Why, for the sake of these unhappy chickens of Hers, does not fair Liberty—who is fast being dethroned in Sydney by her sly bastard-sister License—wake up, and let some paternal edict become law that will make it a State concern to watch over these truly "fatherless and motherless bairns"?

"The childhood," said Milton, "shows the man, as morning shows the day." What will Australia's day be like with all this wealth of youth, that should one

day form the voting and the thinking power of the rising Republic of the South, wasting its sweetness upon the tobacco-and-gin-stained wilderness of vice and idleness in all her cities? Who that knows Sydney is not also aware of the fact that these merry, over-dressed companions of these miserable little "market-toffs" fall an easy prey before the devilish machinations of the foul prowler and her client-slaves of appetence? Each girl—womanlike—vies with her work-fellows in extravagance of dress, destroying the beautiful architectural lines of "Nature's divine building" with her uneducated idea of a perfect *vestis forensis*. If her legitimate exertions and the pocket money of her "pal" is insufficient for her purpose, other persons, whose business it is to do so, come forward to show her other means of obtaining the necessary funds, and the mischief is done.

The colony of New South Wales is badly in want of wives and mothers, and cries out ceaselessly to the older countries that she cannot give to every man a wife. Yet here are her own flesh and blood, female forms of which she need not be ashamed, all hurrying down the sewer of crime, like drowning butterflies, to rot in the foul slums and gutters of the capital.

As democracy grows used to her new-born powers, perhaps the people will cease to toy with the bright but keen-edged weapons of responsibility, and turn to guard their boys and girls. At present, however, and that is what concerns the object of this book, Sydney is a gigantic bait-pond where the wealthy debauchee can luxuriously roll in sin, and feed, shark-like and unchecked, upon the daughters of the colony.

But to return to Claude, and the delightful acquaintance he has made. Our hero, having discovered that he must wait a few days in Sydney before starting northwards to prosecute the object of his journey, has become fidgety and impatient. It is so annoying that he cannot begin his work at once; and he is only too glad to find any means of passing the intervening time. As the two men stroll along, Claude's companion discourses eloquently to him upon the scenes around them, and Claude, walking silent and thoughtful at his side, feels grateful to him for doing all the talking.

"You have no idea, my dear fellow," rattles on the young man in the grey coat, "you can't have the slightest idea of the growing tendency which the unlimited freedom of the youth of this colony encourages towards the doctrine of Free-love.

"We see the lower orders here," gracefully waving his cane, "and, mind you, the 'lower orders' is not a synonymous term with that of 'poorer classes,' as in the older countries. And which of the young people here to-night looks forward to marriage as more or less of a certainty, as people do in the older countries? Even in the parent-land the new doctrine is growing in strength. Here, I assure you, the girls dread marriage, and simply because it curtails that freedom of life, of following their own inclination, that passion that is bred in their bones, and was the holiest creed of their parents.

"Only a wealthy husband, who is not likely to be too uxorious or too particular, will be endured in a few years. Do we not see it already in some of the States of America? Steady fellows like you may call

the new doctrine simply open sin. But after all, what is sin? What but the breaking of certain unstable laws, that change and give way to others, as the nations that made them clamber painfully upwards towards the attractive light of freedom. Divorce is becoming every day more common, and easier to obtain. Every day home life is more and more exposed, and is fading away before the searching bull's-eye of the unsympathetic paper-reading public. The beauties of home, that suited our mutton-headed fathers, are departing; and the price—marriage—is too much nowadays to give for what is often everybody's property, as much as that of the unfortunate and foolish purchaser. But, as I said, you can see here the lower orders of the people. If you can judge the mind from the exterior body, you will acknowledge I am right in my deductions. And now, if you have no objection, we will visit another place I want you to see, where we can study those human fowls that roost upon the second perch from the ground. Are you agreeable?"

"Oh, I'm in your hands entirely," replies Claude. His companion smiles grimly,—turning his head away, for they are passing under a lamp. "It's only too good of you to take the trouble of entertaining a dull country-fellow like myself. Where do you propose taking me to next?"

"Oh, it isn't far, and I'll take you a short cut. I want you to see a skating-rink. You'll see lots of human moths there, and very pretty specimens of *lepidoptera* some of them are, fluttering, or rather rolling, round the lamp of sin. These rinks are little more or less than places of assignation."

The young men have left the whirring, noisy, lamp-

lit crowds of Paddy's Market during this conversation, and are making their way westward to George Street. The air is hot, and steamy with the butyric odours of a Saturday-night crowd. Crossing the wide rattling thoroughfare just mentioned, with its thousands of lights, and busy streams of thundering omnibuses and cabs, Claude and his companion push their way across the pavement,—crowded with purchasing humanity,—and find themselves suddenly in a new world. It is in this locality that one of the few nests of ancient rookeries that still remain in Sydney exists,—a menace breathing the foul odours of vice and sickness upon the rest of the city. Stately warehouses are, bit by bit, pushing these plague spots out of existence, and in a few more years they will happily be swept away. Here is before us an example of Dr. Johnson's saying "that men are seldom better employed than when making money,"—commerce successfully waging a war of extermination against those fortresses of the city's criminal population. A few gas lamps here and there, at long intervals, make the dark dreariness of the blank wall, and lightless broken windows of the tumble-down houses, more complete. Black, suspicious-looking alleys and lanes slink off to nowhere in particular from unexpected corners to right and left of the midnight passer-by, as if fearful of being noticed.

At the end of the dark silent street, by the flickering light of a solitary broken lamp, Claude reads, upon the dirty wall of a house, a notice to the effect that a collar-maker had once lived there. That he or any one else existed there now, and was within call, was hardly to be imagined, so lonely did the spot appear

to be,—no lights at the windows, no sign of life, and no sound save the lessening roar of the great, hot, artery of traffic fast being left behind.

The two men walked quickly on, their hollow footsteps echoing over the broken pavements, and then another and still darker lane is crossed, surrounded by still more tumble-down wooden tenements. The place is a wilderness, long deserted, surely, by mankind ; only peopled by ghostly cats, and half-starved supernatural dogs, that, at the sound of footsteps, slink off like shadows into fetid drains, or through broken doors and fences, under cover of the blackness beyond.

"Where the dickens are you taking me to?" presently asked Claude,—the sound of his voice making quite a pleasant relief to the dead silence around.

"Oh! we're quite near to Liverpool Street now," replies his companion. "It's a dreary neighbourhood, this; is not it? By Jupiter, it's warm walking too! I'll take my coat off." The speaker stops for a moment, and, divesting himself of his dust-coat, hangs it doubled over his left arm.

"There," he cries, a few steps further on, pointing with his cane, "there are the lights of the rink." At this moment the two men left the shadowy lane, and felt under their feet the surface of a well-kept street, a pleasant change after the broken ways they had just traversed. Above where they stand, and about a quarter of a mile off, the blue-white radiance of several electric lights show the location of the famous cosmopolitan rink.

The street they are in terminates as such some twenty feet from where they stand, and, changing to

a well-paved road, rises upwards, on a wide, serpentine viaduct built upon arches, to the dim building-clad hill before them. A low wall has been built on either side to prevent passengers from falling off upon the pavement below. On the right-hand side of the viaduct is a large cobble-stoned yard, covered with hundreds of boxes, crates, and empty barrels of all kinds. It is part of the railway goods station, and is at one point some twenty-five or thirty feet below the road upon the arches.

The faint earth-tremors of moving trucks and carriages, and the distant whirr of machinery, announces that there are persons not very far off. But, save for a hansom cab that dashes by the spot, it is almost as lonely as the slums just left.

"We'll soon be there," says Claude's companion, who, glancing up the viaduct, has caught sight of a short, stout figure, as it passed under one of the few lamps above, coming slowly down the footing.

"I can hear the music, too, I declare," he adds presently, as they reach the highest and darkest part of the incline overlooking the railway yard below. "Do you know the air? It's Killaloo."

Claude's friend ceases speaking, and whistles a bar or two of the well-known song. Just then a short lame man is seen hobbling out of the darkness towards them, leaning upon a stick. He passes, and it is odd to notice how he at once becomes cured of his infirmities. At the same instant Claude's companion exclaims, "A fire, by Jove!" and points towards a distant glare in the sky. Immediately afterwards he quickly steps backward, and seizing his light overcoat in both hands suddenly, with great dexterity flings it

over his companion's head, so as to completely muffle any attempted cry. Claude's head is turned in the direction indicated by his companion, when he feels his arms suddenly pinioned behind. At the same instant some rough kind of drapery is dragged tightly over his head. He gasps for breath, and with the sudden anger of a surprised and wounded tiger dashes himself backward on his unseen foes. His frantic efforts are unavailing; and before his half-dazed senses have properly taken in his terrible situation, he feels himself raised by four strong arms upon the parapet of the viaduct. The fearful truth flashes through his reeling brain. His whole body breaks out into suddenly alternating hot and icy sweats. He vainly tries with struggling feet and back-bound hands to save himself. It is but for an instant. The next moment he feels his back upon the sharp edge of the coping stones. The hot blood surges through his brain in a red, wild, lurid, ever-increasing rush. Then he suddenly turns cold. His back overhangs the wall! He is resting upon nothing! He is falling!

CHAPTER V.

THE SELVAGE EDGE OF CIVILIZATION.

OUR next act in the drama before us begins with the footlights still turned down low, for another night scene is to be enacted. It is the new township of Ulysses. Some six or seven thousand miners are crowding into the one long, irregular street of a new Queensland "gold rush" township. For it is the night of the week,—pay-day night; with Sunday for an idle to-morrow on which to get sober.

The new field of Ulysses—some sixty miles from the famous copper mines of Reid's Creek—is, like many of the later Queensland gold fields which have been within an easy distance of railway communication with the coast, quite a different affair to the old rushes of an earlier date, or even the modern Croydens and Kimberleys of the far north. As such it is worth sketching. Rapid means of transportation, cheap fares,

and double-leaded notices in the daily southern papers have brought hosts of town-bred men and boys to compete with the professional miner.

The difference between these two classes of workers is immense. Now the reader can take it as a gospel truth that of the various classes of men who earn their bread with the sweat of their brow, those who follow the profession of the practical miner are amongst the noblest specimens of humanity. Mind you, we do not mean the labourers, who, by hundreds, earn their 6*s*. to 10*s*. per day in the great Wyndham "stopes" or upon the hot "benches" of Mount Morgan. Nor do I intend you to mistake for the real article the half digger, half speculator, who haunts the grog-shanties at night, and spies for chances to make some "unearned increment" from the whisky-wagging tongues of the true workers on the field. The professional jumper of claims too, who figures more often in the Warden's court than the "m drives" and "cross-cuts" of the field, is another individual that no one experienced in mining camps would long mistake for a *bonâ fide* Queensland miner.

Watch the latter at his work. Look at him toiling over perhaps hundreds of miles of semi-desert to the dreary, flat waste, covered with stunted box or quinine trees, where the white quartz glares back at the red-hot sun across the dusty plain. Burnt by the scorching heat all day; watching midst the dangers of desperate starving natives, poisonous snakes, and unguardable fever all night; thankful if he can fill and boil his pint pot three times a day with the foul drink that goes by the name of water in the interior,—he toils on to the golden goal.

Once there, his active brain and stalwart arms send the stunted forest reeling with flashing axe-strokes. The mushroom village of blue-gum bark and branches springs up in a purple-brown crop around the red and yellow trenches, and "whips" and "poppet heads" rise in due course.

Geologist, mineralogist, carpenter, blacksmith, hunter, surgeon, and cook, the true prospecting and working miner, who has "followed the diggings" since the Canoona rush or the Palmer field excited the mining world, is a veritable Admirable Crichton. He is a true, iron-bound, walking edition of practical receipts. Open-handed when "on a patch;" frugal and level-headed when a "slide" or "fault" has taken his golden "leader" out of sight; quick to take offence at an intentional insult, and as quick to "Put your hand there, pard," if in the wrong,—this character may be summed up in the expressive words used by a miner to us, when describing a brother of the pick: "He'd lend you a fiver if you harsked him, and he'd fight you for a bob if he thought it b'longed to him."

The "towneys," as I have hinted, muster very strong at Ulysses, and as a consequence the rowdy element swamps the steady miners, such as we have just described, right out of sight. The Warden of the new field has only just arrived, and is toiling night and day to arrange affairs into workable form out of the chaos of matters before him.

He is "underhanded," to use a nautical expression, as is always the case, and is powerless to act, as he could and would act, were he not—besides being Police Magistrate, Warden, Senior-constable Surveyor, Clerk

of Petty Sessions, etc., etc.—also general adviser to the field upon every conceivable subject.

Let me draw you a rough outline sketch, in black and white, of a "pay-day Saturday night" at Ulysses.

The long, straggling collection of dwellings, that has not yet crystallised into a town proper, and which is now emerging from the "bark-humpy" to the "iron" age, begins to look more lively than ever, as evening with its lighted windows and moving lanterns shows that business is commencing with the influx of miners from the surrounding claims. Troops of "larrikins," who think, because they wear muddy clothes and get drunk, they must be rough-and-ready miners, begin to perambulate the muddy street, in a state of body more or less bordering upon intoxication. Crowds of picturesquely-rough characters now collect round the gaming-tables, shooting-tables, and other attractions, over and around which flare great oil-lamps, minus shade or glass. Every shot, every throw of the dice, every action of every actor upon the busy scene, gives rise to strings of filthy oaths,—so profane, so disgusting, that to any one but a man long acclimatised to them a feeling of extreme nausea would result.

Darker grows the evening and larger the crowd; oaths, blasphemy, and yells that would make a Red Indian blush with envy hurtle through the hot, close night-air.

Wilder grows the feverish excitement, born of bad whisky and worse beer, till, words growing tame, blows are resorted to. A curious and interesting if disgusting spectacle is Ulysses on a Saturday night.

All around are wretched creatures wallowing in the much-trampled mud, like so many spirit-preserved

beings,—half hog, half man. From the open door and windows of the foul-smelling, brilliantly-lighted "shanty" just at hand, a Babel of filthy and excited language roars and roars, as if an opening to "the murky pit" were close by, and the voices of the damned had reached our ears.

Crowds of men and boys jostle each other as they pass amidst the flaring lights and dusky shadows of the much-peopled ways, and near us a couple of tipsy, blear-eyed rowdies are doing the only useful thing they have done this day, in attempting to destroy each other with fist, foot, and teeth. Round them a vile crowd, mostly composed of lanky, big-piped, beardless, weakly-looking, youthful, would-be miners are exchanging bets, in language as idiotic as obscene.

Darker grows the night and later the hour; the majority of the crowd are either reposing in the mud or have staggered to their tents and "humpies," out of reach of the robbers, male and female, who begin to slink about, like those horrible beings who haunt the fields of battle to prey upon the spoils of the honoured dead. Woe betide the sinner who lies down to sleep off his drunken fit in an Ulysses street after sundown if he has money upon him.

The main "street" is now abandoned by the gamblers, three-card-trick men, and other blacklegs of like nature, and now wretches, who disgrace the name of white men, and who would never have dared to show themselves upon the older fields of the colony, are to be seen offering miserable, frightened native women to the loafers round the "shanties."

One o'clock comes, and only select parties of soakers still make night hideous with their songs.

Outside the "gins" (native women), drunken and howling, are screaming out obscene remarks to each other and passers-by in broken English; and scenes take place that make the observer almost fancy himself viewing one of those horrible December orgies of Ancient Rome, rather than a scene in a civilized township of an English colony.

But let us ring up a change of scene.

In another part of the embryo township, a few hundred yards along the main "street," the Queensland Federal Banking Company has erected a small, curiously-constructed edifice of galvanised iron and sheets of bark. Competition is immense amongst the Queensland banking concerns to establish the first branch upon a new gold-field. On a new "rush" taking place, information as to the likelihood of its turning out a "wild cat" (or failure) or not is obtained as rapidly as possible. The manager at the nearest township receives a wire from the head office; and next morning some unhappy wight, who likely enough has just been married, or was to have taken unto himself a wife in a few days, is ordered off at perhaps two hours' notice to administer to the commercial comfort of the rough selvage of humanity at Devil's Gap, or Three Gin Gulch, five hundred miles from anywhere, and situated in a dreary desert. He starts actually not knowing what part of the country he is going to, till he opens his sealed instructions at the railway station or wharf.

The remarkable little building to which we have referred is about the size of a ticket-taker's office at a small theatre. Upon its front elevation, and overhanging it at each end, hangs a wooden-framed sheet

of linen, upon which is painted the name of the bank whose branch it is. But we must go behind the bank-buildings to where stands the "most desirable residence" upon the field. It is a travelled house this; and has seen more than one "rush" before. With tongued and grooved sides screwed securely to studs and plates, the house can be taken to pieces and removed a few hundred miles by a bullock team, and put up again, not much the worse for wear.

It is like rising from the lower regions to that "ethereal beyond," which is the appointed permanent location, so say the poets, of all "good niggers," to leave behind the scenes we have just described, and saunter up to the quiet deserted end of the town, and hear through the darkness the *chinkle chankle* of a real piano. Through the windows we catch a glimpse of a lady (the only one within, perhaps, a hundred miles), in a cool, white dress, indulging her husband, the bank manager, and a few select sojourners upon the field, with the latest waltz from Melbourne. Inside the cottage—which stands on wooden blocks, surmounted with snake-and-ant-foiling tin plates—are seated some half-dozen men, listening to the music and chatting by turns. All are dressed in white, with crimson or yellow sashes round their waists, save one,—a new "chum," lately from Albion's cooler climes, whose idea of what is due to the lady of the "house" makes him appear in a suit of dark tweed, as the nearest approach to evening dress his travelling baggage can afford him. The conversation, as the piano ceases its rather raspy vibrations, reopens upon a subject that had commenced to be discussed earl er

in the evening,—the treatment of the aborigines by the settlers.

"Yes, it must appear strange to you," says a dark-eyed, brown-haired man, leaning back in his cane chair, and looking at the ceiling of unpainted canvas, "it must appear to you rather strange that such scenes can occur in what people are pleased to call a Christian land. But remember, my dear Mr. Jolly, you are a 'new chum,' and don't understand our ways yet." After a pause he continued: "I was one myself once, by Jove."

"If you mean by a 'new chum,' replied the young gentleman rather hotly,—whose appearance in dark clothes has already attracted our attention,—"if you mean by that, that I'm an Englishman, I'm only too glad to acknowledge——"

"Now don't fall out, you two boys," roars a big, burly, perspiring, jolly-faced, elderly man, who is sitting by the open window, "it's much too hot to quarrel. Morton's only trying to get a rise out of you. All new-comers here talk like you do at first. Now as I'm a little bit older than you are, Mr. Jolly, I'll just give you a friendly bit of advice. Don't take offence, if I say you are airing your opinions in an incautious manner. You ought to allow that we 'old chums' know more about the way to treat the niggers than you can. You raise," continued the speaker, who is the pushing proprietor-editor of the new-born local gazette, ladling an ant out of his glass of lager-beer, "you raise the old indictment of wholesale slaughter of the black population by the white Christians who have seized upon their lands. It is the ancient story of midnight murder, treachery,

bloodshed, hypocrisy, cruelty, and immorality, which has been told in every land where the Englishman——"

"I deny that," interrupts Mr. Jolly.

"Well, to please you,—the, er, European has come in contact with and dispossessed a feeble population. The men by whom these outrages,—confound the brute! (this to a *gecke*, or climbing lizard, that has fallen off the ceiling on to the speaker's pate),—the men by whom these outrages are perpetrated are members of that race which, with all respect for Mr. Jolly's favourable and patriotic opinions of his countrymen, claims to be the protector of the oppressed all the world over; and the tale of their atrocities is identical with the tales which—when the scene was laid in Bulgaria instead of Australia—roused the whole Anglo-Saxon race to an outburst of virtuous wrath and holy reproach. It is a story, on a smaller scale," continued the speaker, taking a fresh cigar from a box near him and lighting it, "on a smaller scale, of India over again."

"No!" jerks out the dark-coated youth.

"But it is," snaps Mr. Editor-Proprietor. "The tragedy which the British alleged Christian enacted in Jamaica, Burmah, Egypt, and a hundred other scenes of massacre, and which the same snuffling Christian will continue to enact so long as he is strong enough to kill, and some one else is weak enough to be killed——"

Here the speaker paused, and, taking a glass of lager at a gulp, spat out of the window, and looked round, cigar in mouth, at the young man who had been the cause of his lengthy speech.

"Well, you surprise me, Mr. Brown," says the

latter, in answer to that gentleman's stare, "and that's all I'll say further. I was prepared to find some excuses presented for such atrocities, as, for example, hot-blood, revenge, etc., but not on the lines you have laid down. You will excuse me if I take your remarks to mean that you are expressing your constituents' opinions, not your own, when you say that no man would attempt to protect the helpless, unless he had selfish motives in view, or was a fool."

Swinging round on her chair at the piano, the pretty, little, fragile hostess, who is a young woman of twenty, but who looks at least twenty-five years old, eyes the debaters with an amused and rather satirical face.

"Well," she says, interrupting the somewhat heated conversation, making a pretty little *moue*, "what's the good of talking about those horrid blacks? Augh! I hate them. And I ought to know, for I'm a squatter's daughter; and my father had to shoot more niggers when he first took up the Whangaborra country than any man in Queensland has."

The young black-coated philaboriginist turns his head, and looks with mute wonder at the fair young advocate of human slaughter.

"What's wanted here is a Black war like they had in Tasmania," continues the fair pianist. "Wait till you've been amongst our squatters awhile, and you won't think more of shooting a nigger than of eating your tucker." The speaker laughs a silvery little laugh, and all her audience, save one, smile in acquiescence. "What are the blacks? They're only horrid thieves, and are worse than wild animals, and murdered

poor old Billy Smith, only a couple of weeks ago, at Boolbunda."

"Yes," growls a stern-faced man with dark hairy face and coal-like eyes, a mine manager on the Mount Rose line of reef, "and many's the time I said to Billy, 'They'll close in on you, my boy, some day.' How he used to laugh when I told him he oughter carry a shooting-iron! 'They know me too well,' he'd say, 'and this too,' and he'd clap his hand on his coiled-up stockwhip on the saddle. 'Many's the yard of black hide I've taken off with my bit of twist here.' But they got him at last, the black devils! Poor Billy; he was a rough sort, but he was true as a level, was Billy."

"Did they send the 'boys' out?" drawls out a languid youth, who has been silent so far.

"Yes, rather!" answers the bright little hostess, with a curious steely gleam in her grey eyes, clasping her tiny hands together on her lap, as a child does when excited with delight or anticipated pleasure. "Yes, rather! Inspector Puttis, my cousin, you know, was at Gilbey's station at the time when the news came in. And you bet he gave them a lesson they won't forget in a hurry."

"Did he catch the murderers?" asks the unfortunate Mr. Jolly innocently, immediately wishing, on noticing the half-hidden sneer on all the faces present, that he had kept quiet.

"Catch the murderers?" the little lady in white repeats, with a grin that spoils for the instant her pretty face. "No, indeed. We don't go hunting round with sleepy Bobbies here, and summonses and such rubbish." A murmur of applause rises from

the cigar-holding lips of the auditors. "No! Cousin Jack I guess cleared off every nigger from the face of the earth within forty miles of the place. At least, if he didn't, he ought to. They're a horrid nuisance, and besides, it's a long time since they've given the 'boys' a chance of doing anything."

The irrepressible new chum however is not satisfied.

"But they're awfully useful as servants, ain't they?" he asks.

"Yes, if they're trained young. You saw that girl of mine, when you were pretending to admire my baby this morning." And the fair speaker smiles a smile of great sweetness upon Mr. Jolly, as she remembers his unfeigned praise of her child. "Well, she comes from a bad lot of Myall blacks near Cairns. The police have cleared them all out now. Inspector Young gave her to me. One of his sergeants got her at a 'rounding up' about three years ago, before I was married. She was only about six years old then, and had got her leg broken above the knee with a bullet. She'd have got away then, he said, but the dogs found her in a hollow log. He saved her," continued the lady, in the same tone of voice that a sportsman's daughter in England would have employed when speaking of one of a litter of foxhounds, "he kept the dogs off her and saved her, because she looked such a strong, healthy little animal. But all this reminds me that Jack Puttis, the Inspector, you know, said he'd call in here to-night, if he could get so far. So I'll just go in and see about supper." Rising, the active, fragile speaker trips away, leaving the rather stolid brain of the young Englishman slowly recovering from the shock it has received.

His preconceived notions—"young-man notions," if you like—of woman as a gentler, diviner creature than man, and worthy of the worship of the ruder sex as the citadel of mercy and holiness of thought and action, have received a blow that they will never quite recover from. His thoughts flash back to a line in the "Civilization" of Emerson: "Where the position of the white woman is injuriously affected by the outlawry of the black woman," and he feels sick and disgusted.

A grave-looking young man, who has sat in silence watching the face of the heretical new chum expounder of the doctrine of Mercy, now leans forward and touches his shoulder.

"It won't do, Jolly," he says, in a half whisper, "you really mustn't express your ideas upon this subject. It isn't business-like to speak of your opinion against that expressed by a possible customer. You'll have to get case-hardened, like I had to. We ain't in England now, and you'll have to close your eyes and ears to much out here. A new chum is especially the object of suspicion and dislike to many of the older colonists. 'He's come out to reap the harvests we have sown in labour and danger,' they say; and consequently the figurative 'new chum' is hated. You can ask as many questions as you like, but don't air your opinions on such subjects as you've broached to-night. You'll find the colonists hospitable if you wink at their pet vices and sins, but act otherwise, and,—they're the very devil. Now I've told you the square facts, and don't you forget it."

"Here's Puttis!" cries the fat man by the window, at this instant; and the sound of several horses

stamping, and the silvery jingling of bits, is soon after heard at the side of the house. Directly afterwards a small, well-made man, wearing enormous spurs (nearly a foot in length), and habilited in the semi-uniform of an Inspector of the Queensland Black Police, marches into the room. He is immediately noisily welcomed by all the men present. Mr. Jolly is, in due course, introduced to the new-comer, of whom he has heard all kinds of terrible tales since his arrival at the new township, and he cannot overcome his repugnance to the man who, he has reason to believe, is a paid butcher of defenceless women and children. He feels unable to stretch forward his hands to meet the slender white fingers extended towards him, and, pretending not to see them, bows stiffly and turns away. The bad impression he has already created is doubled in those who notice this action of the young man, and he is forthwith put down for certain as "an unmannerly, proud beggar of an Englishman."

Inspector Puttis, as he stands talking to the men (all a head or more taller than he is), has a face that would immediately attract the attention of an artist or physiognomist.

The skin of the forehead and cheeks is pallid beneath the bronze of an open-air life. The "corrugator" muscles of the eyebrows are unusually well developed (a sign, according to Sir Charles Bell, of great power of thought and action combined with the savage and wild rage of a mere animal). The brows cover small, piercing, restless, blue-grey eyes, the lids of which are generally half-closed. The lips are thin, and kept tightly closed over brilliantly white teeth,

except when talking or smiling; when expressing the latter emotion the lips are lifted so as to expose the canine teeth, which are large. The nostrils are full and slightly raised. In conversation, the Inspector's words come short and sharp, in brief breaths of speech; and he has an uneasy way with him, as if always on the watch and impatient of inactivity. You feel, looking at him, instinctively that before you stands a man who is as incapable of a merciful action as he is of running away from an enemy,—a sharp, active, well-drilled man, who bites before he growls, and has led a life of wild exhausting excitement and danger for some years past. His black, tight-fitting jacket (ornamented with frogs) and buckskin riding breeches fit him to perfection; his leather gaiters are splashed with mud, and a dirty straw hat—the national head-dress of Queenslanders, and called by them a "cabbage tree"—lies by him on the table. Inspector Puttis stands chatting to the men for a few minutes, and then turns to greet the little hostess as she trips in and pays her tribute of welcome and laudation to her "cousin the Inspector." Handing him two telegrams presently, she says,—

"They came over from Nanga just after you left. As you said you'd be back I didn't send them after you."

"Thanks, awfully, Minta. You'll excuse me; and —er—you gentlemen. May have to start at once. To-night. Never know. Deuce take these telegrams, I say."

The little man bows an apology for opening the messages in their presence, and struts to the candle still burning on the piano, and tears open the first

envelope. It is from the Chief-Commissioner of Police, Brisbane, and is brief and concise :—

"*Proceed Cairns and Georgetown, with troop, to relieve Inspector Snaffle.*"

"What the devil does this mean?" murmurs the police-officer to himself. Then a ghost of a smile plays over his face—a grim, half-hidden trembling of the nostrils and opening of the eyes—as he reads the second wire. It is signed "Lileth Mundella."

"*Want to see you at once. Palmer will see Commissioner about it. Bad news from Sydney.*"

The message that the Inspector holds in his hand is from his *fiancée* of six months' standing; and he smiles to himself as he thinks how lucky he is in having appropriated a girl who is clever enough to bend even the Commissioner of Police himself to her purposes.

There are numbers of odd matches arranged every year, and this is one of them. Neither Inspector Puttis nor Miss Mundella, to whom we shall introduce our readers presently, have ever pretended for an instant that either of them were "soft enough" (as the lady once expressed it) to be in love with the other. The one, a dark-haired girl of the Diana type of beauty, who could carry a room full of ordinary people to her wishes with a flash of her magnificent brown eyes and a word from her haughty, firm-set mouth; the other, a determined man, who had climbed through sheer hard work (work that few would care to undertake, and, thank God, still fewer to carry out) to a good position, and from which he meant to climb still higher.

"We can help each other to our mutual advantage, Mr. Puttis," Miss Mundella had said, when the preliminaries of the arrangement between them were being discussed.

Although we shall introduce this young lady personally to our readers shortly, it is perhaps best to preface that ceremony by a few preliminary remarks.

Miss Mundella, since returning to Australia, some five years before the date of our story, after receiving a European education at London and Paris, has resided with her uncle, a Mr. Wilson Giles. Highly educated, and with the reputation of being a large heiress, Miss Mundella, at the time she left school, was a girl whose lot in life seemed to have been cast in pleasant places. But a change came o'er the spirit of her dream. Her bright *châteaux d'Espagne* were rudely broken up by the unforeseen ruin of her father, and his subsequent death. This gentleman—a member of an old Jewish family in England—was a successful squatter for some years in Queensland. Suddenly, to the surprise of his friends, and the indignant anger of his relations in the old country, he married a Christian lady. A complete rupture with his own people ensued; and he shortly afterwards became nominally a member of the Church to which his wife belonged. From this period ruin seemed to dog his steps; and finally, whilst his daughter was still in Europe, a series of bad seasons placed his name upon the list of bankrupts. Overcome with the weight of his afflictions, which were suddenly added to by the loss of his wife, Mr. Mundella paid the only debt left in his power to liquidate,—that of Nature. He left two children behind him, a son

and a daughter; to the former we have already introduced our readers, in "mufti," in Paddy's Market.

A professional visit to the uncle's station in Northern Queensland throws Inspector Puttis and Miss Mundella into each other's company. The two individuals both find in the other those strongly ambitious views for the future that is their own bosom's god. One meeting leads to others; and the arrival of Billy at the station with the deceased explorer's letter gives Miss Mundella the opportunity of indulging in a scheme for placing herself, by means of her *fiancé*, in as enviable a position as that occupied by herself when she left school, as the wealthy young heiress.

But we have left our friends waiting for supper and the Inspector to finish his telegrams too long, and must hurry back. The well-drilled little man offers his arm to his fair cousin, and the pair lead the way to the next room.

Whilst the company are seating themselves the Inspector attracts his cousin's attention, and whispers hurriedly,—

"Will you do me a favour?"

"Anything I can, Jack."

"Is it likely you'll be stationed here for a few months?"

"Yes."

"Well, a young friend of mine—a great chum. Made an awful mess of it. Hurt a man down south. Want him out of the way for a month or two. *Vous savez?*"

"Is that all?" answers the little hostess with a gay

laugh. "Send him up here. If he ain't too handsome, so as to make Bob wild, he can stop here. As for being out of the way, there's plenty of that lying around here."

"Thanks, awfully, I'll wire him to-morrow."

CHAPTER VI.

TWO ESCAPES: A FALL AND A RISE.

"Sweet Puck,
You do their work; and they shall have good luck."

OUR fourth chapter left our hero, like Mahommed's coffin, "twixt earth and heaven." Luckily, however, for our story, if not for Claude, Providence dipped her umpire's flag, after merely a momentary hesitation, to the first-named of the opposing attractive forces, with the result that marvellously little harm happened to the chief actor in the tragedy.

We mentioned the empty boxes, crates, and barrels lying in cumbersome confusion about the stony seclusion of the railway yard. It was the presence of certain of these husks from the city's great dinner-table that saved Claude Angland's life.

Some good fairy, early in the afternoon previous to the assault upon the viaduct, had whispered into the

grimy little ears of one of the numerous shock-headed waifs of the neighbouring alleys to play at building houses with the smaller cases in the yard.

It was a glorious idea. And the diminutive owner of the aforesaid shock-headed and dirty oral appendages got the credit of it, and was unanimously elected master-mason by his juvenile compatriots of the gutter. How do we know how often this same good fairy raises us humans above our natural level, for her own good ends, whilst we are fondly priding ourselves upon our specially gifted brains, and natural superiority to our fellow-men ?

But see ! The ragged troupe frisks noisily to the yard. The corners of the sorrowful little mouths forget to turn downwards for a time, and the tear-stained, dirty cheeks wrinkle up with mirthful lines. Shouts of glee, and the usual noisy revelry of happy urchindom, echoes back from the grim, dark, smoky arches. The tiny workers gradually build up, under the unfelt gentle influence of some wonderful directive power, a pyramid of perilous construction, about ten or twelve feet in height.

Little did those baby builders, under the mystic architect, know for what purpose their labours were invoked. The work is completed, and the little tools of Providence, tired with their game, move and pass out of our story, leaving their structure to fulfil its appointed duty.

Now the would-be murderers come into view, and commit their crime, as described in Chapter IV., as far as their power will permit them ; and decamp forthwith, so much the more soul-soiled than they were before.

Instead, however, of Claude's body coming down upon the pavements with a fall of some thirty feet, as poor human ingenuity had intended, our young friend fell upon the yielding, unstable erection of cases, barrels, and the like, and was saved from serious injury. Save that he received a severe shock, and remained for a time unconscious from the combined effects of partial asphyxiation,—for the overcoat still remained round his face,—and a slight blow upon the back of the head, he was really, but for a few bruises and cuts, little the worse for his adventure.

Only a CRASH, followed by the brief tattoo of falling boxes, signalled the occurrence through the silent, still dark air. The night-watchman upon the premises, who alone heard the noise besides the two would-be assassins, awoke with a start, and had time to call down the curse of the Immortal Jove upon "them blank, blank larrikins" before he again fell into his well-earned and peaceful repose. By-and-by the cool, early-morning harbour breezes arrive and aid Nature to bring Claude back to the world and consciousness. Gradually, even before he is quite himself again, his arms, working on their own account, have freed themselves from the loosely-tied line that has hitherto bound them together.

He moves his head at last. The muffling overcoat falls partly off, and his strong lungs eagerly suck in their full supply of life-giving oxygen in a series of sob-like gasps. Consciousness dawns upon him, and he realizes his position and feels his bruises. It is some time, however, before he can move his limbs, he is so stiff; but he does at last, and sits up on the edge of a broken crate.

All is silent. It is still dark, and he cannot at first make out where he is. One thing is certain, he must wait for more light ere he can make a move comfortably. Presently, with the instinct of a smoker, he feels for his pipe and matches, and solaces his lonely reflections by puffing peace-bringing, but unseen, clouds of fragrant smoke from his lips, and sits waiting for daylight to appear. A dead stillness is all around, broken only by the sound of a far-off steamboat's droning whistle from time to time, the rumble of a distant vehicle, or the occasional silver chiming hour-bells from some clock-tower close at hand. Looking upward from where he sits, Claude can see the dark mass of the viaduct standing out against the sky; and, not knowing of the children's pyramid of boxes, for it had utterly collapsed after performing its appointed duty, wonders with a shudder how he could possibly have escaped as he has done. Why should these men have attempted to destroy him? His uncle's warning, which he now remembers in conjunction with his late experience, seems to show that some mystery attaches to the work he has to do, and that the late explorer had reason in telling him to travel incognito. He thinks of how nearly, through his own carelessness, he might have been now a shattered corpse; he pictures his mother's grief, and half-rising utters an exclamation of impatience against himself out loud. As he does so, he hears a slight noise near him, and becomes aware that he is not alone amongst the boxes, that, like the ruined sarcophagi of some Babylonian grave-yard, are just visible piled around him. The soft regular sound of snoring reaches his ears, and comes from a corner close by. Claude listens for a few

minutes, and tries to guess what kind of animal is the cause of those tender nasal notes. He quickly determines that the midnight music does not proceed from the vibrating mucous membrane of a man, nor is it a drunken snore. It is either that of a woman or a child. But who is it sleeping out here to-night without roof-cover, in this wealthy city? And why does she or it do so?

A mixed feeling of curiosity and compassion makes him determined to solve the mystery: so, lighting a match, he painfully scrambles towards the sleeper, making as little noise as possible. His search is soon rewarded by finding a little ragged body curled up upon some paper-packing in a corner. It is that of a small-limbed boy-child of about eight years, clothed in a torn, dirty linen shirt and ragged trousers,—the latter innocent even of the traditional single brace of street-arabism. The little sleeper is resting face downwards, on his left side, and a thin little bare arm is hugging the dark matted coat of a well-fed puppy, which nestles close to the child's bosom. Claude gets but a brief sight of all this before another match is needed, the noise of striking which causes both the boy and dog to awake,—the former putting up his arm, as if instinctively to ward off a blow, even before he quite opens his eyes.

"Well, youngster, what are you doing here?" asks Claude, oblivious of the fact that the same question might with equal right have been put to himself. "Don't be afraid, I sha'n't hurt you."

"I hain't a' doin' o' nothin', mister," whimpers the child, in a hoarse dry tone. "Them Star boys collared me ticket, an I'll get (sob), I'll get dollied if fayther

cotched me back at 'ome without a thick 'un fur 'im."

"Well, jump up, youngster, and show me the way out of this place, and I'll get you another ticket," Claude says kindly, not knowing in the least what a "ticket" may be, or for the matter of that "Star boys" either. "I've lost my way here, and," giving the boy a coin, which that diminutive creature immediately put in his mouth, as the only safe pocket available, "and I hope you'll be able to sleep at home to-morrow night."

"Oh, I'll show er the way, mister,"—here the "arab" made a noise like *ough*, much after the style of a Red Indian's expression of surprise. "Guess yer'd better not let ald Sandie cotch yer lightin' matchers 'ere," he continued in the same hoarse whisper, looking slyly at Claude out of the corners of his eyes, as our hero strikes another light.

Then taking the aforementioned shaggy-coated puppy carefully up, and placing it in straddle-legged wonder upon his poor thin pointed shoulder, the little guide bobs away into the gloom, his bare feet moving quietly over the boxes, and his dirty shirt forming a sort of sartorial "pillar of fire" leading the way out of the wilderness of the yard. Painfully and slowly Claude scrambles after the diminutive ghostly form in front of him, and at last finds himself once more in Liverpool Street. The boy stands there under a gas lamp, his pup in his arms, but edges off into the road, as if in suspicion of Claude, as the young man hobbles forward. "Now, youngster, could you get me a cab, d'you think?"

"If yer'll mind er pup," the hoarse-voiced baby

skeleton replies, after hesitation for a minute, and then, like a spirit, he silently and suddenly disappears. Claude is glad to sit down on the curb, and has only waited a few moments when the well-known regular pulsation of an approaching policeman's walk is heard upon the viaduct. Presently the form of a splendidly-built sub-inspector of city police, in forage-cap and cloak, and holding a riding-whip in his hand, appears, and comes to a halt where Claude is seated.

"What's up, mate?" asks a powerful but musical bass voice.

Claude has had time to think what answer he will make in case of being questioned, and has decided that his would-be murderers had better go free for the time being, than let a police inquiry retard his search for his uncle's body; so, turning his head a bit, he lets loose the first lie he has used since a boy at school: "I'm waiting for a cab; have sent a boy for it. I got knocked down by a cab or something an hour or two ago, maybe more, and have been sitting down in the yard there till just now."

"You don't know who ran you down?"

"Haven't the faintest notion. I'm not much hurt, and it was my own fault."

"Ah! it was you then lighting matches just now in there?"

"It was I. I found a boy sleeping in the yard, and have sent him for a cab. Will he have far to go?"

"To the Town Hall, sir. Were there many boys camped in the yard?"

"Only saw one,—said he had been robbed by 'Star boys,' whatever they may be, and was afraid to go home. By-the-bye, Inspector, if you're not in a hurry,

may I ask you something about these youngsters one sees about the streets here? Haven't had an opportunity before. Am a stranger in Sydney. I think you have more 'street arabs' here, as we used to call them in England, than ever I remember seeing in London, or any of our large towns at home."

"Well, sir, fact is, I can't spare much time now, but you can come round with me some night if you like. I'm a Londoner, and can tell you that you'll see all the old familiar scenes in Sydney of houseless beggars, and starving children driven out into the streets by drunken parents, and suchlike, camping around where they can find the softest pavements. But you've hit it when you notice the number of 'larrikins,' we call them. We've got a larger percentage of youthful criminals amongst our bad classes than at home; and it's a growing percentage, more's the pity."

"Well," observes Claude, "I've always been interested in these subjects; and I guessed what you've just confirmed, namely, that parental supervision is almost a dead-letter here, isn't it?"

"Yes," answered the Inspector, stroking his splendid flaxen beard, and glancing up and down the road, that was now lightening up with approaching sunrise. "Yes; it's a fact youthful crime is increasing here, faster than it used to do in past years. It is my opinion that the Government will have to look after the children altogether before long, just as it schools them now. The parents wouldn't or couldn't see to the schooling business, and the State had to step in and do it. The Government will have to look after the young people altogether pretty soon, if we are

not to have a nation of criminals growing up around us."

"Well, Inspector, from a professional point of view, you don't object to a decent sprinkling of criminals amongst the population, I suppose?" laughed Claude; but he continued gravely, "I'm very glad to have met you, and sincerely hope to have a chat with you again."

The subject Angland has broached is a favourite one of the sub-inspector's, moreover, he is anxious to know who Claude is. So he determines to wait a few minutes longer.

"Thank you, sir," he goes on, acknowledging Claude's compliment. "One word more: the parents here, if they can spare threepence a week for schooling their children, pack them off there to get them out of the way, and Sunday Schools are in favour chiefly as a means of getting a quiet afternoon. The kids are bundled off to school; whether they go there or not is another thing."

"Now that boy I found amongst the barrels, how does he get a living? Does he go to school?"

"Oh, he's a newspaper boy, likely enough," replies the police-officer. He told you about his ticket, didn't he? The boys get a dozen papers for 9*d.*, and on handing over that sum to the publisher they receive a ticket, which, when presented at another part of the paper office, brings them the required number of 'Evening Newses,' or 'Stars,' as the case may be.

"These boys? Well, they're a class really worth study, sir. That is, if you're fond of such things. They're a wild, untamable herd of free-lances, that's what they are."

"I suppose there's a large army of them?"

"Yes. And I suppose nearly half of them are on their own hook, and many of them combine the professions of loafer, thief, and larrikin with their legitimate calling. They're bright lads,—have to be,—with any amount of courage, and hard as nails. They're worth protecting; and they should be, by the newspaper proprietors or the Government. But here's your cab, sir, I think. Any time you like, you'll find me at the 'Central,' or my whereabouts if I'm away. My name? Sub-Inspector Chime, at your service, sir. Good-night."

The cab rattles up. Claude bids adieu to his small guide, and leaves him with more silver in his mouth than it has ever held before. Then our hero gets back to his hotel, and finds himself so far recovered next day as to be able to set forth for a stroll in the evening. It is not long before the *genus* Newsboy forces itself upon his notice, and he sets to work to study them carefully. Who that has done so has not been amply repaid? A new class established in the community by the necessities of an advancing civilization,—a class composed, for the most part, of neglected youth, whose useful services to the needs of the public are recompensed by starvation wages and ill-usage. Of course there are many bad ones amongst these newsboys,—these poor, little, ragged, dirty-faced, barefooted arabs of our colonial streets,—but on the whole they are wonderfully honest, hard-working little souls. Amongst the best of them are the paid boys in the employ of some one who has purchased the sole right of street sale of certain thoroughfares or parts of thoroughfares.

Let the unattached newspaper-boy, who, finding trade slack amongst the idlers at his own particular corner, come poaching upon a preserve. In such a case, the reception of a yellow ant which has fallen upon a black ant camp, or the welcome of a stranger dog in a country town by the local canines of the place, is tepid, compared with the fever heat of combined patriotism shown by the "regular boys" in driving off the intruder. Throwing papers and petty jealousy to the winds, the unwary invader is soon hurried over the frontier.

Near the book-stall at the corner of King Street Claude finds six or seven very small newsboys. Amongst them is a little, bare-legged, fairy-like girl-child in a dirty red frock, also engaged in disposing of mental food from one of the great "Fourth-Estate" mills of the city.

The girl dodges in and out amongst the crowd that is waiting for the trams, selling her papers, quite heedless of the boys' angry voices, which follow her with abuse. But as Claude comes upon the scene one youthful protectionist has caught the diminutive object of his wrath, and gives her several blows in the face with his open hand. No one interferes. A newsgirl getting a beating for cutting into the trade of the "regular" boys is to be seen any night in Sydney, and consequently is not worth interfering about. In this case, however, the boy goes off howling instead of the girl, the result of a cut from Claude's cane. Angland is immediately surrounded by a contingent of youthful "regulars," and a little hubbub of flat-toned voices rains upon him—

"What er you a-hittin of 'im fur?"

"The gent's mad cos 'is gurl hain't met 'im!"

"Yah, you wid the stick; 'it a man yur hown size!"

Claude of course does not heed the abuse, but firmly impresses upon the erring lad he had chastened that if he touches the girl again he will thrash him soundly.

"Hain't 'e got er right ter 'it 'er?" shrieks a cat-fish-mouthed manikin, resting his head against an adjacent verandah-post, as street-curs sometimes do when they howl. "Hain't 'e got er right ter 'it 'er? She's 'is sister."

This evidence in favour of the accused is hailed with a cackling chorus of approval by the remainder of the boys, amidst which Claude takes the girl aside to question her a bit.

She informs him, in better English than the boys employ, that she must sell two dozen "Stars" and "Nooses" before she can go home.

"How long will that take you to do?"

"Ten o'clock; p'r'aps a bit later; p'r'aps a bit hearlier."

"Have you any parents?"

"Dunno, mister. Mother hired me out er to Missus Bowen a year ago. I live at Woolloomooloo Bay. Buy a 'Noose,' sir?"

"And if you don't sell all your papers, what then?"

"Guess I'd get a lickin', or p'r'aps have ter sleep in er yard."

"Was that your brother hit you?"

"Dunno, sir. He's got ter look after me. That's all I know. Buy a 'Star,' sir? Mother Bowen has three gurls as sells papers. 'Star,' sir? 'ere you hare.

Jack, he's got ter look arter two gurls, and Johnnie, that's he, he looks arter another down the Royal Arcade."

"How old are you?"

"'Bout ten, sir."

"Do you go to school? Can you read?"

"No, sir. I hain't swell enough. I used ter, when huncle sended me, but the missus at the school, she said, 'Yer a dirty little gal, yer are,' that what she said. 'Yer a dirty little gal, and yer must get a tidy gownd afore yer come agin.' I hain't been since, sir. Buy a 'Noose'?"

"Of course I will," and Claude buys all her papers, straightway returning them to her. Then he walks down Elizabeth Street, and seeing two gruesome juveniles with large mouths and shock heads, who are howling out "Even' Noose! Even' Noose!" he gets them to come into a tea-shop and have a feed.

Seated at the clean, white-topped table, Claude is glad to recognise one of the boys as his little friend in need of the night before. The motherly dark-eyed mistress of the tea-shop, in reply to a question put to her, smiles kindly on the trio, and wagging her head slightly, with the air of knowing more than she cares to tell, says, "They know me well enough. Don't you, boys?"

"Er yes, missus," from both.

"Do they come here for their meals, then?" asks Claude with surprise.

"They're always coming in, sir, and saying, 'Missus, are yer got er stale bun?' and sometimes they buy a cup of cocoa on a cold night."

"Is that all they get to eat, d'you think?"

To the casual observer, the boys look as if food was a rarity rather than a regularly recurring feature in the day's landscape.

"Well, sir, I sees a lot of them, and I don't think they get more than breakfast at 'ome and a bun, or a stale roll during the afternoon, which they call supper, poor things. They lie long abed of a morning, I believe, and have their breakfast at half-past nine or ten,—they're up so late, you know."

The dark-eyed ministering female trots off, and Claude watches the dirty smudged faces of his little guests, as the rolls and sweet tea disappear. They eat but little, however, and that very slowly.

Of the two boys only one, Claude's friend, possesses a hat, or rather the remnants of one. The happy possessor of this ghastly semblance of a *chapeau* has carefully removed it on coming into the shop; and our hero notes his well-formed head, and falls to musing over the probable future of the owner. Neither of the little craniums before him is that of a weak or poor intellect, and the faces would be beautiful if the shadows of sorrow, hunger, and neglect were but removed. The dirty, unkempt, elfin locks are growing vigorously around a brain clearly worth cultivating,—an active brain that will expend a vast amount of energy in the world, for weal or for woe, as its budding inclinations are directed. The boys answer Claude's questions promptly, and to the point. They are little business-men with no time to waste. One tells how he sells three dozen papers a day "fur me bruther;" the other is working on his own account.

Says the hatless youth: "I sells 'Nooses,' sir, an'

I 'ave ter give one er ter me mother, and one er ter me sister." He continues: "I sells more 'Sunday Times' ner 'Nooses.' I gets a dozen 'Times' fur a thick 'um and a narf, and I sells em fur three shillin'."

"And if you don't sell your papers?"

"I'll get a hidin', that's all."

"Does your father whack you?"

"No, mother does the lickin'."

"Does your father do any work?"

"Mostly no, mister. He ain't much out of the 'ouse. He's a wool-packer, an' he's mostly out of work."

"How old are you and your friend there?"

"I'm ten, Don's 'bout nine."

It is the same old story which one can get repeated from hundreds of children in the busy Sydney streets. Another phase of the utter neglect to which the parents of the poorer classes consign their children, to the danger and trouble of the State. Grim old London cannot show, in proportion, so many unhappy human fledgelings slaving and starving through the dusty streets,—driven out to work for their parents' gin money, or hired out to slave-drivers with the same end in view.

Claude listens with a tear of sympathy in his eyes as the boy aged ten tells how he has "runned hisself two year," and mostly "sleeps out er nights" by the Circular Quay. And how he would like to go to school, but has not a coat to go in, nor a threepence a week to spare to invest in education. Then the children get fidgety, and the dark-eyed, kind-hearted shop-woman, with true feminine intuitiveness, whispers

to Claude that they "want to join their mates." And so off they go, each gravely saying, "Thank ye, sir," and each pocketing his shilling in his capacious mouth, but neither showing any capability of pleasure nor of gratification. Claude wishes them "good-night," and finishes up the evening with a visit to the Circular Quay at twelve o'clock, and there finds a solitary policeman standing under one of the wonderful electric lights, who shows him where to look for the newsboys sleeping out.

"But don't you go a-questioning of 'em, hif you don't want to get mobbed by them blessed larrikins," was the constable's last good-night.

Not much hunting is required. Down amongst the cases, the barrels, the timber, and the great iron water-pipes, Claude counts over ninety boys camping out. He wisely follows the policeman's advice, however, and does not disturb their slumbers, and goes home more puzzled with Sydney than ever.

CHAPTER VII.

MESSRS. WINZE AND CLINSKEEN.

"So shines a good deed in a naughty world."

THE firm of Messrs. Winze and Clinskeen, Mining and Stock Agents, of Pitt Street, Sydney, is known as well, if not better, in "outside" wilds as even in Sydney. The establishment is one of those remarkable outcomes of Australian push and enterprise that are to be found in these colonies and nowhere else in the world. The office before us is the focussing-point of two great fields of operations,—mining and stock-raising. In the ground-glass case in the office—dedicated, as a black letter notice on the door informs us, to Mr. Clinskeen, the station-business partner—a subtle brain is directing the business affairs of fifty large stations a thousand miles away, comprising a total area of perhaps 50,000

square miles. Any hour of the day you may drop in at the office, and you are sure to find somebody from the "Far North" closeted with the keen-eyed, courteous, military-looking old gentleman and his shorthand clerk in the little glass case aforesaid. Tall, slim, darkly-bronzed men, in well-cut clothes and be-puggeried light-felt hats, come there and drawl out their ideas about "fats," stores, capital, artesian-bores, and the like, whiffing long cigars meanwhile, and everlastingly "nipping" from the decanter of "three star" upon the table. One of these bowed out, perhaps the "boss-drover" of a mob (herd) of fat cows, which has lately arrived from the north in Sydney, enters, with his dirty, rough, cabbage-tree hat in his hand. He has a jolly, brown-red face, and has come to get his "accounts squared up." He is a bit "breezy" just now, for he has already begun to "knock down his cheque" (spend his money); but he sobers up under the keen "no nonsense" glance of Mr. Clinskeen in little less than no time. He is not quite happy, to tell the truth, about these same accounts. Thoughts will enter his head about that beast that disappeared mysteriously about the time he had to wait with his cattle near Swindle's grog-shanty, at Parakelia Creek, for five days, whilst his black boys tracked some of his pack-horses that had wandered away. His mind is not quite easy either about his enormous butcher's bill; for Mr. Clinskeen knows something about the awkward mistakes that will arise sometimes with drovers, in mixing up their own private grog account with the "rations expenses' list." However he has got down with only a loss of one and a half per cent. of

his "O. B. Fours," and his business being soon dispatched to his satisfaction, he goes away as contented as may be. Jew money-lenders, hydraulic engineers, stock-inspectors, patentees of "ear-marking" machines, come and go, and then more squatters. The flow of business through that little glass office is never ceasing.

On the opposite side of the clerk's outside office is Mr. Winze's special apartment. "His claim," he calls it, for he it is that conducts the mining part of the affairs of the firm, and he is thoroughly professional in speech as well as action. Born a "Cousin Jack" (a Cornishman); working for his living when nine years old in the submarine levels of a great, rambling tin mine on the ragged sea-front of the Old-land; educating himself by the light of flaring tallow-dips, whilst the moisture of the mine walls fell upon his book; the noisy man-engine creaking mournfully by his side, and the sea roaring far up above his head, he has fought his way through life; and, by means of Australian gold-fields and Cornish pluck, is now one of the wealthiest and most respected of Sydney's citizens. He does not see so many visitors in his little sanctuary as his business-brother Mr. Clinskeen does, over the way; but it is through his far-sightedness and practical knowledge of mining that the firm has amassed the capital that his partner can lend to such advantage to their run-holding clients. Mr. Winze is sitting, as our curtain rises, at his paper-strewn table. He is a powerful-looking, squarely-built, elderly gentleman, with magnificent, dark-brown eyes, and well-formed head covered with thick iron-grey hair. The expression of his face shows that much of

the youthful fire remains; and although over sixty years of age, he is really younger in many respects than some of the town-bred, thirty-five-year-old clerks in his own office. By the side of the mining partner is an open iron deed-box, from which he takes several pink-ribboned bundles of papers. He reads rapidly through some of them, glances at others, taking notes meanwhile; then, glancing at a clock upon the wall opposite, turns towards the corner of the room where his lady type-writer is seated, and informs her, with a kindly smile, that he will not require her presence till three o'clock. Left to himself, he stretches himself, and letting his gold *pince-nez* fall upon his broad chest, with a shake of his head, proceeds to fill and light his "thinking pipe," as he calls it.

"Disengaged, sir?" at this instant says a red-headed clerk, opening the door after first knocking on the glass. "Mr. Angland, sir."

"Oh, how d'ye do, Angland? Come in; right to time to a minute. Easy to see your heart's in the work you've undertaken. Sit down over there, that chair's more comfortable. This other one is an old mate of mine, let me tell you. It has a history. I made it myself from the 'sets' that gave way in the O'Donaghue, when what we thought was the 'hanging-wall' caved in, and showed us the true reef again, and a nice little fortune too on the other side of a 'horse.'

"Can I offer—— no? You're almost an abstainer. So much the better. Well, I've thought out your matters *carefully*,—and when I say *that*, knowing, as you do, that your uncle was the nearest approach to a brother I ever had, and that his wishes are

sacred to me, I think you'll believe me." Pointing to the table with a paper-knife made from a piece of silver-kaolin from Broken Hill, he continued, after a pause, "I've just been going through his papers again, so as to be well posted up against your coming. Now, to drive right into the subject,—and perhaps you'd better not interrupt me till I 'clean up,'—to go right ahead, I propose that you leave for the north at once. That you go to Cairns, in company with a tough old practical miner that I'll introduce you to, —a 'hatter' who knows a lot about that part of the coast range. You're not safe here, evidently. This little arch-business the other night showed that; and, almost teetotaler as you are, you may possibly be helped, *nolens volens*, to a drop too much—excuse the joke—that will leave you not worth 'panning out.' It's no use your travelling under an assumed name now. You'll be watched, likely, in any case; and I intend to hedge you round in a better and different way. You shall be a public character to a small extent. You shall go under the distinguished auspices of the Royal and Imperial Ethnological and Geological Society of Australasia.

"Plain Mr. Brown, or John James, Esq., may disappear; and it's too late to look for traces of either when missed. It's very different, let me tell you, with an accredited explorer of the Royal and Imperial —excuse the rest. He is under the eyes of the public wherever he goes; and there is much protecting virtue in the words 'Royal and Imperial,'—and this is especially the case here, in republican Australia. Odd, ain't it? Now you have trusted me because poor old Sam, your uncle, told you to do so; and

you mustn't object to my old miner friend going with you. If the poor old boy has kept something good up there, in the mining way, for you, you wouldn't be able to do things properly without an old hand to teach you the ropes and dodges. If you went by yourself you'd be shadowed and tracked down, safe 'as a Cornishman's set.' How about money? Ah! that's all right; but if you *do* want any, draw on me to any amount."

Claude murmured an expression of thanks.

"Not at all," continued Mr. Winze, rising, "and now you'll come and take lunch with me, and afterwards we'll interview the scientists."

* * * * *

After lunch, seated in a corner of the splendidly appointed smoking-room of the "only" club in Sydney, Claude's new friend and ally discloses to him the past history of the late explorer.

"Now, all you know about your uncle, you say, is that you thought him 'the grandest fellow you ever met;' that you saw little of him when he visited London in 1878, with his native boy Billy, whom you are to find; that his time was much taken up with lecturing and seeing old friends; and that the late Dr. Angland, your father, and he did not quite hit it altogether. Both seemed to respect each other, but they didn't combine well. You'll see the same sort of thing every day,—first-class fellows, who respect each other's good qualities, but haven't enough in common in thoughts or prejudices to become friendly. Will fence with each other in a friendly, but stilted conversation, but won't amalgamate any more than sickened silver will with gold on a badly managed

battery-table. Well, the main reason of the—antipathy, I suppose we must term it in this particular case—I'll explain. Have you a match? Have used all mine. Burn more matches than tobacco, I verily believe. Your uncle and your mother were the only children of a wealthy London merchant of the old school,—a man whose word was as safe as a Bank of England note; punctilious to a fault; and who, from what Sam used to tell me, would have died of horror, I verily believe, if he had lived to see the modern way of conducting business affairs. He was one of those straight-laced, horribly exact men of the last generation; one who never traded beyond his capital, and never owed a ha'penny. Old Mr. Dyesart would have turned his only son out of his house, I believe, if he had found him borrowing sixpence on an I.O.U. or promissory note. Sam was brought up on these lines, and inherited all the best points of his father's character. He was, however, of a speculative turn. When he became a partner in his father's business he developed a taste for big things, and at first rather startled the steady old clerks in the tumble-down offices in Fenchurch Street. I recollect his telling me how he took up the trade in maize from America which commenced after the last Irish famine, and did splendidly. Things went on well, and the old gentleman and his aged clerks felt more confidence in Sam in regard to his speculations, the vastness of which often caused his father at first to storm at his son, and afterwards to admire him more than ever. Then bad years came, and Sam's Australian wheat connection drew him into various 'wild cat' ventures in Queensland sugar plantations

and gold mines, and before long the credit of the old-established firm was in danger. He did not tell his father, and hoped to tide over the bad time, and anxiously searched for an opportunity to recover himself.

"With all this trouble on his shoulders, he still,—he was ever the same,—he still could think, feel, and work for others. He was indeed, as you say, 'a grand fellow.' As one of the 'great unpaid,' he was exercising his official position of Justice of the Peace for some little country town near London where he lived, when a young girl was brought before him one day charged with being an immoral character and without means of support. She told a pitiful tale. She was from Australia, she said, having left all a year before to follow the fortunes of a young libertine, who, as traveller for the soft goods firm by whom she was employed, had come in contact with and ruined her. He had been commissioned by his firm to buy for them in the chief manufacturing towns of England, and, having been already seduced by him in Sydney, the girl had no alternative—or desire either, if you ask me—but to accompany him to Europe when he told her to do so. After a brief sojourn in London he deserted her; gave her the slip. Without money, friends, or much of a character, left helpless in the great city of a strange land, and afraid to write to her parents, she fell into the ranks of the wretched 'necessary evils of the pavement.' Now instead of passing over this girl's story with an incredulous smile, as most J. P.'s would have done, he communicated through his agents with the girl's parents,—no, it was the girl's brother, a gold miner,—and, paying

her passage, packed her off back to Sydney again. The girl never reached home, but died on the voyage, of consumption, I think Sam said, contracted by the fearful life she had led in London. You'll see why I mention this matter by-and-by. Soon after this, Sam saw what he thought was at last a chance of winning back his losses. It proved a 'duffer.' This, with other mining speculations, proved to be the straw to break the business back of the old firm; and, happy only in the thought that his father had been spared the shock and disgrace of the collapse by quietly dying beforehand, Sam Dyesart left for Australia,—'To cure my wounds with the hair of the dog that bit me,' he used to say, for he turned gold miner, and was pretty lucky all through. His sister, your lady-mother, was engaged to be married to your father, young Dr. Angland, just about the time the final crash came. Although wooing your mother as an heiress worth £20,000 or more, his affection—with honour let it be remembered of him—his affection knew no change when he found her penniless. He must have been a very good fellow. But it appears that he had all along warned Sam of the risk he was running in dabbling in mining matters, and when the crash came rather crowed over Sam I fancy. At any rate, a tremendous row ensued. Sam forbade his sister to marry the doctor. The doctor stuck to his colours, however, and the marriage took place, Sam being absent from the wedding. Then, just after you were born, I think, having wound up his affairs, Sam started for this country, promising his sister before he went that he would return her dowry to her with interest some day. A number of years afterwards,

when Sam was my mate upon the West Coast diggings in New Zealand, a stranger arrived in the camp, and came to our ware (house) one night and asked if Mr. Dyesart was at hand. You didn't hear many surnames on the camp, I can tell you, and Sam was generally known as 'Doctor,' from the surgical knowledge he possessed, and the fact of his being ever ready to nurse anybody who might be sick. The visitor turned out to be the brother of the girl Sam had tried to save. It appears that, upon hearing of his sister's disgrace and death, he set to work and saved up his wages till he could go to England. There he traced out the girl's destroyer; and finding him, left him a helpless cripple for life. The avenger was arrested, and served a term of, I forget how many, years' imprisonment, to which he was sentenced by a judge who pointed out, in the usual cold-blooded style, 'that the girl had her remedy against her seducer,' and that the law did not recognise the righteousness of a brother's anger against the destroyer of his only sister. But the object of this long yarn, which has apparently not bored you so much as it has tired me, is that the faithful brother, —I forget his name now, 'Solemn Jim' the boys used to call him,—Jim met with an accident a few months after he found Sam, and on his death-bed told your uncle some cock-and-bull yarn of a regular bonanza of a gold-bearing reef, situated somewhere in the Queensland desert country. It was the belief in this imagined 'second Mount Morgan,'—the outcome of a feverish imagination and a wish to repay your uncle for his goodness to the sister, and nothing more, I verily believe,—it was this that kept Sam flying round the country like a Cooper's Creek 'brumbie'

(wild horse) of late years, for he did not know the exact spot to look for his gold mine in, as Jim had turned up his toes in the middle of the directions how to find the reef."

"Do you know what the directions were, Mr. Winze?" asks Claude.

"Nothing about it, save that the reef was firmly believed in by your uncle, and he expected of late to find it on the Great Coast Range, in Northern Queensland. Now I've told you all I know. My pump of recollection 'sucks,' as the engineers say. No more to be had of personal reminiscences. But I've still one thing to add,—had almost forgotten it, although to my mind most important of the lot. I've reason to believe that, contrary to his usual custom, your uncle has either invested in some large speculation up north or has loaned a considerable amount to some one. I say contrary to his usual custom, for he did not inform me of it. It strikes me that this is the secret of his calling you to his grave. Now, as I am appointed sole executor under his will, which will have to be proved upon your return, it is part of my duties to find out what has become of the missing money. The singular silence upon this point maintained by him is odd; but I think that your friend of the Royal, who took you to see the rink so obligingly, but who carelessly dropped you on the way, could point out the answer to what we want to get at."

The two men rise to go, and soon they are crossing Hunter Street, on their way to the rooms, or rather room, of the Royal and Imperial E. and G. S. of A. Claude, so far from feeling inclined to murmur "*Ich bin langeweilig*"—as an illustrious person did on

a similar occasion—at the loquacity of the old gentleman at his side, has been intensely interested in all he has heard. The evident affection also the narrator had for the memory of the best points in the character of his "old chum Sam" reflected Mr. Winze's own goodness in its expression; and the young man respects him accordingly, and is ready to follow his directions. Our friends arrive at the Society's room, and on the way the mining agent has sketched its history for Claude's benefit.

This august body, like many of the institutions of New South Wales, is unique in its way; it belongs to a class of scientific associations whose parallel is to be found nowhere outside the Australian colonies. To understand the Society's present position, one must be aware that the most prominent trait of the practical, pushing, nervous brains that are rolling Australia's "old chariot along" is the instinctive readiness with which any object likely to facilitate the upward march of the individual is seized and made use of, to be thrown aside when it has served the purpose of the climber.

"Advance Australia," yells Mr. Corn-stalk (N. S. Wales), John Chinaman Crow-eater, Esq. (South Australia), or hot-headed Master Banaana-boy (Queensland); but really they mean "Advance Australian," which Australian is the particular *ego* of each individual shouter of the national motto.

Let a thing be untried or unknown, then America or Europe must test it. It will hardly have a chance in Australia of a fair trial. But once an idea has proved itself a good one, an invention has been found labour-saving, an actor has crowded the houses of

New York or London, and the hero-worshippers of Sydney and Melbourne become frantically enthusiastic over the new matter, man, or thought brought to their notice. It was through this latter kind of forcing growth that the humbly-useful, plain Geological Society (no Royal and Imperial then) of Sydney—which was originally composed of real lovers of science—suddenly burst into the green-leafed glory of public recognition, with a real live Governor of the Colony as patron.

Science is a tender plant in many respects, and requires plenty of room in which to expand and throw out its ever-increasing tendrils. You cannot assist it by tying its budding branches to the regal fence with ribbons and parchment charters. Indeed, the healthful circulation of the life-giving chlorophyll is dependent on freedom. Second only in harmfulness to the dank shadows of the Church is the hot blaze of Imperial glories on the tender shootlets. Science is impatient of both.

About 1884 great public interest was awakened by an attempt of the "man of blood and iron" to annex the whole island of New Guinea. Germany's Chancellor for once in his life made a mistake. He had calculated upon the surprise, supine, peace-at-any-price restfulness of the English Colonial Secretary, but he was frustrated by the prompt pluck of the Premier of the Queensland Ministry, Sir Thomas McIlwraith. Some of the business-men subscribers of the Society—who had joined to oblige their scientific friends, wives, or sons—saw in the excitement caused by the New Guinea question the tide in their affairs that, taken at the flood, was to lead them on to

promotion in their business and social worlds. They got elected on the executive of the Association; worked upon the feelings of the newspaper proprietors till copious "notices" of the Society appeared in "our columns;" got anybody and everybody who knew, or pretended to know, anything of New Guinea to read papers before the members; and, after judiciously waiting till the public were well advertised of the existence of the Society, suddenly proclaimed that an expedition would be despatched to the Dark Island, and proceeded to obtain contributions towards the same. Dinners and conferences follow, with the Governor himself yawning at the end of the committee-room table; and then, as a finishing touch of the picture, came the gilding of "Her Majesty's gracious permission" to add the prefix Royal and Imperial to the little Society's scientific cognomen. The energetic councillors soon received the rewards of their energy; their plan to robe themselves in the reflected glories of the English scientific societies, by building a dazzling looking-glass association on the lowly foundation of an already established body of thinkers, met with perfect success. Plain Mr. Orkshineer became John Orkshineer, Esq., F.R.G.S., and Hon. Treasurer Royal and Imperial Ethnological and Geological Society of Australasia, and found himself rubbing shoulders, at conversaziones and soirées, with a far better crowd in which to enlarge his clientage than he could have dared to show himself in heretofore; and Mr. Lionel E. Gentlydon, the gay and handsome —but, alas! briefless—barrister, met sixteen solicitors' daughters at one scientific garden-party, where he spread his peacock's tale of new-born glories as Hon.

Sec. of the R.I.E.G.S.A. He has never since regretted his far-sighted policy in climbing up by the scientific ladder, which he had helped to ruin on his way up. The original and true naturalist members of the Society are, as is generally the case, quiet men who dislike all this tinsel and glitter, and they retire more and more into the shade. The New Guinea expedition goes ; the brave explorers employed find their provisions composed of damaged and unsaleable articles got rid of by advertising firms, whose names appear before the public as Donators to the Expedition Fund. Even the steam-launch, which must be their home for many months, has long been condemned as useless by her owners, and is obtained for the Society, at an enormous sum per month, through the kindness of one of the shipping-agent members of the Council.

The expedition returns, scientifically successful in spite of all the disadvantages of jobbery and bad management, and the round of dinners, speech-making, and festivities is begun again. Meanwhile the unhappy explorers—several of whom are quite incapacitated by sickness and the hardships they have undergone—wait in vain for their wages for months, when it is discovered that the Society is financially ruined. The business men have sucked what they wanted out of the Association, and now the older members come forward, and are trying to rejuvenate the dried husk when Claude is first introduced to their notice by Mr. Winze. We have perhaps trespassed too long already upon the subject of the Society, or we would indulge in a sketch of the Executive Council, as the members thereof sit round the little table in the shady room with the map-covered walls. Suffice it, however, to say that

the genial old mining-agent, having long been a member of the Society, briefly introduces Claude. He points out that he is a scientifically-inclined young man, who is about to visit on business some property of his in Central Northern Queensland, and that Mr. Angland is willing to collect information and data upon such subjects as the Council may suggest, without cost to the Society, in return for being accredited as its representative. The President welcomes and thanks Claude, and half an hour afterwards he says good-bye to Mr. Winze, having successfully accomplished the first item in the programme laid out for him by his new friend.

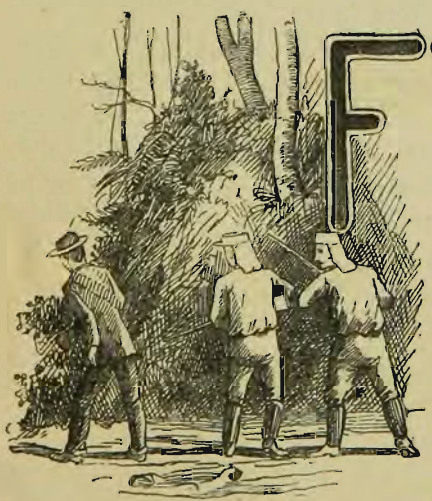
Claude feels light-hearted, and is intensely interested in the work before him ; and he proceeds to make a few purchases of such scientific instruments as he may require in his new *rôle* of explorer,—a couple of aneroids, maximum and minimum thermometers, and the like. Then he sends word from a messenger-boy office for his little friend of the arches to be ready to start with him next day,—for Angland has taken his little guide of the arches under his wing entirely. Don's parents have readily agreed to part with him to Claude, upon receiving a few greasy, crumpled pieces of paper issued by a local bank ; and so altered has the child become, in the last few days, that the old expression, " his own mother wouldn't know him," would have actually been the case had that bedraggled, whisky-sodden lady taken the trouble to go and look at him. The general " cleaning and refitting " the youngster has undergone by Claude's orders have so changed him that even our hero can hardly believe that his little henchman is the same child that piloted him out of the railway

yard. By the advice of Mr. Inspector Chime, Don has been placed under "police supervision," namely, at the home of a suburban constable; and here, in a week, by the motherly care of Mrs. Peeler, he has developed into a bright, good-looking little fellow, with an intense desire to become a policeman, and a large capacity for food. His pup has improved with its master, and now shows—the matted coat being treated with carbolic soap—all the points of a well-bred brown retriever. For Claude has wisely arranged that the development of the child's good qualities should suffer no arrest, even for an instant, by being separated from the only object he has as yet learned to show unselfish kindness to.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BLOODY SKIRT OF SETTLEMENT.

"I had always heard the Indian (North American) spoken of as a revengeful, bloodthirsty man. To find him a man capable of feelings and affections, with a heart open to the wants and responsive to the ties of social life, was amazing."—*From the Memoirs of Henry R. Schoolcraft, the hero-explorer of "Garden of the West" fame.*



FOR the purposes of our narrative we must turn back in our portfolio of Australian reminiscences, and present to our readers a sketch of an event that took place sixteen years previous to the date of the commencement of our story.

An August evening is sealing up in long red rows of clouds another day of the year of 1873. The scene before us is the heart of the weird "Never, Never Land," so called by the earliest pioneers from the small chance they anticipated, on reaching

it, of ever being able to return to southern civilization. Eight hundred miles in a direct line nor'-north-west from Sydney on the sea-board, and over fifteen hundred miles by the dreary ways a traveller must follow, the sand-hills, clay-paws, and low sandstone prominences of the district, now called the country of the Upper Mulligan, was still a *terra incognita* to Europeans on the aforementioned evening. It is true those ill-fated heroes, Burke and Wills, had passed through it twelve years before; but, poor fellows, they were hurrying southwards for the relief that came too late, and had no time to take much notice of the country. Night is coming on, with that gloamingless presumption that is mentioned as one of the oddities of the new land by most new chum visitors to tropic Australia, in their epistolary offerings to friends in the old country. The crimson clouds just above the horizon flash out brighter than before, as the sun sinks its lower edge behind the dim grey-blue line of dreary sand-hills. The earth grows darker suddenly, and the bosom of the piece of water in the foreground, isled and fringed with graceful lignum bushes, and backed by a picturesque outline of broken sandstone cliffs, becomes lighter by contrast as all else merges into purple shadows. Native companions (a large kind of crane) croak hoarsely high overhead, as they follow the sun westward, across the violet expanse of sky, to their feeding grounds by the salt lakes; large buzzards, called turkeys by the Australian settlers, come out to wrangle over grubs by the water's side; mosquitoes rise in shrill-voiced, murmuring clouds to address the night-feeding fauna of the locality, *vice* swarms of persistent house-flies retired, the latter having now

festooned themselves in countless myriads upon the zigzag branches of the Gidea scrub around; dingoes are slinking by, like the guilty shadows of departed thieves, to the dark, slippery mud-pools, where the overflow of the water-hole (a small lake left in an intermittent river's bed) has formed a broken, snake-haunted swamp; and all the life of the half-desert country around this part of the Parapee (now Mulligan) river gathers to enjoy the moisture, the comparative coolness, and the food-producing qualities of this Australian oasis.

Westward across the dreary salt pans, were we to follow the pelicans and native companions in their evening flight, we should find bitter lakes, with dazzling fringes of snowy salt, and strange—and, according to native legend, Cunmarie-haunted—mound springs. There, also, in the neighbourhood of the rocky Gnallan-a-gea Creek and sand-locked Etabooka, we may find the wondrous Pitchurie plant (of the poisonous order of *Solanacea*). Growing here, and nowhere else in Australia (at the time we write of), the location of this valuable native drug, with its lanceolate leaves and white flowers,—that fires the warrior, soothes the sufferer, and inspires the orator,—was shrouded by the cunning protectionist inhabitants of the wilds with the grimiest, most mysterious surroundings their medicine men could possibly invent. Black boiling lakes, Cerberus-like *portiers*, half man, half emu, and devils of the most uncivil type were supposed by the natives of other districts to guard this sole source of revenue, in the shape of boomerangs and red ochre, of the Paree and Mudlow country.

Eastward a matter of twenty miles from the

water-hole are the castellated "spires and steeples" of a long range of flint-crowned sandstone hills, whose *débris* has covered the intervening country with an almost unbroken "dressing" of glaring yellow and red brown stones, or "gibbers." If we were to follow the river bed southwards we should come upon magnificently grassed flats, now covered with the shorthorns of various squatter-kings.

On the sandy summit of a mass of brittle, broken sandstone, overlooking the water-hole, is the chief camp of the aboriginal inhabitants of the district. The father of this little hamlet—if we can honour the collection of beehive-like, mud-coiffured *gunyahs* by that name—belongs to the strong class-family, or *totem*, of the *Mourkou* (iguana-lizards); and, food being plentiful, enemies scarce, and no death-avenging troubles on hand, the little community is happy and contented on this winter evening, as the sun goes down. The smoke from the camp fires curls up fearlessly from the tree-studded flat below the village, setting the More-Porks (night-jars of Australasia) coughing in the branches; and the peaceful though monotonous chants of infant-suckling mothers come with a soft lullaby murmur upon the ear. There is something very soothing about these native *Yika-wimma* (literally, milk songs), although we have heard them facetiously likened to the buzz of a meat-tin-imprisoned blow-fly; but, anyhow, their effect on a quiet evening like this is perfectly in sympathy with the spirit of the surroundings. Presently some twenty male natives, naked almost as the day they were born, collect round one of the fires, and proceed to discuss the merits of sundry lizards, fish, and

bandicoot which have been roasted on the embers. The *menu* also includes two varieties of potato-like roots,—*Kylabra*, a rather rare climbing plant, and that yellow-flowered "praty" of the interior, *Tintina*. The women sit patiently waiting for their turn to come, each watching her particular lord, much as a brown-eyed collie does his master, but scarcely ever ceasing their droning song. Now and then their patience is rewarded by a morsel being flung to them; and by-and-by, at a few words from the village-father—there is no real chief in these truly socialistic circles—the men gather round him to hold a consultation of some importance, the "ladies" immediately proceeding to do justice to what remains of the dinner. The men now gathered round the white-haired old native are mostly athletic-looking fellows, whose dark, naked skins, freshly polished with the fragrant fat —to an aboriginal's olfactory ideas—of the ignana, shine in the firelight like the dark oaken carvings of saints in an Antwerp cathedral during midnight mass. The younger men and the boys (*derrere*), who keep at a respectful distance, and have eaten their meal apart from the fully-initiated males, are far from bad-looking as a rule. Ceaseless fun and joking, with occasional tale-telling, is going on amongst the youths; and presently they skip off into the shadows of the *wurleys* (huts) on the hill, where one of their number tells the oft-repeated native yarn of the "Crow and the Parula Pigeon," amidst the shrieks of laughter of his delighted audience as they open their white-ivoried jaws in merriment at his imitations of the car-car, car-car, of the feathered rascal of the story.

The middle-aged men have the usual distinctive

characteristics of all Australian aborigines,—the slightly-made, calf-less leg; the brilliantly-expressive yet bloodshot eyes; the short, flat, "tip-tilted" nose and strongly emphasized corrugator muscles of the forehead. They wear their hair generally in a matted collection of wiry curls, cut so as to fall round their heads in the modern high-art fashion; but some, having need of materials for fishing-net and line making, are cultivating their locks into cone-shaped elevations, by means of bands of grass. All of them stalk, rather than walk, as they move about, with long, from-the-hip strides that remind one of Harry Furniss' caricatures of Irving. And what is particularly noticeable is, that the hunted-thief look one nearly always sees on the face of the average "station boy" (squatter's aboriginal servant) is absent.

"What does the father of my mother's sister, Pirruup, the clever sandpiper, think of these warnings, of these warnings?" chants one of the men, addressing the grey-haired patriarch, who sits a little apart from the rest, all being now squatting on their hams around the fire. "Shall Deder-re-re, of the duck-haunted Bindiacka water-hole, tell us once more of the strangers he saw, so that all may hear?"

Only two of the men have yet heard the important news brought by their red-ochre trader on his return home an hour before, so with the eagerness of children they wait open-eyed for the sage's answer. Gazing heavenwards, where the stars are fast appearing at their brightest, the old man sits blinking his cunning old whiteless eyes, without apparently having heard the question. Upon his shrivelled, old, monkey-like features, lit by the fitful, dancing glare of the flames,

nature has written a long history of privations, of weary trackings and watchings, and of savage battles. Yet there is something decidedly picturesque about him, and even admirable; for there is a certain air of dignity, command, and superior knowledge that makes itself manifest in all his movements.

After a somewhat lengthy silence, broken only by the laughter of the boys, and the distant, musical howling of far-off dingoes, the old man turns his head towards a young man, wearing the *Yootchoo*, or "string of barter," and murmurs, "*Yathamarow*" (you may speak).

All the men present are busy plaiting hair, scraping the thigh-bones of emus for dagger-making, and the like; but they cease their work as their trader, who has the distinctive red-ochre marks upon his body that show his profession, begins to speak.

"Three are the moons that have broken, as the *Nerre* (lake-shells) break upon the wave-beaten shore, since I departed for the land of the Dieyerie, for the land of the Yarrawaurka. The sun is hot. The birds fly only in the shade. After two days water is needed by the man who carries a weight." The speaker proceeds, in a round-about way, to notify to his hearers that, partly through want of water and partly by fear, he had not cared to follow up a certain discovery he had made,—of approaching strangers.

"They travelled slowly," he continued, gesticulating, and glancing round as his growing excitement fired the faces of his audience with reflected interest.

"Their heads were ornamented with the white *moongarwooroo* of mourning, but worn differently to ours. Their skin is covered with hair like the Thulka

(native rodent), and they carry the fire-sticks of the southern people in their hands. Their women are large as sand-hills, and bent double with the weight of their loading,—their black hair sweeping the sand, and their resemblance to emus in the distance being great."

We are bound to pause again, to explain that the natives of the interior have often told us they mistook the first-comers' horses for their women, as they carried the packs, the females of a native party on the march always taking the part of porters. This will explain the ochre-trader's error.

A general conversation follows for a time, when the red-marked native cries,—

"Listen! I have learned a new Wonka (song)." Then commencing to mark time with his nodding head, and tapping an accompaniment with two carved boomerangs, he commences to chant the following verse:—

"POORAMANA, oh poor fellows,
Oro TORA TONA, cooking,
In the embers savoury morsels,
Came the strangers, PLUKMAN HOLO
BUM, BUM."

An impromptu chorus here came in from all the men present of—

"PARAMANA, oh poor fellows,
BUM, BUM."

With the ready appreciation of Australian aboriginals, all those present took in immediately the significance of the above words, and saw in them the singer's wish

to warn his brethren that the approaching strangers were of the same kind as those mentioned in his song. As, however, the difficulty of true translation and the obscureness of the meaning may puzzle our white readers and prevent them culling the poet's idea, we will explain that the trader had, in these terse lines, pictured how some poor black fellows, having obtained some savoury morsels, were cooking the same over the fire, when the dreaded strangers surrounded and destroyed them by means of smoke-emitting fire-sticks, that made a great noise, the imitation of which formed the chorus of the song "Bum, Bum."

There is a cessation of the song, and a feeling of insecurity saddens each face, for it is only before whites, and the natives of other and possibly hostile districts, that the stolid, expressionless physiognomy, sometimes mentioned as characteristic of the American Indian, is seen in Australian aborigines.

The old man has taken a plug of a tobacco-like compound from behind his ear and is chewing it, growing excited meanwhile. He is seeking for inspiration from a sort of hasheesh, formed of the dried and powdered leaves of the Pitchurie mixed with the ashes of the Montera plant.

The author of the didactic dialogues of Thebes, the old world expounder of some of the theories of modern psychology, if he could revisit the earth and wend his way to Central Australia, would there find some of his ideas, or rather the ghostly semblance of them, passable as religious coinage amongst the old men of the tribes. Grand old Cebes taught that man had a sort of life of apprenticeship before he entered upon this world's stage, and could (if pure of heart) sometimes

take counsel in times of perplexity by looking backward into his sinless anterior existence.

One of the virtues that the native drug Pitchurie is supposed to possess when used by the old men is the opening up of this past life, giving them the power and perquisites of seers.

To return to the old man and the camp. All the men watch him, waiting for him to speak. The boys, meanwhile, having tired of story-telling, are playing at Beringaroo over a large fire they have started. This game is performed with boat-like toys formed out of the leaf of the Aluja, warmed and pinched into shape. Flung upwards with a sharp twirl, imparted to it with the first and second fingers, concave side downwards, over the blazing fire, the plaything mounts with the draft, spinning rapidly, till it meets the cooler air, when it descends, only to mount again, still whirling in hawk-like circles. Shouts of applause reward the player whose toy keeps longest on the wing.

"Let the big fire be extinguished!" comes the word of command from the old man, uttered in a low voice. Then the speaker rises, and stretching out his arms towards the west, with the saliva caused by the chewing process running from his mouth upon his white beard and tawny chest, he commences to speak. The boys' fire has been quickly subdued, and men, women, and children watch the fingure of their "guide, philosopher, and friend."

Slowly, at first, come the words; the old man's voice growing louder and more excited towards the end of his speech, which is a kind of address to his patron-, or birth-star, in this case that of the Evening, or Lizard's eye:—

"*Amathooroocooroo*, Star of approaching night, *Kow wah*, thou risest, *dilchiewurruna*, from the sun's camping-place.

"*Boonkunana boolo*, Thy shining head ornamented with gypsum,

"Is slowly ascending o'er *Waieri*, the sand-hills.

"*Aumin thieamow*, Remain and tell us, *Purrurie*, what see you, *Ooyellala*, beneath you?

"The red-ochre hunters, *Wolkapurrie*.

"The braves who have carried *Murulyie*, the red-ochre, hither, *Wilchrena*, are fearsome!"

Here the men and women burst in with a chorus of one word, dwelling on the last two syllables:—

"*Muracherpū-nā*, We are groping in the dark."

The old singer continues:—

"Quiet is *wathararkuna*, the south wind; but *gnapou kouta*,

"The noise of the waters reaches us.

"The *ko-ning-chteri*, the noisy gnats,

"*Chaudachanduna kuriunia*, are whispering over the spinifax (spiny grass)."

Chorus: "*Muracherpū-nā*."

"Thou dancest as *kintallo*, the shrimp,

"As o'er *Kuldrie*, the salt-lake, thou risest.

"*Kouta*, the waves, *koolkamuna*, dance round you,

"*Apoouna*, *Apoouna*, bathing thy face.

"*Murieami mungarina*, farewell, thou silent one!

"*Mungamarow mungara*, let my soul speak!"

Chorus: "*Mungamarow mungara!*"

As the last vibrations of the chorus die away, the aged vocalist suddenly turns, and, filled with the spirit of prophecy, cries aloud in a different tone of voice, "The strangers are coming," and then proceeds

to march rapidly up and down beneath the *Walke* trees, his limbs quivering with excitement, and his staring eyeballs almost flashing with the wild madness of intoxication.

"I hear them crush the *Yedede* with their feet," he howls. "No more shall our women gather the food-seed of *Warrangaba*." Then stopping, and raising his arms, he continues in a lower tone: "High above my head soars the hawk *Kerrek-i*, laughing as he smells the slaughter." Then mournfully, as he goes on with his promenade: "No more shall the emu seek the *Nunyakaroo* for its young ones. Both the *Yeraga* and *Galga* will disappear from the land. What does *Tounka*, the crayfish, whisper in the waters of *Palieu?* Why does *Mol-la*, the crab, cry *Kow-wah!* come here! *Kow-wah!* come hither?"

The old man goes on marching and gesticulating, as he continues his prophetic lament; and the frightened boys, huddling together near the women, have ceased to laugh, and can hardly breathe with terror. The mothers hug their fat little offspring closer to their breasts, and dismay is pictured on all faces save that of the travelled bearer of the dreadful news. He had already owned to feeling timid, when two days since he found himself alone in the proximity of the dreaded white-faced devils from the south, of whose cruelty and far-reaching lightnings he had heard account on his travels. But he is with his friends and brethren now, he thinks, and besides, the newcomers will not arrive at the village yet awhile, perhaps not at all. The white-faced ones were not always victorious either; he had heard of a party of them, who had been on a slave-making expedition,

being attacked, and their prisoners rescued, at Congabulla Creek, to the south-east. To-morrow the signal fires could be lighted, and the whole tribe collected for a grand consultation upon the subject of the invaders. Three hundred braves could surely defy the handful of approaching *Purdie* (locusts). The *Pulara* (women who collect the braves and hunters together) should start at day break. Just as the thinker's meditations gave birth to a more hopeful view of things, the old prophet of evil ends his harangue from sheer exhaustion, and sinks theatrically upon the sandy soil, lying there motionless in a state of coma.

Nearly every emergency produces its hero. Stepping forward into the open space before the other natives, bold-hearted Deder-re-re, of the red stripes, expresses aloud his hopes and plans, and winds up with a kind of nasal chant, that only a few of his audience—wonderful linguists as most of them are—can understand, as it is of southern origin, and in the language of the Warangesda tribe of New South Wales. The words have, as in most native songs, a hidden meaning,—a *double entendre*,—and in this case they are intended to illustrate the fact that a tribe is safest when its members are collected, or "rolled together," much after the manner of the fable of the bundle of sticks. The song sung and explained has a visibly cheering effect upon all. At the risk of being tiresome, we place the words before our readers, with a fair translation of it, as another example of Australian aboriginal poetry:—

"*Chūul'yu Will'ynu,*
Wallaa gnorœ:e

Chillœ binuœ aa gna,
Kinūnœa gnūuraœ jeeau
Chiœba-a gnūutata."

Chorus: "*Kirrœgirrœ, kirrœgirrœ Leeaa gna .*"

TRANSLATION.

"The porcupine has fiery spikes,
Burning like the fire-stick,
Surely some one is pinching me,
Softly, as a sister pinches her brother,
But I am safe, safe beyond danger
Grinning, grinning, grinning, are my teeth."

The men now begin to discuss the matter in hand in a low voice, the old patriarch still lying upon the ground meanwhile; and a strange, wild group they form in the firelight, as they squat round in various attitudes. The women and boys now retire to the hut-crowned hill above the river flat. The heavenly peacefulness of the night scene, with the star-spangled sheet of water lying silent in its dark fringe of verdure; the purple dome above, pierced with the golden eyes of native deities; and the tremulous cries of various night-prowling birds and beasts, softened and sweetened by distance,—all seems in curious contrast to the anxious faces of the little community.

A woman wearing the *Bilpa* forehead ornament of kangaroo teeth is sitting at the door of one of the gunyahs on the hill, with a child in her arms. The hut, which is exactly like all the others in the group, —and for the matter of that all within two or three hundred miles,—is built of sticks, which have been stuck into the ground at the radius of a common centre, and then bent over so as to form an egg-shaped

cage, which is substantially thatched on top and sides with herbage and mud. The door, on opening, faces the least windy quarter, namely, the north. Reclining against the portal is the satin-skinned native mother, who, dark as night, has the beautiful eyes, teeth, and hair of her race. She is gazing at the fat little man-animal on her lap by the light of an anti-mosquito fire-stick which she gracefully holds above her, and the group would form as beautiful a model as any artist could wish for to illustrate that affectionate adoration for their offspring which is the pleasing attribute of most mothers, civilized or uncivilized, all over the world. A slenderly formed boy, of about eight years of age, kneels by her side, amusing his baby brother with a toy boomerang that he has that day won as a prize, in the throwing game of *Wuæ Whuuitch*, with his fellows. The woman is singing the chorus of the chant with which the villagers have that day welcomed the returning ochre-trader, her husband :—

"*Mulka-a-a-a-wora-a-a,*
Yoong-arra-a-a Oondoo-o-o
Ya Pillie-e-e-e Mulka-a-a-a
Angienie,
Kooriekirra-a-a ya-a-aya."

TRANSLATION.

"Put colour in the bags,
Close it all round,
And make the netted bag
All the colours of the rainbow."

But leaving the peaceful village for a time, let us turn our mental night-glass towards a point four miles down the river's course. Here the stream, having left

the rocky, sandstone country, rushes its spasmodically flowing waters, from time to time, between banks of alluvial mud. A rank growth of various herbs, rushes, and fair-sized gum-trees has arisen here from the rich soil, whose fertile juices are more often replenished by the river than that farther afield. It is very dark below the branches; but if the meagre star-light could struggle in sufficient quantity between the pointed leaves, we should be able to see upon the water's brim a strange mark in these solitudes, the footprint of a horse's hoof,—the first of its kind that has ever refreshed its parched and grateful throat in the little billybong before us.

The ochre-hunter was in error when he calculated the speed at which the strangers were approaching his village. He had seen only the pack-train, which was proceeding leisurely to Palieu water-hole. The invaders were squatter-explorers pushing northwards in the van of that great red wave of European enterprise that, set in motion by the land fever of the "Seventies," burst with a cruel and unbridled rush over the native lands lying north of the Cooper and Diamentina rivers.

Delighted with the Mitchell-grass and salt-bush country which the party had discovered a few days before, four of their number were now making a flying trip round in order to ascertain the extent of the "good country." Hearing from their trained native scouts of the village on the rocky water-hole, they have decided to disperse the dwellers therein after the usual fashion, that still obtains in Australia when land belonging to and inhabited by the weaker aboriginal race is being taken up.

A consultation is being held by the four whites in the shadow of a group of native plum-trees. The two scouts, both armed with Snider carbines, stand close by, and answer the questions put to them from time to time in the strange pigeon-English taught them by their masters. Each carries a tomahawk in the cartridge-belt that, fastened round his dark, oily waist, forms his only article of clothing.

"Well, it's too dashed early to go near them beggars yet, by least three hours," says one of the white men at last.

"And yet," he adds to himself, "it's risky not to get the job done, for if that blank, blank Englishman got scent of what I'm really after in pushing up here, he'd try his best to let the black devils escape. We'll go back," he adds aloud, with a curse, "to the old-man sand-hills by the clay-pan, where I sent Jackie back with the pack-horses. It won't do to stop here, or the black devils, curse 'em, will drop on us, you bet. So we'll retire and doss down for a couple of hours' camp—say till one o'clock. Take us an hour to reach the beggars; half-past two's the time to catch 'em sleeping."

Turning to one of his boys, he asks,—

"How many black beggars sit down alonger camp, Bingerie?"

Bingerie, who has been close to the village that our readers have just left, and on business not altogether unconnected, as country newspapers would say, with the proposed slaughter of its inhabitants, murmurs huskily in reply,—

"Mine bin think him plenty black fellow sit down longer camp. Big fellow mob. Plenty little beggar,

plenty pickaninny all about gunyah." The speaker's black face wrinkles up into a cruel, Satan-like grin, as he touches the tomahawk in his belt, the two actions boding no good for the said pickaninnies if he gets them in his clutches. Then glancing with cunning, obsequious eyes at his master's face, to try and catch through the darkness a facial expression of approval, he continues, "Mine see um plenty gin, plenty little beggar gin (little women, *i.e.*, girls); mine catch um, by'm-bye."

The white men laugh at this, and the "boss," flinging a stick of "station-twist" to the black imp before them, gives him some directions.

"Well, Bingerie, you black devil, there's some 'baccy for you. Now, you see that fellow star," point- to that part of the heavens where the constellation of Orion's belt was looking down from the calm Australian sky upon the group of explorers,—"you see one, two, three fellow star. All the same star longer brandy bottle."

"Me know," murmurs the black "boy," with a smile of pleasant recollections crossing his attentive features for an instant.

"White fellow go alonger gunyahs, when three fellow star catch 'em that fellow branch. Big fellow hoot then, eh! you black limb of Satan, you!"

The black "boy"—all aboriginal male servants of Australians are called "boys," regardless of the age to which they have attained—regards the overhanging branch, and, mentally gauging the time it will take for the stars indicated to reach it on their track westward ho! across the heavens, grunts "Me know," and slinks off as noiselessly as a cat after sparrows, and

presently reappears with another attendant sprite, both of them being mounted on wiry little horses, and leading the steeds of the rest of the party.

"Now, Jim," says the man who has previously spoken to one of the others, as they ride over the sound-deadening sand, "we'll have a camp for a couple of hours, and then we'll proceed to give these cursed niggers something to let 'em know we're not to be trifled with. Curse their black hides, I've tried kindness, and I've tried the other thing; but curse me if it ain't less trouble to clear 'em off first thing,—I've always found it so, instead of having to shoot 'em in compartments afterwards." He laughs a short, hard, hac! hac! as he finishes, to which his companion responds with,—

"My trouble's about shooting of 'em hither way, curse their livers; all in the day's work. Safe to light up yet, capting?"

"Not yet," replies the "boss;" "round the sand-hill it'll be all right," and soon the party emerging from the brushwood, where a dark, spinifax-covered sand-hill overhangs an empty water-hole, pipes are lit, and the horses given in charge of the "boys;" the whites lying down for a spell, for they have ridden many weary miles that day.

Let us return to the village. Whilst we have been away, two braves have arrived at the water-hole with a message-stick for the head man of the village from the Eta-booka branch of the tribe. This curious means of communication consists of a piece of wood about five inches long—the half of a split length of a small branch. On the flat side a number of transverse notches have been cut with some rather blunt tool,

probably a flint-knife. The larger cuts denote the names of men and places; the smaller are symbols of sentences. The message, which is soon read, is to the effect that Eta-booka people have seen the white strangers whose approach has alarmed the Paree-side villagers; and finishes by proposing a "meeting of the clans" for the next day. A reply message is determined on, manufactured, and despatched by the trusty runners, who start homewards with rapid feet, happy in the possession of a small piece of ochre each, with which they intend to beautify themselves at the "full dress" meeting to be held.

The thought of combination and safety on the morrow now sends the villagers, tired with the excitement of late events, to their gunyahs on the hill; and soon slumbering, they do not see the fateful fall of myriads of *Ditchiecoom aworkoo*, shooting stars, that takes place at one o'clock. Deder-re-re is restless, however, in his smoke-filled wurley; and, half awake, dreams he is on one of his distant expeditions, and that the southern night-owl is screeching to its mate, as it flits past him on its ghostly wings. Suddenly he wakes. He listens, with upraised head. Yes, there is no mistaking it; the cry he heard in his dreams comes to his ears once more. *Creek-e-whie, creek-e-whie*, this time from the back of the hill. It is answered by a somewhat similar call from the water-hole below. A southern bird up here; and two of them. Trained hunter-warrior that he is, Deder-re-re takes in the situation in an instant. Foes are at hand, probably the dreaded white devils; and are surrounding the camp, signalling their position to each other, before the final attack, by imitating the

cries of a night-bird. Smiling to himself at the foolish mistake of the enemy in using the note of a bird foreign to the district, he prepares for action. A touch and a whispered word to the wife of his bosom, and he slinks out of the gunyah, crawling on noiseless hands and knees to warn his fellows in the other huts. His sharp sense of hearing, made doubly powerful now that all his savage heart holds dear is in peril, distinguishes the crushing of branches close by. Only white men could be the cause of that, he instinctively guesses. A passing dingo or emu would brush by the branches, and a black foe would make no noise whatever. It is too late for resistance. He must alarm the camp openly and effectively at once, and perhaps his loved ones may escape in the general excitement. A bright idea, heroic as ingenious, suddenly strikes him. If he can get the enemy down by the river-flat to chase him, and at the same time make noise enough to wake his brethren, perhaps the majority of the latter will be able to reach the water-hole, their only chance of escape, through the gap thus formed in the circle of foes. With a fearful yell, he therefore springs to his feet, and bounds down the rocky side of the hill, sending a rattling avalanche of stones all round him as he goes, and reaches the flat below. Here the white "boss," having arranged his men, is taking up his position for potting the black fellows as they make for the water, as his long experience in taking up "new country," and knocking down the inhabitants thereof, has taught him they are sure to do. The cool-headed white man hears Deder-re-re's yell, and can just see him as he bounds past the smouldering fire towards him. A snap-shot

rings through the air, and the black fellow, springing upwards, falls dead upon the red-hot embers, crushing and fanning them into a sudden blaze, that shows the dark, flying forms of the villagers rushing towards the water-hole. Now ring the short, sharp carbine shots through the still morning air! Now whistling swan-shot from fowling pieces buzz through the falling leaves! Wild shrieks, deep groans, the scream of frightened birds, the plunge of swimmers in the water, and all the fearful turmoil of a night surprise! Where lately the silent brushwood hooded over its dark image in the lake, the leaves blush ruddily with the sudden blaze of bursting stars of flame, as the white men fire upon the swimmers in the water-hole.

Then comparative quiet again. The opening scene in the act of bloodshed is almost as soon over as begun, and then the fearful work of despatching the wounded commences. The whites leave this job to their black accomplices, and retire to the gunyahs on the hill, to mount guard over those who are giving the *coup de grâce* to the unfortunate wretches writhing on the flat below. Well do they know that their "boys" will miss no opportunity of painting those already dripping tomahawks of a still deeper tint. Brought from a far-off district, and believing it to be perfectly legitimate for them to kill their black brethren if belonging to another tribe, their savage natures, moreover, trained to the awful work, they glory in a scene like this. The rapid and sickening thud, thud of their small axes, right and left, at last ceases as the early blush of dawn begins to break behind the weird hill to the eastward. The mangled

bodies of some thirty men, women, and children lie here and there amongst the broken bushes and half-burnt gunyahs ; and the wild dack skimming down on to the once more placid bosom of the little lake, rise again with frightened squeaks on seeing the ghastly objects on its red-frothed banks.

"Didn't do so badly," says the white man whom the others address as "boss," as he looks down from the rugged hill. "Got more than half the black devils. But I'll bet their friends won't come near this water-hole, at any rate, for a few years to come. No spearing of 'fats' here, when they come down for a 'nip.'" Then turning his jolly, sensual face towards one of the other men, as they shoulder arms and prepare to return to their horses, he asks, with a laugh, "What did you do with the little gin you caught?"

"Give her ter Nero (one of the 'boys') when we was tired of each other. She's begun a long 'doss' (sleep)," he continues, with a grin that puckers up one side of his cruel face, winking at the "boss" at the same time with a bloodshot eye; "guess she's tired with the fun she had. Saw her lying precious still jess now, heac! heac!"

The two other white men are gone on in advance a little bit with the "boys," being glad to quit the place. Now that the excitement is over, they begin to find it unpleasant. They have not seen enough frontier service with squatters yet to harden their hearts sufficiently to joke at the scene of a holocaust, although when the water-hole is left behind a mile or two their fast succumbing consciences will be asleep.

"Yarraman (horses) come this way," suddenly cries one of the boys, and throwing himself upon the ground

to listen adds, "Two fellow Yarraman (two horses) come pretty quick."

The white party stand altogether on the flat, listening, for a few minutes, and then the less perfect auditory organs of the whites can distinguish the "property, property, property" of approaching horsemen. A couple of minutes more, and a rattle of brittle stones, followed by a brief plunging in the narrow part of the swamp close by, and two horsemen appear upon the grassy flat, and, bending upon their horses' necks to avoid the branches, ride through the shadows at a walking pace towards the men on foot. The first of the new-comers to appear in view is a black "boy" of the conventional type, save that he is better clothed than the usual station native, and wears a scarlet handkerchief, placed turbanwise, upon his head.

"I'll be hanged if I wasn't right about that blank Britisher!" says the "boss," angrily, out loud, as the second rider comes into view. "Why couldn't the beggar leave this part of the work to me if he doesn't like to do it himself, not go poking his nose after me wherever I go. But I don't care a cursed shake of a possum's tail if the beggar 'props' or not at it." He openly affirms his feeling of nonchalance, but in his heart he feels very uncomfortable,—which, seeing that the new-comer is his partner, who is to supply the necessary funds for stocking the new run with cattle, and for wages, rations, and fencing wire; and, moreover, since an important contract between them has just been broken by himself, his irritation is natural. "Curse me," he murmurs to himself, biting his lower lip, "if I'd waited till he'd got accustomed to what

the other fellows will do when they take up the country round us, and he found the niggers coming for beef on his own run, he'd soon have been the same as all of us."

The white rider comes up to the group. The broad brim of his dirty, white felt hat, turned up in front, so as not to obscure his view, shows the stern and severe face of a man of about forty-five. He holds a revolver in his sword hand, is spare of form and sinewy, and wears a thick brown beard. The bosom of his grey shirt flaps opens as he moves; and the long stirrup leathers he uses show at once that he has learned riding elsewhere than in Australia.

"Morning, Sam," says the "boss," as the horseman pulls up, "anything wrong at Bindiaka?"

The other men look on curiously, as if they expected a wordy warfare and were waiting for the first shot.

"Have not come from the camp," answers Dyesart, for it is our hero's uncle that is eyeing his partner keenly as he replies to the latter's question.

"I had a look round the big flat to the eastward after I left you yesterday. Came across a friendly lot of natives at a place," pointing to his "boy," "Saul says they call Narrabella. Coming back cut your tracks. Lost them on the 'gibbers' (stones) last night. What have you been doing up here? No row with the natives, I hope? Heard rifle shots early this morning."

"We camped here last night," replies the last speaker's partner, turning to avoid the keen eyes fixed upon him; "niggers attacked us, if you want to know."

"You camped here, leaving your horses and tucker (food) behind," sneers Dyesart, disgusted with the palpable lie.

He continues after a moment,—

"Well, I'll find out for myself what's been your game. I'm afraid I can guess what has happened." He rides past without another word into the arena of death, where a few crows are already at work upon the bodies. Dyesart has seen many awful sights in his time, and is expecting one now, but the scene overpowers him for a minute with mingled feelings of horror, pity, and indignation.

Speaking a few words to Saul, who is an educated "boy" he had obtained from the good missionaries of Rillalpininna on his way up from Adelaide, he fastens the horses to a tree, and proceeds on foot to examine the wounds and positions of the corpses.

"A nigh[illegible]rprise," he says to himself; "I thought as much. The third of the sort I have seen in two years, and yet those smiling squatters one meets down sout[illegible] swear through thick and thin these things occur only in the imagination of the missionaries. What cowardly devils!" he adds aloud, as he stands before the body of the pretty young mother of Deder-re-re's children. One dark, shapely arm still clasps the baby form; the other, crushed and mangled with attempting to ward off the blows of some weapon, rests upon the gory, horror-stricken face. Both the woman's skull and that of her child have been smashed in with axe blows. Over each body in turn the sinewy form of "Doctor" Dyesart bends, as he searches for any wounded that may still

be alive for him to succour. But the work has been too well done. Thirty yards away the boss's black boys are peering over the rocks, wondering what he is doing. Dyesart is so different to the other white men that have come within their ken. On the road up, his curiosity with regard to rocks and stones, and his perennial kindness to them and all the other "boys," has often much amused them. Presently one of these "boys" spies out a body amongst the rocks he has not noticed before. It is that of a young boy,—the one that played with his baby brother, as it lay in its mother's arms, last night. The child's thigh-bone has been broken by a snider-bullet, which has torn a frightful hole in the limb's tender flesh. He is alive and conscious. But with the firm nerves that he has inherited from his hardy ancestors, he lies motionless, feigning death, though his soul is racked with agony and fear, and his mouth is dry and burning with a feverish thirst. Saul is helping his master in the search, and sees the movements of the other "boys," as they proceed to despatch the victim they have hitherto overlooked. A hurried sign to "Massa Sam," and the long barrel of a "Colt" rests for an instant on a steady left arm. Then the combined noise of a yell and a revolver shot breaks the silence, followed by the ping of a bullet and the whir of rising crows. Dyesart has shown his wonderful skill with small arms on many a gold-field, but he never felt more satisfied with his shooting powers than on this occasion. The bullet, hitting the black boy's up-lifted tomahawk, hurls it from his half-dislocated wrist, and poor Deder-re-re's son still breathes. The wounded boy is attended to, and then

the question of what to do with him arises. He can scarcely be left behind, for his friends will hardly venture back to the water-hole for many days. In the meantime the horrible dingoes, crows, and ants would leave little of the original youth. Dyesart, too, wants a "boy" (as his nephew did long afterwards), as he must return Saul to the little mission station before long. So, after fastening a long branch to the child's side and injured limb as a splint, and fixing it securely with well-trained fingers by means of strips torn from his saddle-cloth and Saul's gaudy head-gear, Dyesart makes the little black body look like a newly "set up" skin in a taxidermist's laboratory. Little Deder-re-re, junior, who will figure in future in these pages as Dyesart's "boy" Billy, is then placed upon the saddle in front of Saul; and the waterbags being filled and suspended from the horses' necks, the two riders proceed across the dreary sand-hills towards the junction of two wet-season creeks, where the explorers' camp and "station" preliminaries have been established. It is late in the evening when the two horsemen, having been delayed by their wounded burden, reach the white tents, where the "boss" and his subordinates have previously arrived; and after a silent meal of damper and duck, Dyesart says a few words to his partner, as the whites sit round the fire smoking.

"I am returning south to-morrow," he begins. "As it is no use, I suppose, telling fellows like you what I think of your cowardly last night's work, all I'll say is that I feel justified in withdrawing from the arrangement we made between us about taking up land. When a man finds he's made a contract with

another fellow who doesn't carry out his part of the arrangements, he's right in getting out of it."

"I don't want to shirk my part of the agreements," growls the "boss."

"Part of the contract," calmly continues Dyesart, "between us was that all collisions with the natives were to be avoided if possible,—I quote correctly, don't I?"

"Curse me if I know or care," comes the muttered reply.

"And that no 'dispersing,' 'rounding up,' or employment of the Native Mounted Police was to be allowed on any new country we should take up. You have broken this part of the contract several times, I believe, but this time once too often. I return south immediately, and if you try to hold me to my agreements with you,—but no, I don't think you'll be such a fool as that. You fellows have made me more orthodox than I was, at any rate," he says, rising; "I never believed really in a material hell till to-day, but now I'm sure there must be one for such cowardly devils as you are."

Next day Dyesart leaves, with his "boys" and horses, without bidding farewell to the others of the party, who, though they wouldn't confess it for the world, are sorry to lose him with his jolly songs and genial temperament.

* * * * * *

And this was how Dyesart obtained his faithful henchman Billy. He had the little savage educated with white children in New Zealand, where the natives have equal rights with the Europeans, and he flourished into a bright, trustworthy young scholar,

like one of those that any of the half-dozen struggling mission stations of Australia can produce, in refutation of the popular Australian saying that the aborigines "are mere animals, and should be treated as such."

Billy accompanies his preserver on all his later wanderings through the Australian wilds; and lastly, after laying the remains of his beloved master beneath the soil, he starts off across the desert with the treasured message, which when delivered in safety to the nearest white man, he sinks unconscious and exhausted upon the ground. Billy thus becomes one of the main instruments of Providence whereby our hero is set upon his journey and these pages written.

We close this chapter with a saying of the late explorer's that expresses his views on a somewhat mooted point: "The true definition of civilization, it seems to me, is a state of social unselfishness, combined with useful learning. Knowledge and works that are antagonistic to this state of society, I do not believe to be properly designated as civilized."

CHAPTER IX.

MURDER, MADNESS, AND MELODY.

"On him attends the blue-eyed martial maid."
—HOMER'S *Odyssey.*

ON board the swift coastal steamer *Eidermere*, as she cuts through the tepid waters of the Molle passage with her knife-like stem, on her way to the northern Queensland ports. The coral-reef-sheltered expanse of waters is quite oily in appearance, so perfectly calm is its mother-of-pearl surface, which, crimson, blue, and yellow with evening tints, reflects a perfect topsy-turvy picture of the purple, pine-covered, pointed islets and grand, shadowy hills of the mainland, that make this spot the most charming point upon the Australian coast.

There is really no excuse for even the most susceptible sufferer from *mal de mer* on board to remain below. Consequently the whole "contingent" of passengers, saloon and steerage, are lolling about on deck in various easy attitudes, enjoying the ever-changing beauties of the glorious sunset picture before them, and revelling in the comparative coolness of the hour.

On the raised "first-class" end of the vessel the usual specimens of humanity one always sees on board a passenger-steamer, in whatever part of the world you travel, are present. The over-dressed, noisy bagmen of wine and spirit houses are there; the quiet, canny representative of a pushing "Glascy" soft-goods manufacturer; two or three Jewish mine-owners; a sprinkling of Scotch storekeepers; an Irish doctor; a German inn-keeper; and a select circle of long-limbed members of those upper circles who belong to the genus termed in Australian parlance "silver-tailed," in distinction to the "copper-tailed" democratic classes.

Here a thin-faced clergyman, on the way to his missionary labours amongst the Papuans, stands by his fresh, young Victorian wife, pointing out to her the various "outward and visible signs" that they have at last entered the tropics, as the trembling screw hurries them past lazy-looking turtles, long rows of algæ seed, and occasional broken branches of mangrove and pandanus.

Over there the courteous captain of the ship, dressed in spotless linen suit, is pointing out to a lady passenger "the identical spot on that particular island, my dear madam, on the dark red rocks that lift themselves out of the deep water, where Captain Cook landed in 1770." The gallant skipper, who is a well-known antiquary and geologist, proceeds to promise he will some day show his fair friend—who, by-the-bye, does not appear very interested—the cairn erected by the same wonderful navigator near Cooktown, and lately discovered by himself.

Down near the forecabin a few greasy-looking

stewards are dawdling over the job of emptying overboard sundry trayfuls of *débris* from the saloon tea table, enjoying meanwhile the fresh air, ere the "boss" shall call them back into the stuffy atmosphere of their principal sphere of labours.

"Golly!" says a small boy to one of these marine waiters, as the former stands on tiptoe to look over the bulwarks, "Golly! but them kiddies round the news office, guess they'd give 'alf of their papers fur that lot o' grub you chucks away, mister."

Without waiting to see if his remark is understood or even noticed, Don—for it is Claude's little friend—dives down, and, seizing a fat brown puppy that is lolling against his legs, lifts it up to see "them gooses" that are skimming past the ship. Above the group, on the saloon deck, is Claude, leaning against one of the boats, and trying to listen to a dark, elderly man, dressed in a "slop"-made grey suit and soft felt hat, as he spins him a yarn of the Palmer diggings, commencing,—

"'Spose you've heard of poor Jack Straw, who was killed by the natives under his waggon?" etc.

Claude, to tell the truth, is neither interested in the tale nor the scenery; and when the former is finished, and the historian has been dragged off to take a hand at "cut-throat" euchre, our young friend relapses into a reverie.

Eager as he was to follow out the instructions of his dead uncle until the steamer reached Brisbane, he cannot disguise from himself the fact that since that day his enthusiasm has greatly cooled. Something happened during the few hours he spent on shore in the capital of Queensland which has disturbed his set

purposes considerably. Struggle as he may, he feels a longing he can hardly understand to return to Morecombe Bay,—a mysterious tugging at his heart strings that grows stronger as the steamer rattles its way northwards. Any lady readers who may honour these pages with their perusal will already have guessed correctly that young Angland has been attacked with the same sort of complaint that caused sorrowful young Werther to make such an egregious stupid of himself in Göethe's marvellous histoirette.

A pretty girl has flattered his vanity by apparently particularly admiring him, and, man-like, he cannot help feeling that she shows a sense above all other girls in so doing. The birth of love in man is generally after this fashion. True admiration, whether signalled by word or smile, is the expression of adoration by an inferior to a superior being. And as man's hereditary instincts teach him unconsciously to wish to succour and protect the weaker of his immediate species,—for it is probably owing greatly to this desire that the human race has worried its way along to the front seat in creation,—the usual predilection strong men (physically or otherwise) have for mating with weak women, and *vice versâ*, is easily explained.

So Claude develops at first a simple desire to shield this forlorn maiden. He feels somehow that she must be forlorn, although he does not,—and he feels ashamed to own it, even to himself,—he does not even know her name. She may be engaged to marry a man who will not appreciate her. What a sickening feeling comes over him at the thought. What a pity the days of the *duello* are over, and all that kind of thing. Surely she could never have looked into anybody's soul before,

as she did into his, with those deep blue orbs,—those eyes that have floated before him day and night since his little Brisbane adventure ; her little dimpled face, flushed with excitement and pretty pursed-lipped anger, as he first saw it; or that angel look of mute entreaty as those glorious eyes shot burning arrows into his brain as he turned to her assistance, that would have spurred him to any rashness, much less knocking down a clumsy lout of a drayman. Yes, permanently nailed upon the wall of his mind's photographic studio is the sunlit picture of the neatly dressed *petite* figure, with the halo of golden hair, that held out a tiny, faultlessly-gloved hand to him as she said good-bye, and, thanking him for his service, left him half-stupefied with a last glance of those glorious eyes.

This is Claude's first affair, and one must not be too hard on him. Some men take love easily, as others do the measles. Some young fellows, on the contrary, have their best natures all over one grand eruption, which leaves their soul's cuticle marked for ever, for good or bad, as the circumstances of the case direct. But really the spooney season is a more important time in a young man's life than it is generally considered. For there is little doubt that men (who have "felt the pain") look at womankind during the remainder of their lives through spectacles that are coloured rosy or grey, according to their happy or miserable experiences of "the sex," as represented by the particular cause of their *première grande passion*. But instead of stating our own opinions upon a matter that every healthy subject diagnoses for himself or herself in his or her own way, we had better proceed

to state at once that Claude had been "hard hit," and that the "pleasing punishment" was given under the following circumstances.

On the afternoon of the S.S. *Eidermere's* arrival at Brisbane, where she had to stay a few hours, Claude landed, and proceeded townwards from the region of great, busy wharves, behind which noisy steam-cranes were rattling and puffing at the cargoes of sundry vessels. At the gates of the steam-ship's company's yard the usual crowd, that always congregates in similar places to prey upon the freshly-arrived and perhaps sea-sick passengers, was there in force. Porters, cabmen, van-drivers, runners, and nondescript loafers of various sorts jostled each other and fought for the luggage of the travellers. Pushing his way through these, he soon found himself in the comparatively quiet neighbourhood of the public gardens, and was just about to enter them when he heard a great "how d'ye do" close at hand. This was occasioned by the dusty scuffling of two dogs, one of which was shrieking as only a small dog can shriek when in fear of immediate disintegration at the hands, or rather teeth, of a larger canine animal. Above all rose hoarse yells of delight from a circle of the city's *gamin* who were enjoying the scene. Claude would have proceeded on his way, after turning his head to ascertain the cause of the uproar, but for a sight that attracted his sudden attention.

The small dog evidently belonged to a young lady, who, alone and unprotected amongst the crowd of roughs, was courageously but injudiciously trying to save her tiny four-footed dependent by beating the big dog with her parasol. Hurrying up to her assistance,

Angland saw a burly, red-faced man, apparently the owner of the large animal, step forward and roughly snatch the fair one's weapon of attack from her vigorous little hands, giving vent to his indignant feelings at the same time by expressing his intentions of "seein' fair play," and "lettin' no blessed gal hurt 'is dawg." Claude just saw the little figure with clasped hands, and heard the faltering appeal for help to the brutal bystanders, as he burst through the crowd. To him, accustomed to wild-boar hunting in the dark Hunua ranges near his home, the job of making a fierce pig-dog "take off" from its quarry had often been an every-day occurrence when training his canine hunters. It was comparatively an easy work to choke the big, over-fed cur, and make it let go its hold of the little ball of palpitating floss beneath it in the dust. To give the large dog a sounding kick that lifted it half-a-dozen yards away, whence it slunk off homewards, was the next act; and the whole thing was done ere the disappearing mongrel's master could recover from his open-mouthed surprise. Claude was stooping to pick up the young lady's dishevelled pet, when he saw the red-faced man "coming for him," and was just in time to receive that gentleman's most prominent features upon his own large and rather bony left fist. Angland knew that in a row with those modern mohocks, Australian larrikins, you must "hit to kill," as Dick, his old home chum and "tutor in pugilism," used to call it. So, following his defensive blow with one of attack, he instantly brought his right fist forward, so as to knock loudly on that thinner portion of his adversary's skull which is situated just above the approximation of the jaw and ear,

dropping him as neatly as the proverbial bullock. The crowd of roughs around, who would have half-killed and afterwards robbed our hero if he had been worsted in the encounter, drew back on seeing the big man fall, and respectfully made way for Claude, as, holding the little dog in his arms, he escorted the lady to whom he had been thus curiously introduced into the gardens, where she sank trembling on one of the seats.

"Oh, how good of you! How brave of you! I can't thank you enough! Oh, I didn't know *what* to do! Poor Fluffy, you're not hurt much, my darling, are you?" (this to the dog). "You know I'd just landed from the ferry-boat, and I wanted to go to the post-office; and I'm always afraid of those horrible men and their nasty dogs when I come over. Poor little doggie," as the worsted ball of a creature continues to wail softly. "How *can* I thank you!" And all the while the sweet little smiles, that were impartially divided between the dog and the man, were working a state of havoc in Claude's heart, the completeness of which even the larrikins could hardly have imitated upon the young man's body.

If the young lady had been plain, or even a little less enchanting, Claude would probably have found out a good deal about her in no time. But the bright little maiden, with the golden hair and dark, melting eyes, bewildered him with suppressed emotion, and when she prayed that he wouldn't think her ungrateful if she said he mustn't come with her further than the post-office, and then when they arrived there tripped off, after giving his hand a timorous little pressure with her tiny fingers, he felt as if he had just

learned what heaven was and had lost all chance of it for ever.

He was inclined to rush madly after her and ask sundry questions, but by the time his thoughts had arranged themselves for action, his goddess had disappeared, and a white-shako'd policeman was watching him suspiciously with gin-and-watery eyes, as a possible slightly inebriated stranger whom he could drag to durance vile.

So Claude walked vaguely about the town (noticing nothing of it), vainly hoping all the while to see her once more, and, barely catching his boat, became surly for the rest of the evening.

"Turning in" early, he dreamed a lot of kaleidoscopic nonsense about fighting red-faced men with small-gloved hands, who changed into laughing-eyed girls and scraggy dogs by turns, and finally burst into pieces, looking like minute larrikins, with a noise resembling the rattling of the rudder-chains, whose jangle overhead awoke him every morning.

And this was how it came about that our young friend wasted his time and opportunities of learning about the wonderful land he was approaching from his fellow-passengers, and remained for a few days in an almost perpetual state of reverie, consisting of alternate pleasing remembrances and self-objurgations at not having ascertained "her" name. His "maiden meditations," however, daily became fewer and farther between, and the particular one that cost him the loss of his mate's yarn, and most of the lovely scenery that lies between Whitsunday Island and the mainland, was abruptly brought to a close by the Irish doctor aforesaid, who, having been a quondam associate of

Claude in New Zealand, came to re-open a subject of conversation between them that had interested our hero considerably before the Brisbane catastrophe.

"Well, me boy, is it brooding over the mimery of the dusky daughters of fair Ohinemuri ye've left far behind you in far Zealandia, you are, or has some Australian rose

> "Put your ring on her finger
> And hers through your nose"?

And the gay, dapper little Dublin licentiate winds up his bit of good-natured banter with a piece of impromptu verse, as he seats himself by Claude's side.

Why is it that Irish doctors are, as a class, the most fascinating of men? Is it because in addition to their attractive mother wit and natural kindness of heart, their glorious profession makes them also better judges of mankind than the ordinary outside barbarian, by teaching them the "why" of human sayings and doings, where every-day folk only observe the "how"? We don't know. But at any rate, Dr. Junelle, as a representative of the class, was just the right man in the right place to charm Claude out of his moody thoughts.

Noticing immediately, with quick medical eye, from the slight flush of confusion that rises on Claude's face, that his carelessly thrown conversational fly has hooked the real cause of the young man's thoughts, he proceeds to cover his mistake by plunging at once into the theme that he knows will interest his friend. Dr. Junelle has travelled through a great deal of the little-known and less-populated districts of Australia

called generally the "outside" country. Whilst moving amongst the frontier settlers of these parts, as the medical referee of one of the great assurance associations, he had ample opportunity for studying the effect of some of the wildest forms of bush-life upon the human mind and body, and has made an especial study of hereditary characters developed by the off-spring of Australian backwoodsmen.

"I've got a bit of news for you, my dear fellow," he continues; "in troth, that's the reason I'm afther bothering you this minute. Did you happen to notice that tall young fellow who joined us at Mackay? Sure it's himself that's standing there with his swately embroidered forage-cap stuck on the north-east end of his face, wid a military air an' no mistake. You did, eh? Well, and he's an officer in the Corps I was telling you about. I'll introduce you by-and-by, if it's to your liking. He'll be glad to give my Royal Geologist here any information he can, but don't you go indulging in any of the caustic remarks about his profession that you did to me when I told you some of my experiences of the work of the Black Police. No, *cushna machree*, remember the swate little Irish melody, '*Tha ma machulla's na foscal me*,' which, being translated literally, means nothing at all but 'I'm ashlape and moinde ye don't thread on me tail.' For it's myself that knows what power and influence these same gentlemen have in the north, and our friend over there would pay any grudge he had against you on your humble servant, that's me. Now it's live and let live, say I, although I *am* a doctor, and I'm after making a fortune as soon as ever I can, me boy, and then, hey! for the bosky dells of scrumptuous

New Zealand, and divil a bit I'll pine any longer in this confounded tropical climate."

"Well, doctor," answered Claude, laughing, "I'll be just real glad, as our American friends say, to have a chat with the hero of a hundred fights over there, and I'll promise I won't offend him. I don't expect all these inspectors are the savage, Nero-like demons you and Williams make out. He looks quiet enough, in all conscience. By-the-bye, do you really mean to settle down in our tight little island of the south some day or other?"

"You can lay your last dime on that, me boy, an' sure I won't be long before I'm there, if the spalpeens don't spoil me honest fields of labour for a year or two by going in for those cursed Saxon innovations that no medical man with an honest pride in the rights of his profession likes to see about him,—drainage and temperance. But, nonsense aside, just to show you that 'it's the truth I'm telling you' when I say the officers of the Black Police,—or Native Mounted Police, as the Corps is officially termed,—that these fellows hold a good deal of social power up north, I'll spin you a yarn if you'll promise you'll not go off to sleep. It's all about a quandary a friend of mine—a Dublin man—was put in, and how he had to knock under to the powerfully persuasive police of his district.

"At a mining township not far from that 'rocky road to Dublin' you will have to follow, I expect, on your way up country, there used to be a lot of natives employed about the houses of the miners. There were 'batteries,' or something of the kind, in the place that employed a lot of men, and some twenty natives used to come into town every morning and work as hewers

of wood and drawers of water for the miners' wives. These niggers were as quiet and well-behaved as any in the colony, barring one I've got at home myself, who's always up to some divilmint. And they were all as well known as the *bodagh* on me father's own estate, which, botheration! was left to me uncle instead when me gran'father died. Now one day—all this happened about five years ago—an inspector of Black Police rides up to the town, all alone but for his regiment of 'black boys,' who came up some time after, and, showing a warrant for the arrest of certain blacks for murder of a stockman, asked, as politely as you please, of the townsfolk if they could inform him where these unauthorized vivisectionists were at present to be found. Divil a one of them was known in the place. But the good gentleman wasn't going to be beaten, and with the admirable zeal that had made an inspector of him determined not to return home with hands full of nothing. So my noble sends his 'boys' round the township, and they catch all the aboriginals who haven't run away the moment they saw the red-and-blue uniforms, and these were three or four 'buck' niggers, a very old chap, some native women, and a child or two. All these, mind you, Angland, were as well known, and better, than the Maories that help you with your maize at home."

"Didn't the miners object?"

"Yes, they did, but only a few men were about, the rest being at work. Those whites about the place showed the inspector that the natives he'd collared were working in the township at the time of the murder, but it was no good. Unfortunately, the local J.P., who was the owner of the batteries and mines

in the vicinity, and had made himself objectionable to the police of the district by doing his best to preserve the natives of the place, was absent, and no one liked to take the responsibility of making a stand against the law in the matter. So the niggers were hauled off. This was bad enough, sure, but the bitter part was to follow. I must stop for a moment to go on to tell you that it's a divil of a bother to bring home a conviction of murder against an aboriginal, through some of the judges having decided that it is illegal to try a man in a language of which he doesn't know a single decent word, barring a few swear-words he's heard used by bullockies, and drovers, and the like. So, finding this lion in the path of justice, the artful protectors of the public have hit upon another plan for arriving at the same desired end."

"What is that?" asks Claude.

"Sure the idea is 'just grand,' as my Scotch gardener says, and as easy to carry out as falling off a greasy log, and that's as nate as it's convanient. The plan is to let the prisoner have a chance of escaping when taking him to gaol, and promptly perforate him with bullets if he takes it or not."

"But that wouldn't work long. Too many witnesses, doctor. Sure to leak out some day."

"Not at all, me boy. The gentleman in charge, who is so anxious to save the Crown the expense of the trial, it's just himself that knows what he's about. His squad of 'boys' is composed of black fellows from various parts of Australia, who belong to different tribes, or factions, to tip it a rale Irish simile. On the top of a downright lovely, natural animosity for each other, which is only restrained by discipline,

these savages wearing the Government livery have been trained to commit every sort of atrocity at a word from their 'Marmee,' as they call the 'boss.' Should a 'boy' misbehave himself, turn rusty because he receives a flogging, or otherwise fail to please his master, that gentleman doesn't trouble to rason wid him; he has only to wink, as you may say, and it's a case of 'off wid his head,' for his black comrades are only too glad to be allowed to steal behind the *bocaun* of a boy and leave him pulseless, all alone wid himself behind a bush. These 'boys' are the only witnesses. But to come home to me story. The prisoners were marched off in an iligent line, or tied to a line, it don't much matter, and three miles outside the town they were neatly despatched, and left to amuse the crows and ants."

"But what did the townsfolk do?"

"Oh, they waited till the boss of the place came back, the J.P. I've been telling of, and that was the same afternoon. They told him all about it. Holy poker! there was the divil to pay, an' no mistake. 'Dripping mother!' he cried, 'I've never had a single instance of throuble wid the darkies of the place.' And then he went on to say, and he was telling the truth, mind ye, that he had been there, off and on, ever since he came, the first white man, to the district. And he told the miners how he feared the retaliation of the friends of the murthered creatures, and the consequent vendetta warfare that would ensue. And then the whole township, headed by the J.P., went out together by themselves, and found the place where the murtherers had left their victims; but divil a bit of them did they diskiver, barring their bodies stuffed

so full of bullets, I've bin told, that you couldn't see them but for the wounds outside.

"Well, a message was presently despatched to the resident magistrate of the nearest town."

"And with what result?" asks Claude.

"Nothing, save but that the artful police thereupon sent some of their 'boys' at night, who quietly burned the bodies to prevent identification. Next day the coroner arrives, all *dhrookin* wid heat, for he'd hurried a bit to oblige the J.P., who was a powerful man and commanded a lot of votes, and, moreover, was a 'bit of a lad' when vexed. Now my friend, the doctor that this tale's about, was a young man, just commencing practice, at the time, in the next town, and he was sent as an independent man, and one who was family docther of the gentleman who might get hanged over the matter, to see the bones and identify them as human. Before he left home, however, the Black Police officials 'got at him.' 'You're a young man in this same district,' they said, 'and you're not the gentleman to be afther taking the part of the black divils against your old friends you've just come to live amongst, let alone the fact that you're our district-surgeon, and the same for the City Police. And isn't your bread and butter dependent on the squatters and settlers round, who call us to do their dirty work for them and clean off the natives? Divil a one of the same but would shut you out if you interfered wid one of us. So, docther *asthor*,' they said in conclusion, 'see what you can do to help poor Dash out of the mess, for it's yourself will be called as a truthful witness at the inquest.'

"Well, this young friend of mine went and pleaded

that he could not tell if the bones were human remains or not, and the inquiry consequently dropped through."

"And did the inspector get off scot-free?"

"Well, not quite; 'though very like it,' as Mr. Pecksniff used to say. The J.P., as I said, was an influential man, and did his best to get the murderers punished. The inspector got sacked till the elections were over, just to keep our J.P. and the newspaper folk quiet. The 'black boys' too were brought to trial, but were released on the ground that they could not understand English, although they'd been years in the force, and English was the only medium employed in their conversations with each other, and their instructions and commands were always given in that language."

"Well, doctor, that incident rather reflects on the judges of the colony. But although I confess I can't altogether believe that such cruelty and gross miscarriage of justice does often happen in Queensland, yet what you say just bears out what Williams, my mining friend, says.

"He was on the Palmer gold-field, before it was the Palmer, you know, and he tells me that the blacks were safe enough to travel amongst till the settlers began to drive them from their water-holes and steal their women. Why, two fellows and himself travelled from Rockhampton to where Cooktown is now without any trouble from the natives, three years before the Palmer broke out."

"Yes, that's thrue for ye, but the older school of diggers were a mighty different lot to the rough lads that followed them. Many's the yarn I've had with

the old boys in the accident ward, for it's there they open their hearts as well as their mouths, for their medical attend[illegible] to pry into. But the species is growing scarce, the bhoy, and one may ask wid the swate poet,—

> "'Why is this glorious creature found,
> One only in ten thousand?'"

And here the doctor forsakes the light Irish tone he has hitherto assumed, which he calls his "visiting voice," and calmly settles down to smoke a cigar and answers his old friend's questions in a prosaic English conversation; honouring Claude, as he does but few, by throwing aside, for the nonce, those scintillating surroundings of synonyms that, like the gay flag at the live end of a lance, are generally employed by the doctor's countrymen in shielding the true point of their remarks from view. He continues, after a thoughtful pause:—

"After the first prospectors came those of whom Burns might have been thinking when he sang,—

> "'Man's inhumanity to man
> Makes countless thousands mourn.'"

"Well, doctor, it's true I haven't seen much of miners yet, but the only two I know are of the old school, and they certainly deserve the encomium you borrowed from Wordsworth. But, by-the-bye, I wanted to ask you, Do you remember that surveyor telling us about the permission given to a man, I forget his name, some years since, by the Queensland government, to shoot any aboriginal he came across, because his family had all been massacred by some

tribe whose land they had taken? a fact or a yarn of our friend's inventive pow

"Not a bit of it; true as logic, not the only case. Frazer was the man's name who had the permission given to him. Why, I travelled up here only two years since with a fellow who had a similar sort of 'license to kill.' He was going to some part of the Gulf" (of Carpentaria) "to revenge his brother's death by killing all the blacks he might come across. This Frazer went about for years shooting all and every native he could see, 'station boys,' warragals, or town blacks,—he was not very particular. It became a kind of mania with him; and at last, having killed a favourite boy of some influential squatter, there was a bit of trouble over it, and he had to leave off further sacrificing to the Manes of his people, except out of the way of newspaper folk.

"I once knew an inspector of police, who's dead now, who asked my advice professionally about himself. He said that after some years of this man-hunting, he found himself suffering from a growing morbid desire to kill everything alive he saw. He was distracted with an idea that haunted him, that he might be unable to restrain himself some day,—'run amuck' amongst the townsfolk or his own family; become a new kind of Helene Iegado, in fact."

"That's an admirable peg, doctor, to hang a sensational tale on,—a man haunted by the spectre of murder that he has raised himself, and which he fears will some day make him turn his assassin's knife against his own beloved."

"Oh, the disease is well known,—a phase of that called cerebral hyperæmia," continued the doctor;

"but it is rarer in the more civilized countries than elsewhere. I consider the mere fact of an educated, civilized man being able to continue to act the part of wholesale exterminator of human beings, at so much a month, is a *prima facie* sign of insanity of the type Sir Henry Parkes mentioned the other day to a deputation that waited upon him. Wonderful man, Sir Henry, knows everything. Have you seen him?"

"Yes, but what did he say to the deputation? He didn't call them lunatics to their faces, did he?"

"Not exactly, though he did so in a roundabout way. No, the deputation was composed of a number of good, soft-hearted, but also soft-headed, old fogies, who wanted to obtain a reprieve for the late-lamented murderer Hewett. 'Sir 'Enry,' as the *Bulletin* calls him, received them kindly, but sensibly refused to accede to their request, saying, "There are few persons save scientific inquirers who are aware of the number of people who take delight in acts of deliberate cruelty.' I think it is Dr. Marshall Hall, no, it's Andrew Winter, on 'Insanity,' says:—

"'It is the sustained departure from the normal condition of mind and mode of life which should suggest a grave suspicion of impending insanity. When we find a modest man become boastful, a lover of truth transmitted into an habitual liar, a humane individual suddenly become cruel, etc., we may be sure there is mental disturbance of a very severe character.'"

"Well, how about our friend over there, doctor? It's too dark now to look at him, but our young inspector doesn't seem to me either particularly mad or cruel."

"No, not yet, Angland, but I'd bet a thrifle, if I had it, that he hates his work. At present he's only a

'sub,' and if he's wise he'll not stick to it. No, he's not got the cruel facial-lines yet on his 'boyish front.'"

"Whilst you're on the subject of 'hatred, murder, and all uncharitableness,' will you tell me about the hereditary part of the business? Does a child always inherit the bloodthirsty proclivities of its parents, say, in the case of the father having been forced by circumstances to become a member of the Black Corps?"

"No, not always. It would be rough on the coming race of young bush-reared Australians if that was the case. But as the history of an animal is the history, to a great degree, of the race to which it belongs, as Darwin says, only he puts it in rather a better way, young humans have generally more or less savage instincts. Dr. Hammond, the great authority upon neurology, declares, in a paper upon the Whitechapel murders, that 'a desire to kill exists, to a greater or lesser extent, in the mind of every human being without exception.' Now civilization is the counteracting force. Parents living in the backwoods of Australia, and accustomed to few of the restraints of civilization and plenty of scenes of slavery and slaughter, are hardly likely to train their offspring in the paths of gentleness and peace."

"You think there is more in a child's associations and home training in determining its character than in its parentage?"

"My experience of children I have seen grow into men certainly points to that conclusion. But it is a somewhat difficult subject on which to gather reliable data, for in nine cases out of ten the child's parents are inculcating their own ideas of right and

wrong into their youngster during the years its expanding brain is most sensitive to permanent impressions. What an ordinary observer might put down to hereditary characteristics of the individual, may thus merely be due to tuition and example."

"You think the guardians of youngsters, then, more responsible for their children's sins than is generally supposed?"

"Well, the young of well-bred men and animals—I mean by that of parents whose ancestors have long been trained in and for certain purposes and habits—have possibly less inclination to revert to the original or wild type; but what a lady friend of mine in Auckland said to me once upon a case in point very well expresses my opinions. This lady told me that the mother of Hall called upon her once, bringing the afterward notorious poisoner with her, he being then a child. The youngster was a very spoilt child, and made a great disturbance at first; but by-and-by he became quiet, and left the room where the ladies were seated, to the great relief of both of them. Presently, on Mrs. Hall leaving, the two ladies went to look for the boy, and found him sitting on the lawn quietly watching the agonies of my friend's 'harmless, necessary cat,' all of whose paws he had carefully disarticulated with a small axe. My lady friend in telling me the incident said, 'I was very shocked, of course, but I can't say I was very surprised, for he was a thoroughly spoilt boy, and allowed to follow his own inclinations entirely; any child almost would become bad and cruel under those circumstances.' I believe, on the whole, she was right in her reasoning."

"And does this murdering of natives still go on,

doctor? I can't really get my mind to believe it?"

"Come here, Angland, to the light from the captain's cabin, and read this."

The doctor hereupon takes a South Queensland newspaper from his pocket. Claude reads as follows in the *Thargomindah Herald*, of date May 30th, 1889:

"(*From our Correspondents.*)

"THE RECENT MURDER BY BLACKS.

"In connection with the recent murder of Edmund Watson, and the attempted murder of James Evans, by blacks at Pine Tree Station, in the Cook district, it has been ascertained that the weapons used were a knife and axe, which were supplied by a station black boy. The perpetrators were caught next day. Every station on the Peninsula is contributing men to give the blacks a lesson."

"The perpetrators, who were station hands, were caught next day, as the telegram says, but I suppose the excuse for the slaughter of the whole tribe will not be missed."

"Well, they don't believe in Buddha's assurance that 'With mercy and forbearance shalt thou disarm every foe,' up here, evidently," says Claude, as the two men descend the companion ladder on their way to "turn in." Down below, an impromptu concert is being given by a cluster of young men round the piano at the end of the saloon, and the performers, who are mostly smoking, turn round constantly for refreshments to the interesting collection of bottles and

glasses on the table behind them. A grand finale chorus, composed of a conglomeration of "Ballyhooly" and "Finnegan's Wake," is just coming to a close, and the gifted accompanist, being only six bars behind the leading tenor, is hurrying up to be "in at the death" when Dr. Junelle's entrance is noticed.

A shout of recognition hails his appearance, and he is forthwith hauled off to the piano, where a dozen voices press him to "name his pison." Having refreshed himself with a foaming glass of "Irish Liminade," he protestingly complies with the loudly expressed desires of the company, and throwing himself into the spirit of the fun around him, as only an Irishman can do, at a moment's notice, forthwith bursts into melody.

"An' mind you handle your tongues at the chorus, bhoys, for I'm afther thinkin' it's me own will want breathing time betwane the varses, the kays are that sticky wid lime juice and tobacco."

Striking a few preliminary chords to silence the "bhoys" who are all shouting for different songs, the doctor forthwith "trates" the company to the following thoroughly "up country" song, well known in Northern Queensland, which goes to the ancient air of "The King of the Cannibal Islands."

"THE QUEER WAYS OF AUSTRALIA.

"Dick Briggs, a wealthy farmer's son,
To England lately took a run,
To see his friends, and have some fun,
For he'd been ten years in Australia.
Arrived in England, off he went
To his native village down in Kent,—

'Twas there his father drew his rent,
And many happy days he'd spent.
No splendid fine clothes on had he
But 'jumper 'n boots up to the knee,
With dirty Sydney 'cabbage tree,'—
The costume of Australia.

Chorus.

"Now when a fellow takes a run
To England for a bit of fun,
He's sure to 'stonish every one
With the queer ways of Australia.

"Now Dick went home in this array;
His sister came out, and did say,
'No, we don't want anything to-day,'
To her brother from Australia.
Cried he, 'Oh, don't you know poor Dick?'
They recognized him precious quick;
The 'old man' hugged him like a brick.
And there was feasting there that night,
For Richard was a welcome sight,
For each one hailed with great delight
The wanderer from Australia.

Chorus.

"The blessèd cattle on the farm
Regarded Dick with great alarm;
His swearing acted like a charm
When he gave them a 'touch' of Australia.
He could talk 'bullock' and 'no flies,'
And when he bless'd poor Strawb'r'y's eyes,
She looked at him with great surprise
As out of her he 'took a rise.'
'Fie, fie,' his mother said one day,
'What naughty, wicked words you say.'
'Bless you, mother, that's the way
We wake 'em up in Australia.'

Chorus.

"Dick went to London for a spree,
And got drunk there, most gloriously;
He gave them a touch of 'Coo-oo-ee!'
The bush cry of Australia.
He took two ladies to the play,
Both so serene, in dresses gay;
He had champagne brought on a tray
And said, 'Now, girls, come fire away.'
They drank till they could drink no more,
And then they both fell on the floor.
Cried Dick, as he surveyed them o'er,
'You wouldn't do for Australia.'"

Chorus.

Several other songs followed, and during the interval Claude makes the acquaintance of the young sub-inspector of police. He appears to be a particularly obliging kind of individual, although a little "stand-offish" till Angland explains his present position, when, as the doctor and Mr. Winze had both predicted, the words "Royal and Imperial" once more assisted him in his project. How to get the young officer to speak about his awful profession was the next question. Would he be chary about giving any information about it? But before Claude had time to puzzle himself much about arranging a plan of campaign, he was saved the trouble of sapping up carefully to the subject by the sub-inspector himself; for in response to a call for a song, he obliged the company with a "little thing of his own," illustrative of the prowess of his Corps during a night attack by natives upon a squatter's head station. This, as it is a lively bit of poetry, we give in full; it was sung to the air of that best of Whyte-Melville's hunting songs, "A day's ride,"

having been written in the same metre with that object in view.

"A NIGHT'S RIDE.

"When the evening sun is dying,
And the night winds o'er us sighing,
And the sad-voiced dingoes crying,
Where the dark hill's shadows lay,

"Then the sounds of horses crashing,
Through the dark bush wildly dashing;
And bounding feet go pulsing past,
Quick beating on their way.

"Then on! blue coat, white shako!
Soon let your carbines rattle,
Where black *My-alls* are howling round
A little force at bay!

"When we reach the station clearing,
And we hear our brothers cheering,
And our rifle-shots shout answer
O'er the yells of fear and pain,

"Knees tightly press our saddles,
As we charge the mass of devils,
And flashing red 'neath burning thatch
Our sabres clear a lane.

"Right and left the black forms reeling,
And our souls fierce pleasure feeling,
As madden'd steeds and whirling blades
Beat down the cursed crew.

"Every foe has fled, and quicker
Than he came, and in the glitter
Of half-burned sheds we gather
By the dark pool's gloomy side;

"And we pledge the panting horses,
That are standing 'midst the corpses
Of the white-ribbed, grinning devils
That have caused our midnight ride"

This song ended and the vocalists dispersing, Claude ventures to ask the singer, "as a stranger in a strange land," what the Corps may be and what its duties. He finds that so far from the young officer being ashamed of his profession, he evidently feels proud of his position in the Black Police. The conversation is continued next day, and before Claude says good-bye he discovers that the doctor was right in his surmise.

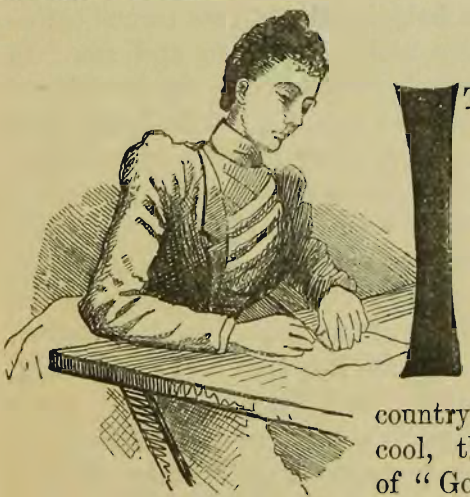
"Yes," the young sub-lieutenant once said to him, when they had become somewhat confidential, "there is a good deal about the work I don't like. The worst part is the terrible anxiety lest any one owing me a grudge should go in for proving a case against me. It is not a pleasant feeling, the noose-round-your-neck idea one has at times. I'm getting used to it, however; but there, I confess I don't like some of the business."

He also told Claude a curious little incident about a young "sub," new in the force, who made a sad mistake in the first report he sent into headquarters, describing a successful "rounding-up" of a party of natives. He used the word "killed" instead of the official "*dispersed*" in speaking of the unfortunate natives left *hors de combat* on the field. The report was returned to him for correction in company with a severe reprimand for his careless wording of the same. The "sub," being rather a wag in his own way as things turned out, corrected his report so that the faulty portion now read as follows: "We successfully surrounded the said party of aborigines and *dispersed* fifteen, *the remainder*, some half dozen, succeeded in escaping."

CHAPTER X.

MISS LILETH MUNDELLA AND MR. WILSON GILES.

"Where the banana grows the animal system is indolent, and pampered at the cost of the higher qualities; the man is sensual and cruel."—EMERSON.



IT is a blazing winter day in Northern Queensland; a morning when it is quite a pleasure to turn one's eyes from the sun-scorched, shadowless "open country" outside to the cool, thatched verandah of "Government House" (head station-house), where Mr. Wilson Giles, the owner of Murdaro run, resides. It is particularly grateful to do so to-day, for in addition to the soft green shade of crimson-blossomed Bougainvillias and other northern floral favourites, the presence of a fair female form in a cool, light dress—that sight so dear to men imprisoned in up-country, societyless wilds—

lends a double charm to the already attractive shelter from the sun's rays. The young lady who is now to engage our attention for a brief period is Miss Lileth Mundella, to whose future hopes and ambitions we have already alluded in Chapter V. On the day in question she sits in the shelter of the verandah, slowly rocking herself in a great cane-chair, the embroidery of light and shadow cast by the motionless leaves falling in picturesque chiaroscuric effect upon her handsome, artistically-draped figure.

Miss Mundella is in deep thought, and the long, dark lashes of her half-closed eyes are turned earthwards as she gently rocks herself to and fro. In front of the low-eaved station-house, on a withered grass-plot,—a futile attempt at a tennis-lawn,—two of the house cats are bounding in turns over a small brown snake, trying to get an opportunity of breaking the angry reptile's back with their sharp teeth. Upon the verandah a few emerald lizards are chasing the house-flies ; and, looking through the passage to the quadrangle at the back of the house, where the store, bachelors' quarters, and kitchen buildings are situated, we can see the dark-skinned, brightly-dressed aboriginal "house-gins" as they prowl about, grinning and chattering over the preparation of "tucker long a boss," or master's dinner. It is nearly "tiffen time,"—a term for the mid-day repast copied by Australians from their Anglo-Indian brethren,—and Miss Mundella, who acts as housekeeper to her uncle, having finished her light household duties for the day, is now giving herself up to her thoughts anent the scheme which so nearly concerns our young friend Claude Angland.

A casual male observer, with the average amount

of discernment and experience of the fair sex, would doubtless have decided in his own mind that this young thinker, with the low forehead and dark, pronounced eyebrows, was pondering over her next new costume, or perhaps of some rival's successes. For the young lady's thoughts are evidently intense, and also unpleasant. But neither dress, envy, nor in fact any of those other common troubles that come to ruffle the soft feathers of ordinary maidens' meditations, ever disturb the firm balanced mind of Miss Lileth Mundella.

"I will make myself honoured, obeyed, perhaps even loved, by means of that one talisman that has survived the ages, and can still work efficiently in this extremely practical world in which I find myself. Money alone will give me the social position which will make life worth living. I will strive to make myself rich." This had been the young lady's keynote of thought and action since the day when she found herself dependent upon an uncle's generosity. Much had it marred the original beauty of her pure, æsthetic soul.

In addition to her duties as hostess and commander-in-chief over the native contingent of her widower-uncle's household, Lileth was also his secretary.

The ladies of an up-country squatter's family very often act in this capacity, for they are generally better educated than the 'boss,' and, moreover, have plenty of leisure time.

Miss Mundella was glad to find herself in this position of trust, for it afforded her the means she sought of strengthening her hands for the ambitious *coup d'état*, that she intended to put into practice

some day. Already Giles's niece had profited by the opportunities her secretaryship gave her, by learning far more of her uncle's past career than that jolly-looking, selfishly-cunning, middle-aged gentleman had any idea.

Wilson Giles was afraid of his niece. A fast youth had enervated his mental powers considerably, and without knowing it, he fell by degrees nearly entirely under the almost mesmeric influence of Lileth's dark eyes and powerful will, whilst yet he fondly half-flattered himself that he was only acting the part of the "generous relation." The two had only had one serious struggle for supremacy: it was in reference to Miss Mundella's brother. This young man had held a position in a southern bank for some years, but being discovered in running a nice little private discount and loan business over the "teller's counter" at which he presided, he was forced to seek fresh fields of labour.

Lileth won the battle with her uncle, "hands down," and her brother became a "rouse about" (apprentice on a run) at Murdaro station.

That her uncle was indebted to a large amount to the late Dr. Dyesart she knew well; she believed the two men, also, to be partners in the run. But this was one of the few things she found herself unable to pry fully into. Miss Mundella had taken charge of the letter from the dead explorer, which faithful Billy had curiously brought to the very station his late master had been so much interested in. She had, moreover, carefully opened the packet which contained the message from the dead; not from idle curiosity, but with the idea that it probably contained something

that would assist her in her plans. The words of the letter she saw at once clearly pointed to three things: firstly, a reparation or gift to be made to some one through the nephew; secondly, a command to this nephew to visit the grave of the writer; thirdly, a suspicion of the honesty of squatters,—possibly a concealed distrust of her uncle Wilson Giles himself.

Miss Mundella's first thoughts were to destroy the letter, but upon consideration she thought she saw in it a means of obtaining further command over her uncle, and so sent it on its road to New Zealand.

She must act, and act quickly, for her brother had informed her from Sydney of young Angland's departure for the north; but before she could move in the matter she must know more of the relations that had existed between Dyesart and her uncle.

The young lady is sitting wrapped in these cogitations, oblivious of the snake-hunting cats and meteoric lizards, when we first see her, rocking herself gently under the cool and shady verandah. Presently a light step is heard in the large room whose French windows open upon Miss Mundella's leafy retreat, and the little figure of an aboriginal girl appears, her dark limbs and cream-coloured gown making her resemble one of those composite statues of bronze and marble.

It is Dina, Miss Lileth's special handmaiden. Caught as a child, she is the sole surviving member of a once great *Otero*, or tribal-family, which was annihilated by the Black Police some eight years before, at a "rounding up" of the natives in the neighbourhood.

It is she alone, as we see her, of all the house-gins, or unpaid native women, who are employed about "Government House," that is decorated with that insignia of civilized female servitude,—a white lace cap; and though Dina looks to-day slightly untidy, one generally sees her glossy, luxuriant locks of jetty hair as neatly stowed away beneath the natty ornament before mentioned as Phyllis of old herself could have desired.

Dina stalks slowly towards her mistress, with a grin of respectful humility wrinkling her dark, shiny face, which would be beautiful but for that excessively triangular appendage, her nose. Suddenly, however, remembering that "missie" has threatened her with a flogging if she appears before that lady without her stockings on, she sneaks off again, softly as a bat upon the wing, and presently reappears with her calfless lower limbs clothed in neat white cotton and shod with highly polished shoes.

The girl stands for some time with her arms akimbo, and her white-palmed hands resting open upon the waistband of her short gown, meekly waiting for her mistress to notice her. But Miss Mundella's thoughts are far away. So Dina at last looks round for something with which to while away the time.

A large beetle, with tesselated-pavement back and enormous antennæ, presently attracts her attention, and squatting down the dusky maiden plays with it, till the frightened insect escapes through a joint between the floor-boards. However, she soon finds fresh amusement in the troubles of a *mantis religiosa*, which has foolishly attempted to cross the thin brown stream of hurrying ants that extends from

the house to their mound, a hundred yards away. Dina's childish face beams with fun as she watches the contest. She is not cruel,—few Australian natives delight in seeing pain in any form,—but she is, like many of her sex, white and black, indifferent, that is all ; content to be amused, and forgetful of the suffering anything may feel so long as it pleasantly tickles her sense of the humorous. The mantis on the path by the verandah is invulnerable to the ants' attack, save at two points,—its soft tail, and long, facile neck. On the other hand, the mode of warfare employed by those tiny, insect bull-dogs, the emmets, is simplicity itself. Laying hold of whatever part of the intruder's awkward body happens to come near them, they "freeze on," their hind legs being used as drag-breaks to impede the mantis's forward march. The mantis, although covered with busy foes, marches on, with that prayerful aspect—the beseeching, upturned head and pious, folded, hand-like front-legs—that has earned it its name. Ever and anon some enterprising ant ventures to attack the weak points already alluded to of this insect Achilles ; then are the lately-folded mandible claws deliberately brought into play, and the enemy is crushed, even as a nut is broken in a pair of nut-crackers.

The solemn, pre-occupied air of the bigger insect, and the plucky onslaught of its tiny foes, at last cause Dina to forget her state of bondage, also the august presence of her mistress, and she bursts into a merry fit of laughter. Her hilarity, however, ceases as suddenly as it commences.

"Dina, what are you doing there?" comes the clear, contralto voice of Miss Mundella.

The culprit stands before "missie" with downcast eyes and trembling figure.

"Your cap is half off your head, and your stockings are coming down. You have forgotten to tie your shoe-laces. And why have you not an apron on? Don't you remember the flogging you received for forgetting what I told you about your coming to me in an untidy state? Be off and get yourself straight at once, and hurry that lazy Sophy with tiffen. Marmie (master) will soon be back."

Miss Lileth always refrains from employing that foolish pigeon-English that generally obtains amongst Australian settlers in their conversations with aborigines. And she has found herself perfectly understood and implicitly obeyed since she first arrived at the station, and established her authority by having the house-gins flogged for the slightest misbehaviour, till they were thoroughly "broken into her ways," as she pleasantly termed it.

Dina, who had come to ask her mistress for leave of absence for the next day, is afraid to do so now, and instead bursts into a theatrical cry, with her knuckles rubbing her eyes and tears rolling down her ludicrously-wrinkled face and dusky bosom. The moment the girl thinks herself out of sight, however, she is transformed into a laughing little nigger once more.

She stands in the passage giggling with all her might at the sight of the youngest house-gin, Lucy, *ætat* ten summers, who out in the quadrangle at the back is up to one of her favourite tricks. This consists of imitating the ungraceful waddle of that head of the culinary department, "Terrible Billy," the old man-cook.

Poor little, large-mouthed, wriggling Lucy loves to get behind the spare, hardship-twisted, little old man as he crosses the yard, and burlesque his every action, to the delight of the black heads that appear at the doors and windows, and grin white-teethed plaudits at the little actress's histrionic powers.

Every action of Lucy's lithe little body, every gleam of her cunning little black eyes, was wicked to a degree. Needless to say, her powers of mimicry were perfect. Nothing escaped her active examination. To see the suddenness with which she could flash from merriment to passive stupidity when discovered in her pranks, or when Terrible Billy—a harmless, old periodical-drunkard retainer of Mr. Giles, whose awkward, stumbling gait she imitated exactly—turned round, was worth a good deal. Her bended little body shaking with bubbling merriment in her single garment of an old gown; the thin, ugly little face, against which her tiny black hands are pressed, as if to stifle the sound of her giggles, whilst she hobbles after the dilapidated old model; and then when he turns, flash! Lucy has changed as quickly into a dull, sad-looking child, who has apparently never known what laughter means, and has thoughts for nothing evidently but her work, to which she is sullenly creeping when "the Terrible" changes his position, and looks suspiciously at her with his bleared old eyes.

Dina is looking at and enjoying the fun, and quick as both she and Lucy are, they are caught by Miss Mundella, who has followed her untidy handmaid to the door.

Lileth says nothing, but rebukes the laggard Dina with a look so fraught with cruel meaning that the

black girl melts into real tears this time, as her mistress returns to her seat on the verandah.

The sound of wheels is now heard approaching, and a buck-board buggy (a kind of light chaise) appears, driven by an elderly gentleman, with a very red face and very white linen suit and hat.

The trap is pulled up near the house, and the driver, taking a boatswain's whistle from his pocket, blows a couple of shrill notes thereon, when two native boys, in dirty moleskin trousers turned up to the knee and grey flannel shirts, hasten up and take their station at the horses' heads.

The occupant of the buggy, however, does not release the reins, but, calling up first one boy and then the other, hits each a couple of stinging cuts with his driving whip round their bare legs, and makes the recipients roar with agony.

"I'll teach you to keep me waiting, you black beggars!" the red-faced man roars. "Couldn't you hear me coming? Now, Tarbrush, yer'd better look out, for, swelp me, but if I have any more of your durned laziness I'll flay you alive, like I did your cursed brother Bingo!"

"Now, look alive, and take the mare and water her," the speaker continues in a calmer voice, "and mind you put a soft pair of hobbles on her. You can let Joe go in the horse paddock. It's your turn, Dandie, to get the horses to-morrow, and if you keep me a minute after seven o'clock I'll loosen some of your black hide, swelp me if I don't."

The speaker, who is Mr. Wilson Giles, now gets out of the trap, and taking his whip in one hand and a revolver that he always has with him in the buggy

in the other, he toddles with the usual short steps of a bushman to the house, just nodding a brief "good-morning" to his niece as he crosses the verandah.

Mr. Giles is, as we have said, an elderly man, but he has rather grown old through his kind of life than the number of his years. A somewhat corpulent man too is he, with a heavy, sensual countenance, on the sides of which, in pale contrast to his scarlet face, are ragged, light-red whiskers. The expression upon this gentleman's face before strangers is generally either a look of suspicious cunning or an affected one of jolly frankness,—the latter having once formed an ample cloak for many a mean action, but, being now worn threadbare, is less useful than its owner still fondly imagines it to be.

After copious "nips" of whisky and soda-water, Mr. Giles presently throws himself into a chair before the elegantly provisioned table, where his niece and a middle-aged gentleman have already taken their places, and immediately betrays the fact, by the impartial way in which he thrusts his knife into meat, butter, cheese, and preserves, that he is either an eccentric or an ill-educated man.

"Come outside, I want to speak to you," he grunts to his niece, when he has finished a very rapid repast, quite ignoring throughout the presence of the third person at the table. This is Mr. Cummercropper, the store- and book-keeper of the run, who, being a new arrival in the wilds, has not yet been able to obtain that point of rapid consumption of diet at which most station folk are adepts.

"I will be with you shortly, uncle," Miss Mundella replies, and proceeds to enter into a conversation upon

music and art with the polished storekeeper, who is the very opposite of his highly inflamed "boss."

Mr. Cummercropper is hopelessly in love with Lileth, like most of the men this young lady thinks it worth while to be civil to. It is a curious feature about Lileth's male acquaintances that they soon become hot admirers or warm haters of the dark-eyed, haughty young lady.

"Oh, you've come at last, have you?" Mr. Giles says, as his niece sweeps to her chair on the verandah, and she knows by experience that his bullying air is the result of something having annoyed or puzzled him, and that probably he will end what he has to say by asking her advice. But her uncle must "blow off his steam," as he sometimes calls it, on somebody, and a scapegoat must be found before he will become quiet enough to talk sensibly. So Lileth's first act is to pacify her uncle in the following way.

"Before you begin," she says, "I want you to have Dina and Lucy beaten. You had better have it done at once, because the Rev. Mr. Harley may be here this afternoon. He said he would try and do his circuit in one month this time."

"Oh, you needn't mind Harley," replies Mr. Giles; "he knows better than to interfere with our ways, Lileth. Besides, he used to 'dress' his wife's little gin down proper at Croydon last year. Even the squatters at the hotel he was stopping at kicked up a row about it. The servant gals told me the little nigger's back was pretty well scored. What have the gals been doing now?"

"Oh, I don't really think that it is worth while my going into the long exposition of household

arrangements that an explanation would necessitate."

Mr. Giles looks sideways at the calm dark eyes that are lazily looking upwards, as their owner sits slowly rocking her chair by his side.

"I'll soon fix their hash for them," he growls forth at last, feeling glad of the opportunity to wreak his anger on somebody. Then he whistles upon the boatswain's call, which had once before that morning heralded a punishment, and shortly a big native appears, whose well-pronounced nasal bones proclaim him to belong to a Cape York or Torres Straits tribe. The black's oily face is surmounted by an old cabbage-tree hat, and he wears trousers and shirt like the other boys; but he also rejoices in a pair of Blucher boots, of which he is inordinately proud.

"Here, Carlo," says Mr. Giles, in the curious pigeon-English already referred to, "you know that um fellow waddy (that stick); him sit down alonger office (it is in the office); mine beat it black fellow (my black fellow beater). You fetch um along." The oily face lights up with a smile of anticipation, for he it is that generally acts the part of executioner, and "combs down the gals" by Marmie's orders when it is needed in the cause of discipline. As a member of an alien tribe, Carlo returns the hatred of the station blacks with interest.

The waddy, a long-handled "cat" of six tails, made of leather, is brought to Mr. Giles.

"Go and catch Lucy and Dina," says that gentleman.

Both uncle and niece sit in silence till the girls arrive, the two miserable creatures having been found

at the collection of huts close by, known as the native-camp, where they had run to hide on seeing Carlo take the whip to the "boss."

"Don't move till I come back. Won't be long," murmurs the squatter rising, and presently the yells and screams of the two girls are heard down by the stockyard, where the boss is standing admiring their graceful, naked bodies as they writhe beneath the lash wielded by the brawny Carlo.

Mr. Giles returns quite an altered man. Either the enjoyable sight he has just witnessed, or a couple of "pegs" of whisky he swallowed medicinally afterwards, has sweetened his soul for the time being.

"Well, niece," he said, sitting down, "I've done your little job. And now I want you to listen to what I'm going to tell you, and tell me what you think of it." Miss Mundella's handsome, white-draped figure rocks a little faster than before, but her eyes remain still fixed on the leaves above her head.

"You know, Lileth, I think,—no, I'm pretty sure you do,—that I'd have gone a 'broker,'"—the black eyes flash a rebuke at him for the slang he presumes to use before her. "Oh, you know what I mean. I'd have had to have filed in '85 if it hadn't been for Dr. Dyesart turning up trumps and lending me some of the ready. Well, when the doctor died he held promissory notes of mine for nearly £20,000. D'you know, niece, why he lent me the money?"

After a short pause the speaker continued, "But I don't know why I should tell you. Likely enough I'll be sorry for it to-morrow."

"If you think I can advise you, uncle, the more I know about the matter the easier can I come to a

DINA'S FLOGGING.

decision. That is your excuse for telling me and mine for listening to what would otherwise not interest me."

"Well, I suppose that's logic, Lileth. At any rate, Dr. Dyesart, I may tell you, was once engaged to be married to my late wife, to the mother of Glory and Georgie."

"Indeed, uncle, and how long is it since poor Aunt Mary was engaged to him?"

"Don't exactly know. I never saw Dyesart till about five years ago—two years after the death of my poor old wom——, of your aunt." The speaker hastily corrects his *lapsus linguæ*, glancing at his niece meanwhile, and continues:—

"Dyesart comes here. Glory and little George,—Lord, what I'd give to find out what's become of my little George," and a tear moistens the inflamed orbits of Mr. Giles,—"Glory was playing with George on the verandah here. The doctor speaks to them, and was telling Glory he was an old friend of her mother's when I arrived on the scene. 'My name's Dyesart,' said he; 'let me speak to you in private. I had the honour of knowing the late Mrs. Giles, your wife.'"

Miss Mundella's chair ceases rocking, and that lady's eyes watch her uncle's lips.

"He told me," continued Mr. Giles, "and I will just cut what he said as short as I can, that he was a wealthy man and a bachelor; that his agents in Sydney had told him Murdaro station would probably be in the market before long; also that he had discovered that the lady to whom he had once been engaged in England had married me, the proprietor

of Murdaro, and was dead. He had come up to see the place, as it was interesting to him. Well, the doctor went into a rapture over Glory,—who's neat enough, I believe, but wasn't a patch on little Georgie. 'She's like your late missus,' he said; and then before I knew it he offered me money on loan without interest, enough to put me on my feet again."

"It was he that gave Glory her money, then?" asks Miss Mundella, showing for the first time her interest in her uncle's narrative.

"Yes, he did all that he did do in a real gentlemanly way, I'll say that for him," returned Mr. Giles, lighting one of two green-leaf cigars that Johnnie, the Chinese gardener, presents to his boss about this time every day. "Whilst I'm on the subject I may as well tell you that I find Dyesart's death doesn't affect Glory's money; I've got a satisfactory letter from my Brisbane lawyers about that.

"Now I have told you pretty well all, Lileth. Is there anything else you'd like to know?"

"Well, yes, uncle; first, how are you situated as regards funds—money matters—now? I should like to know particularly before I ask any more questions." As she ceases speaking Miss Mundella cannot help glancing scornfully at her relative, for she sees he is afraid to ask her advice, although his object in opening up the conversation was to do this. But her look changes as the thought enters her brain, "Is this story of the money the real and sole reason of his anxiety?"

"Well, I'm tight pressed," replies Mr. Giles, looking nervously at his niece; "that confounded spec. of

mine on the MacArthur River was a stiffener for me, and for better men than me too."

"You could not refund the money lent you by Dyesart if his executors,"—the young lady watches her uncle as she speaks, and sees that gentleman's rather washy eyes open a little bit wider and become fixed, a sign that expresses in his physiognomy what turning pale would in most other men,—"could you refund this money if his executors were to press you to do so?"

"Jupiter! No!" gasps Mr. Giles, without an apology for the oath. Indeed, neither notice it in their interest in the matter in hand.

"What would you have to do if you were forced to repay this £20,000, say, to his nephew Angland?"

"I'd have to sell every beast on the run," gasps Mr. Giles, his eyes protruding more than ever, "and I'd have to sell my own carcase into the bargain," he adds, coarsely.

"You must please control yourself, uncle, or I must go indoors," murmurs Lileth, leaning back in her chair.

"Oh, you're not inquisitive about hearing any more, ar'n't you?" begins Mr. Giles, angrily. "You are a woman, although you've got brains, and you needn't pretend——" But the uncle is obliged to nip his ungallant speech in the bud, and afterwards to apologise for it; for his niece rises to leave him, and he feels he cannot afford to quarrel with her at any price.

"Well, uncle," the young lady inquires, "would you be sorry if these promissory notes were found?"

"Why, of course. They'd ruin the whole bilin' of us." Mr. Giles's answer, coming as it does from a

mouth whose chin is sunk upon a desponding breast, is scarcely audible.

"With the exception of Glory?"

"Oh, her money's all right; can't touch hers."

"You have tried, then," thinks Lileth, "and this is the reason you inquired about it. You are desperate. The game is mine if I play my cards carefully."

"Well, uncle," she continues, "there are only two ways that I can see to get rid of this awkward state of affairs."

"What's them?" comes the snappish inquiry.

"Either to find out a means of getting at and destroying these P.N.'s, or——" Here Miss Mundella pauses so long that her uncle's face grows redder than ever with excitement, till at last he bursts out impatiently, "Or what?"

"Or destroy the means this young Angland has of finding where the notes are."

"Can either of these things be done?"

"Yes, the latter."

"How can it be done?"

"By means of money."

"Who will do it?"

"I will."

Mr. Giles cogitates for a minute or two.

"You know more of this matter than you pretend."

"Than I pretend!" The young lady expresses her surprise at this accusation in her sweetest tones.

"Well, then, than you have told me, if you like that way of putting it better. You're a clever gal, and have more 'savez' than I have in a matter like this." The speaker's eyes withdraw into his head, and he feels more cheerful and hopeful as he goes on speaking.

He ends by placing the whole affair in his niece's hands for her to fight out for him.

Lileth has her fish in the shallows now, but she knows she must not startle him till her landing net is safely under and around the prize. So putting a little softer intonation into her voice, and rising from her seat, she goes to her uncle's side.

"Uncle, I am only a poor orphan," she begins, looking almost through Mr. Giles's downcast eyelids. Mr. Giles can feel the power of his niece's glance and fairly trembles, for he is always most afraid of her when she speaks thus softly.

"You have given my brother and myself a home," goes on the young lady. "We owe you everything. I *can* help you and I will."

Mr. Giles breathes more freely, but he would hardly have done so if he had known that Miss Mundella only wanted to make him easier for a moment in order to insure his feeling shy of having the whole trouble back on his own shoulders again.

"But, uncle, I have my good name to think of. I must risk that and a good deal more besides in forwarding these interests of yours. I owe it to Mr. Puttis as well as to myself to ask you if you will make me some token of regard, of appreciation, if I clear this trouble out of your way."

"Anything you like," Mr. Giles murmurs sleepily, almost as if the words were somebody else's and he was simply repeating them.

"I have thought out a plan of releasing you entirely from your indebtedness, but both myself and my future husband will have to risk everything in doing

it. Will you promise to give me a quarter share in the run if I succeed?"

Mr. Wilson Giles's tenderest point is touched at this request, and the pain wakes up his courage for a moment or two.

"You're not afraid of opening your mouth to ask," he says, fighting his ground as he retreats. "You know I've never given up all hopes of finding little George some day. I don't believe the niggers that stole him killed him, or I'd have heard of it. I'd look nice if I gave away what's to be his some day if he turned up afterwards, wouldn't I?"

"If you make me a partner in the run I'll help you. If not, I'll marry Mr. Puttis at once, as he wishes me to do, and go to Brisbane. I don't mind," adds Lileth, pausing for a moment, "agreeing to give up to poor Georgie half my share if he ever returns to you.

"I shall want a written and signed agreement, uncle," she observes, as she leaves him to enter the house, "before I commence work." Then at the doorway she turns and remarks, in a careless tone of voice, "You may like to know that Angland—Dyesart's nephew—has already left Sydney, and may be here any day."

This last bit of news was just what was wanted to complete the subjugation of Mr. Giles to his niece's will. How did she know of this news about Angland? Why, of course, from that young devil of a nephew of his, whom he had bribed to intercept the dead explorer's approaching relative. His own rough-and-ready plan had failed; perhaps his niece's scheme would succeed. Anyhow, it was best to have her

on his side, for otherwise she might consider it best for herself to make young Angland fall in love with her. She could do that, if she liked, Giles felt certain. The squatter rises and paces up and down the creaking floor of the verandah restlessly at the thought.

"Fool that I was to let that black boy of the doctor's escape me," he murmurs aloud. "Torture and money would have made him reveal the grave to me. It is in that grave, or near it, where the secret that can blast and ruin me lies. If that girl knew that secret she would kill me without compunction. I know it. At any risk she must remain on my side till the danger is past."

So the agreement is signed and handed to Miss Mundella that night. And the dark eyes flash like unto Diana's upon a successful mythological hunting morning as Lileth's steady pen directs two telegrams, —one for Inspector Puttis, which we saw him read at Ulysses, and another to an influential admirer of hers in the office of the Commissioner of Police, Brisbane. And then the active brain falls to pondering over the something that she believes her uncle kept back from her that afternoon.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BLACK POLICE.

"Ye to whose sovereign hands the Fates confide
Of this fair land the reins,—
This land for which no pity wrings your breast,—
Why does the stranger's sword her plains invest,
That her green fields be dyed?"

PETRARCH.

"HERE'S another snob trying to get us all cashiered! Confound those beastly newspapers,—just my luck!" exclaims an elderly and rather handsome man, who, sitting before his office table, has just opened an important-looking letter, headed with the royal arms printed in red ink.

"Just my confounded luck. Just at this time too, of all others, when my application to be appointed Protector of Aboriginals for the district must just have reached the chief. Now I wonder what Mrs. Bigger will say if I don't

get this extra salary as Protector, for I can't send Jane down south to school, as I promised, if I don't get more than my present pay, that's certain."

The blue-paper letter that has occasioned Inspector Bigger of the N. M. Police so much vexation—for it is this well-known gentleman who now sits nervously rubbing his eyeglass in the little hot office of the barracks—is dated from the bureau of the Superintendent of Police, Brisbane, and runs as follows :—

"*June 4th*, 1889.

"*John Bigger, Esq., Inspector of N. M. Police for Townsend Barracks, Werandowera District.*

"*The Colonial Secretary having requested the Commissioner of Police to supply him with such information as lies in his power, concerning the truthfulness of an occurrence of which the enclosed newspaper article (which appeared in a recent issue of the 'Northern Miner') purports to be an account, I am directed to desire you to communicate immediately with this Office upon the subject.*

"*I am, sir,*

"*P. P. Commissioner of Police,*

"*Harry Stocrat.*"

The following is a reprint of the newspaper cutting which flutters to the floor on the letter being opened :—

"ANOTHER N. M. P. ATROCITY.

"Close to Townsend, a reliable correspondent informs, the following lately took place :—

"At a mining camp where nothing had been stolen by the natives for months, three natives ran by a miner's tent

one evening. Going into town next day, the said miner mentioned this, but did not ask for assistance. The neighbouring sergeant of Black Police with four boys, however, appears at the camp in a few days. As night falls the light of a native camp fire is sparkling away on a mountain range some four miles off. No one knows or cares if these particular natives had committed the crime of running by a miner's tent. Taking a 'boy' by the shoulder, the sergeant points out the fire, and soon after the four troopers steal off into the gloom, armed to the teeth, and naked save for their cartridge-belts. The sergeant remains behind, and in about an hour and a half the sound of nine shots coming rapidly one after another is heard. Presently the 'boys' again appear with spears and dilly-bags, and tell, amongst other horrid details, that they have despatched 'plenty fellow pickaninnie' with their tomahawks."

The Inspector's little office occupies half of a small weather-board erection, which is so crazy from the attacks of white ants (*termites*) that it can hardly support its hot, galvanised-iron roof. A rough wooden bookcase occupies one wall, standing on a rusty iron tray, which is generally kept supplied with water to defend this article of furniture from the same insect foes that are fast destroying the joints and studs of the building. On its dirty shelves a number of dusty law-books, blue summons papers, and the like, repose in picturesque disorder.

On either side of the single window of the apartment hangs a cat-o'-nine-tails,—one for the use of the refractory "boys" of the corps, and manufactured of plain leather thongs; the other having the narrow lengths of hide decorated with swan-shot artistically fastened to the cruel tongues with whipcord. This more com-

plicated instrument is used for such cases as refractory native witnesses, when a murderer has to be discovered, and has also visited many of the stations round on loan to squatters who are anxious to instil the beauties of civilization into the bosoms (and backs) of those of their native slaves who are desirous of escaping from their bondage. A number of handcuffs and leg-irons, and a few racing pictures, spotted to indistinctness by the last summer's plague of flies, decorate the walls; and behind Inspector Bigger's chair is a rack of Snider carbines, whilst a pair of loaded, long-barrelled "Colts" lie on the pigeon-holed letter rack before him on the table, which occupies the centre of the room.

"Now what shall I do about this, I wonder?" ponders the gallant defender of frontier settlers. "I can't say it was Sergeant Blarney's fault and call *him* over the coals, for I have already reported the matter to the Chief as if I had been present. Well," with a sigh, "it's another proof of how careful we must be nowadays. Bai Jove! if any of these scribblers had seen some of the little affairs we've managed in the old days, between here and Herberton, there would have been some 'tall writing,' as the Yankees say, there would so. Bai Jove!" the Inspector adds aloud, rising from his chair and peering out of the open door down the bare barrack yard to where the square, rush-covered huts of the boys stand side by side, "if that isn't Puttis back again. Wonder if he's been sent up to replace me? Why, he was only ordered down to Nanga district six weeks ago."

The small, military figure of Inspector Puttis, to whom we have already introduced our readers half-a-dozen chapters back, dismounts quickly from the

OFFICER AND "BOY OF BLACK POLICE.

magnificent chestnut which has carried him from Cairns, and, after a few rapid words to his black orderly, who has dismounted also, rapidly marches up the scrupulously neat yard towards the residence of his brother officer. The white sergeant of the local force, and two or three native constables who are standing near, stand "attention" and give the military salute as the dapper little man passes them, which he replies to by lifting his riding cane to his cabbage-tree hat.

Whilst the new-comer is being welcomed by Inspector Bigger, let us glance at the more prominent objects in the scene before us.

Two rows of weather-board iron-roofed buildings, amongst which are the white sergeant's quarters, stretch down a slight declivity to where they meet at right angles a terrace of brown, single-roomed huts, occupied by the native constables. At the upper end of the fair-sized quadrangle thus formed, the thatched, bungalow-like home of the Chief, covered with creeping plants and standing in a brilliant flower garden, looks down on the rest from the summit of the moderate rise on which the barracks are situated.

The "boy" who arrived with the Inspector, and who, in company with several other natives, is now leading the two horses to the stockyard down by the heavily-timbered water-hole, is in the well-known uniform of the Black Police. This consists of a linen-covered shako, blue-jacket garnished with red braid, and white duck trousers; brown leather gaiters reach to the "boy's" knees, and he wears an old pair of his master's enormously long spurs on his "Blucher"

boots. As he is "in marching order," a brass cartridge belt, containing Snider cartridges, is slung, after the fashion of a sergeant's scarf, around his body. To complete this somewhat lengthy description of a uniform to be seen only in "up-country" Australia, we may add that a Snider carbine hangs in its "busket" and strap from the "off" side of the "boy's" saddle.

A few boys in the "undress" of a pair of trousers are sweeping one corner of the yard, and from the doors of the dwellings the brightly turbaned heads of a number of native women, the property of the Chinese cook and white constables, are lolling out for a view of the new arrivals.

But to return to the two officers, who are now seated under the verandah of Inspector Bigger's home, near a table loaded with the usual "spiritual" signs of Australian hospitality.

"Well, Puttis, so you're going up to Murdaro again, are you?" begins the host, after the preliminary courtesies of greeting have been gone through between the two friends. "Bai Jove! I wish I had the influence you have, old fellow, with our lords and masters down there at Brisbane. Ah! you sly dog, can I congratulate you yet?" asks the smiling elder man. "There's not the slightest doubt but Miss Mundella's the handsomest, eh? and the smartest young lady this side of the Clarence. Did she ever tell you, by-the-bye, old man, that I knew her father?"

"Never," replies Puttis, with his customary brevity, just letting his jaws open and shut to emit the word, much like a fox-terrier does when it snaps at a troublesome "blue-bottle."

"Old Mr. Mundella—it was *young* Mundella then

—was one of the first to take up country near where you've just come from. And d'you know," continues the verbose Bigger in a low tone of voice, "d'you know, they used to say at the time that it was our old friend Giles, that's got Murdaro now, that cleaned him out of his run, and not the 'pleuro' (a cattle disease) at all."

"Humph," observes Inspector Puttis.

"Yes, that his wife's brother did it. Well, upon my soul, I would not be surprised at anything I heard of Giles doing. Mundella was grand company, and I don't think I ever saw a better shot at a running nigger in my life, except yourself."

"Hah!" snorts the little man in the black, frogged jacket, "that is nothing," and he bows in acknowledgment of the compliment paid to him by his friend. "Have lived with finger on trigger—night and day—over ten years, may say. You shot well yourself, a few years back."

"Age making me old and shaky now, me boy," answers Bigger; and if he had said a life of almost unrestrained licentiousness he would have been nearer to the truth. "But what have you done with your troop, Puttis?"

"Camped down creek. Four miles. Some niggers camped there. Want my 'boys' to pick up some information. About man I'm after."

"Ah! a nigger?"

"Yes; perhaps you can help me."

"With pleasure, if I can," replied the elder Inspector, adding, "Especially, my dear fellow, as I sha'n't feel so diffident about asking your assistance, in that case, in a little affair of my own."

The host has by this time had six "nips" to his guest's abstemious one, so turning his head towards Puttis he rattles on: "But won't you alter your mind and have another? Or, if you prefer it, I've some real, genuine 'potheen.' Queensland make, of course, but just like the real stuff. One of my old constituents on the Barron river, ha! ha! sent it to me." The two men smile and wink knowingly at each other. "Chinamen never forget a generous action, ha! ha!"

Laughing at the remembrance of how he obtained the "potheen," and filling his glass from the decanter on the table with a very shaky hand, the jovial inspector continues,—

"In consequence of information received from one of my 'boys,' I rode up to the chinky's little scrub farm one day, two years ago. 'John,' said I, 'how many bushels of corn you get off this piece of ground?' 'Welly bad crop, Missie Bigger,' answered the yellow devil, with a sly look at me to see how I took the lie he'd just uttered. 'No goody Chinaman makey garden here. Twenty bushels me sell to Missie Brown. That all,' and the cursed spawn of Confucius kicked some of the rich soil contemptuously over with his sandal. Any one could see there'd been a big crop, perhaps three hundred bushels off the land, by the heaps of husks off the heads of maize lying about the clearing. 'Well, John,' said I, leaning over in my saddle so that some friends who were with me shouldn't hear, 'well, John, you can send me a little of the 'real stuff' you sold MacDuff on Saturday, and then, whether you get twenty or five hundred bushels here, I sha'n't trouble to ask you what you use

it for next time.' Ha! ha! how Li Ching (that was his name) stared! He grew green, but he never opened his lips. But what's more to the purpose, he's sent me a box of potatoes, regularly, every few months since, which I have carried carefully into my bedroom. I'm sure you'd like it. Take a bottle or two with you for Giles. He's a good judge. What?"

"Thanks, awfully," replies Inspector Puttis. "Do so with pleasure. But what's your trouble? Little affair you mentioned?"

The jolly smile that has illuminated Inspector Bigger's face during his telling of the previous anecdote fades suddenly upon the objectionable subject of the official inquiry being recalled to his memory. He hands the red-sealed epistle and the newspaper cutting to his friend with a sigh, and watches the expressionless face of the little man as he carefully reads both with anxiety.

"Well, Puttis, what had I better do about that?"

"About correct?" inquires the person addressed, pointing to the clipping in his hand.

"Oh, I think so. Of course I wasn't there. No good my going up those beastly hills in the wet. You see, there's not been much doing lately in our line about here, and the 'boys' were getting troublesome, so I told Blarney (the sergeant) to see if he couldn't find something for them to do. He heard of niggers having been seen up Mulberry Creek way, and——"

"How did you word report?" interrupts Puttis, lighting a cigarette.

"Oh! same old style: 'Having received repeated complaints from the Mulberry Scrub settlers of the wholesale destruction caused by a ferocious tribe of

dangerous Myall blacks,'—and that kind of thing, you know."

"Ah! too risky nowadays!" snaps Inspector Puttis, again interrupting his senior. "Can you get a written complaint? 'We demand assistance,' and that style of thing?"

"Oh! there's Thompson, and that old German Bauer,—he wants to sell me a couple of cows. Either would do that for me, I think."

"Umph!" grunts Inspector Puttis, "I'd like to see sergeant. Will think I'm up here about case."

The white sergeant is summoned to the presence of the two superior officers, through the medium of a native constable who is weeding the garden close by, and, after a little word fencing, he settles down into an account of the occurrence which corresponds, in most particulars, with that of "our trustworthy correspondent." In answer to a question put to him he continues,—

"I heard of the camp, sorr, from a young gintleman, yer honours, who kapes the stour at Riversleigh, an' he tells me, sorr, that one of them miner chaps up at High Cliff had tould him as how two murthering thaves of nigger women was in the creek by their camp lately. 'Divil tax 'em, sorr,' he said, but the varmints they got away before the miner could get his mates to help catch 'em."

"Were the miners glad to see you and the 'boys'?" demands Puttis.

"Sure, sorr, it's yourself has guessed the right words they spake, sorr. They was sulky as bandicootes, an' never said a word till I amused 'em with me arthful stories,—the 'bhoys' having started afther the fire

on the hill. 'We're not afraid of the niggers,' said one,—who I'll kape me eyes on when he's in town for a bit of a spree,—'we hain't afraid of niggers: let 'em bide.'"

"Wait a bit, sergeant. How do miners get tucker (provisions) up there?"

"It's Thompson, sorr, the only settler, yer honours, on that side of the Cliffs; he kills fur 'em."

"Is that Thompson who trained the bloodhounds for Inspector Versley?"

"The same, sorr."

"That'll do, sergeant." The energetic non-commissioned officer salutes and withdraws, and Puttis turns towards the local chief.

"Say, Bigger, have you got that western 'boy' you lent me once? What was his name? Oh! Tomahawk. Got him still?"

"No, accidentally shot. Very sorry to lose him, for he was a good 'boy.' He knew every nigger's tracks for fifty miles round. No, I lent him to Versley, and you know what Versley is. Tomahawk gave him a piece of cheek, and—and he was accidentally shot."

"Ah! that's a pity. Fact is, I want a 'boy' who knows the western lingo. Also knows scrub. Got one?"

"Yes; Teapot's a good 'boy.'"

"I want to get hold of that educated nigger that Dyesart had with him when he died. Giles heard him telling other niggers. Had killed Dyesart. Have got warrant to arrest him. Served Dyesart right though. Educating a cursed nigger."

"Oh, you mean that fellow Billy. Why, I thought

he brought a letter or something to Murdaro from Dyesart. Should not be surprised if the nigger wrote it himself though. Those civilized blacks are up to anything."

"He was at Murdaro," remarks Inspector Puttis, "but he made himself scarce." He might have added, for he knew it to be a fact, that Billy had only made himself "scarce" because he had very good reasons for believing that Mr. Wilson Giles intended to make him altogether "extinct,"—the reason for that worthy gentleman's inhospitable behaviour being explained and set forth hereafter for the benefit of our readers.

"Shouldn't be surprised if he was at the Mission Station," observes Inspector Bigger, after a short pause for reflection. "If so, I can get him for you. I've got a little gin (girl) that will fetch him, if he's to be fetched out of the sanctuary where all these rascals go to." After another pause, and a "peg" at the volatile fluid on the table, the speaker continues musingly,—

"If these missionary fellows did any good I wouldn't object, but they don't. They just teach those black devils of theirs to think themselves better than a white man. Why, one beggar they've reared they sent over here,—in a black coat, if you please!—who had the impudence, curse him! to give a sermon in the Wesleyans' Gospel-mill down there."

"Ha! ha!" laughs Puttis grimly, looking straight in front of him, his left hand unconsciously fingering the revolver pouch on his hip. "These mission stations. Good preserves for us sometimes. Besides missionaries prevent squatters doing our work themselves. No missionaries, no Black Police very soon.

A Black War, like they had in Tasmania, would soon result. No more niggers for us to disperse."

Taking a Sydney paper from his breast pocket, the little man points to it, asking if his friend has "Seen this?"

Inspector Bigger adjusts his eyeglass after some nervous, blundering attempts, and with some trouble, for he has "nipped" himself into a happy, sleepy mood by this time, makes out the following paragraph in the Sydney *Telegraph*.

'DEPREDATIONS BY BLACKS.

"SWEEPING CHARGES AGAINST THE MISSIONS.

"(By Telegraph.)

"Adelaide, *Wednesday*.

"A deputation of Northern Territory pastoralists to-day asked the Government to send more mounted police to the Territory in order to deal with depredatory blacks, who killed large numbers of stock. The majority of these natives belonged to the mission stations. The Minister for Education, in reply, said it seemed to him that the mission stations did more harm than good. He had official information that all the black outlaws in the Territory made for the missions when hard pressed and the missionaries protected them, and that the worst cattle-killers were the mission aboriginals. He was sorry, however, that owing to the bad state of the finances of the Northern Territory additional police protection could not be granted."

"Yes," murmurs the inspector, when he has got the gist of the article fairly into his slightly muddled brain. "That's comforting. Right man in right place. Education's the thing. He knows what he's

talking about. As long as we've squatters in the ministry and on the bench we're all right, eh ?"

"Yes, and when Western Australia is out of home Government's interference. Ha! ha! something to do for squatters there, I fancy. I'll see Thompson," Puttis adds, rising, "about your affair. He knows me. Never allow nonsense from cockatoos (settlers). He will send evidence you want. Double quick time."

And Inspecter Puttis knows what he is talking about, and is not bragging when he declares himself superior to the irritations occasioned wilfully at times by settlers. There were not wanting instances where imprudent scrub-farmers and others had suddenly lost horses and cattle; had found their cottages burned to the ground on a temporary absence in the bush; had left their crops safe over night, to wake cornless and hayless next morning; and yet no trace of the ravagers and thieves was to be found when the aid of the Black Police trackers had been called in to help to discover the aggressors. And as such invisible pirates, it was noticed, apparently only attacked the holdings of the few persons who were publicly at enmity with the Black Police, ugly stories got about that pointed to the N. M. "boys" as having played the *rôle* of midnight marauding Myalls (wild aborigines) "at the special request" of the officers of their troop.

Inspector Puttis now proceeds to bid his host adieu, and before he goes arranges for the neighbouring mission station to be watched for the arrival of Billy.

* * * * * *

It is growing dark when Miss Mundella's *fiancé*

leaves the barracks, and he rides with loose rein at an easy canter towards his camp. The black "boy," Inspector Puttis's aide-de-camp, follows some hundred yards behind. After a couple of miles along the red clay banks of a dried-up mountain torrent, the track leads up a small ridge into an outlying portion of the dense "scrub," or jungle, that covers the high ranges on either hand. Here the way becomes far more difficult to travel, and the riders allow their clever steeds to slowly pick their own path. The clay surface of the treacherous road, worn into wave-like corrugations, a foot or more in depth, from the passing trains of pack-mules from the distant tin-mines, and ever moist with the dews of the dense tropical growth on either hand, is quite dark with the overhanging branches of buttressed fig-trees of gigantic growth, of graceful palms and pendent ferns and creepers, whilst dangerous stinging-trees and lawyer-vines to right and left render caution necessary. But the other side of the patch of scrub is safely reached, and the inspector is just about to urge his horse into another canter, when that animal suddenly snorts and bounds to the other side of the track. This impromptu action probably saved its rider's life, for as it does so, *phut!* and a long kangaroo spear flies harmlessly past the inspector's body, and goes clattering down upon the stony bottom of the watercourse in front.

Puttis, although a perfectly fearless man, is one of those persons who never throws a chance away, and, knowing what good cause the aborigines of the district have to wish for his destruction, always carries a revolver in his hand when out late in the

scrub. Almost before the spear has touched the ground, certainly before it is motionless, the active little man has swung round in his saddle, and fired a snap-shot at his cowardly assailant, whose dusky form can just be seen, as he stands, paralyzed for an instant at the escape of his victim, upon a fallen tree trunk by the wayside. A sparkling burst of flame, a crashing echo, half drowned with a yell of agony, and the inspector's horse becomes unmanageable, and bolts with him down the track into the open land beyond.

When Puttis can prevail on his horse to return into the scrub, he finds his attendant native constable standing by the side of the prostrate body of the would-be murderer, examining him by the light of a wax match he has just struck. The wounded savage, who is desperately hurt in the region of the right lung, scowls up at his enemies as they lean over him. He is quite naked, and lies on the road on his left side. The necklace of joints of yellow grass that he wears, shows him to be in mourning for a relative.

"What name this beggar, Yegeree?" inquires Puttis of his constable, meaning, "Who is this?"

"*Malle* beggar, Marmie. Him bin long a 'tation, mine think it" (Bad fellow, master, has been a station-hand, I think), pointing to some half-healed scars on the man's shoulder-blades that demonstrate to the experienced eyes looking down on him that he has recently received a flogging.

"Any more black fellows about?"

"No more black beggar, Marmie. This one sit down long his self," replies the trained black, in

whose wonderful powers of hearing, seeing, and deduction his officer has perfect confidence.

"What 'tation you belong to?" continues Yegeree, kicking the wounded man with the toe of his boot.

"Ah-r-r-r," growls the wounded savage, with such angry fierceness that Inspector Puttis's revolver drops into position, ready to give the sufferer his *coup de grâce* should he attempt any mischief.

"*Monta karaan!*" (curse you!) hisses the feeble voice, "you white devil. You kill um *lubra* (wife); you kill um pickaninnie; you,"—he pauses to gasp for breath,—"you kill um all about black fellow. No more brudder long a me. Ah! no more brudder long a me. *Monta karaan!!*" The sufferer's head drops down towards the ground, and he literally bites the dust, or rather mud, in a frenzy of passion and agony. Then he becomes unconscious apparently, and murmurs a few unintelligible words, followed by a groaning request for—

"*Kouta! kouta!*" (Water, water.)

"Ah!" muses Puttis to himself, knowing by experience that a dying man speaks his last words in the language of his childhood, however much he may have forgotten it a little while before, when in full health. "Ah! *Kouta* is a western word. He's a runaway nigger, and has been living with some tribe about here. He will be very well out of the way." And nodding to his black aide-de-camp, who thereupon begins to drag the wounded savage off the track into the scrub, the inspector mounts and rides off.

As he reaches the other side of the dried-up

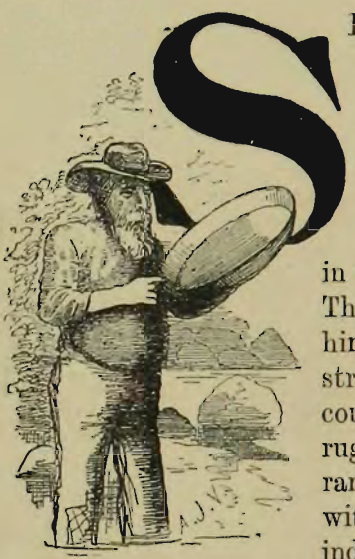
river-bed once more, his chestnut starts at the sound of a single carbine shot that rings out with weird, muffled suddenness from the dark glades he has just left. It is the requiem of another departed member of the fast-fading aboriginal race of Australia.

CHAPTER XII.

BILLY AND THE "HATTER."

"He traced with dying hand 'Remorse,'
And perished in the tracing."

J. G. WHITTIER.



SIXTY miles in a southerly direction from the place where Inspector Puttis met with the adventure related in our last chapter, the figure of a man is reposing beside a silent rocky pool, in the heart of a dense jungle. The tropic vegetation around him is part of the same straggling line of "scrub-country" that covers the great, rugged shoulders of the coast-range of Northern Queensland with a soft green mantle of indescribable grandeur and beauty. Enormous fig-trees (*Ficus*), with gigantic, buttressed stems, tower on all sides into the hanging gardens of climbing ferns, orchids, and creepers that swing above in mid-air, and provide the dark, moist

soil beneath with a perennial shelter from the sun's rays.

Save where a brawling brooklet has cut a rugged pathway for itself through the dense undergrowth, or a hoary monarch of the forest has succumbed to age and insect foes and fallen to the ground, no road through the matted growths around seems passable but for the smallest animals. Yet it is in these gloomy wilds that some of the tribes of Queensland aboriginals find their only safe sanctuary to-day, from the white settlers who have driven them from their old homes in the open country at the foot of the mountain chain. It is midday, but the green shadows of the leafy canopy overhead would render the reading of a newspaper difficult work. But although so dark, the forest is not silent. Its great pulses throb and murmur with the pleonastic signs of tropic life. There comes upon the ear the thousand tiny voices of insects and of birds, swelling and dying in a soft-toned lullaby chorus, which, like the murmur of the coast-waves ten miles to the eastward, is never ceasing.

It does not require a second glance at the lonely figure at the little rocky pool to ascertain that it is that of an aboriginal. He is dressed in the ragged remains of a coarse woollen shirt and trousers, both of which garments are so torn with the thousand thorns of the thickets their wearer has just traversed that the wonder is that they still cling to his thin and emaciated body.

Presently the black raises himself from the ground, where he has been reposing at full length upon his back, with his arms extended at right angles to his

body, after the fashion of aboriginals who have undergone excessive fatigue, and totters towards the little water-hole. First examining the sand upon its banks for footmarks, he next proceeds to bathe his bruised and bleeding limbs. The man before us is Billy, the late Dr. Dyesart's "boy," and he is almost in as bad a plight as when we saw him on the eventful morning by Paree River's side, when the explorer saved the wounded child from the uplifted axe of the squatter's tracker. Billy is now a young man of twenty-four years of age, well-built, active, and handsome for an aboriginal; but the privations and trouble he has lately undergone have pulled him down considerably. After refreshing himself at the pool, he sits down on a fallen tree, and, feeling in his pockets, smiles to himself as he finds that he still possesses a pipe, tobacco, and matches. He is too fatigued to search for food yet awhile, and here is something to stave off the feeling of hunger for a time. Odd as it may appear to those of our readers who do not know Australia intimately, Billy, although a native, and born a *warragal*, or wild native, was almost as helpless as a white man in this "scrub" country, as regards finding the means of sustenance. Take an aboriginal from the semi-desert interior of Australia, and place him in the coastal jungles of the north-eastern shores of the great island, and he is hardly more capable of getting his living there than a European, who then saw the "bush" for the first time, would be under similar circumstances. The *fauna* and *flora* were all new to Billy; even the snakes were different. This was bad enough, but, in addition, he had only just escaped from remorseless enemies, who might even now be

again upon his tracks. The dependent life he had led for sixteen years with his old master was much against him, now that he was thrown upon his own resources. Much of his late life had of course been in the "wilds," but they were very different to those that now formed his hiding-place. And, besides, there had generally been flour galore for "damper" and "Johnnie-cake" making, and always plenty of powder and shot as a *dernier ressort* with which to procure a meal.

The young man sits smoking and thinking for a while, and then falls to digging away at the rotten wood upon which he is seated,—a small, toothsome luncheon of fat, oily grubs rewarding his operations. Suddenly he stops, and withdrawing the pipe from his mouth listens intently. His marvellous powers of hearing have detected a distant sound that, falling on the tympanum of a European's ear, would have become jumbled up and lost amidst the confusing buzz of flies and other myriads of tiny noises around him. What the sound is caused by Billy cannot tell, but it is a stationary one, and in a different direction from that by which any of his pursuers are likely to approach. It may be natives chopping down a tree for honey, but it is almost too sharp in tone for that. After listening awhile the young man rises, and, having determined to ascertain the cause of the phenomenon, begins to crawl down the bed of the little rocky creek near by in the direction of the curious sounds.

Ragged fragments of basalt, straggling tendrils of sharp-toothed lawyer-vines, and other impediments, make his progress slow and painful; but after creeping along the half-dried-up course of the torrent about a quarter of a mile, where hundreds of mosquitoes and

leeches combined, in a sort of guerilla warfare, to attack the black's arms, legs, and face, he at last finds himself on the edge of a cliff, above one of those curious, circular, crater-lakes that abound in one part of the great uplands of the wild coast-range.

Black walls of basalt rise more or less perpendicularly around the dark, indigo water at their feet. Here and there the ancient lava has crystallized into prismatic columns, or weathered into picturesque battlements and projections, which stand up, like the ruins of some old abbey, above the feathery palms and undergrowth that struggles down the precipitous cliffs in places in avalanches of sunlit emerald or shady o'erhangings of brown and purple.

The dark mountain tarn is some two hundred yards across, and opposite to where the stream, whose bed has hitherto been Billy's road through the jungle, joins it, the surrounding wall of cliffs seems to fall away, as far as one can make out in the shadows, as if the waters of the lake there found a means of exit.

Cautiously peering through the prickly palms and brushwood, our black friend endeavours to find an open space through which he can proceed on his way; but so dense is the mass of vegetation on all sides that there appears but one road to take, that offered to him by the lake itself.

It speaks well for the superstitionless training Billy had received at his late master's hands that he at last determined to take water, as a means of continuing his journey towards the sounds that still, intermittently, make themselves heard above the various voices of the forest. For little in nature can surpass

the awful, supernatural look of these black, silent jungle lakes, and there was something particularly "uncanny" about the appearance of this one. And when, in addition to this, there was the certainty of those dark waters being the abode of more or less numerous swimming snakes, also the grim possibility of some frightful *veengnaan*—the local Australian edition of a Scotch "water-kelpie"—lurking in those gloomy depths, we may safely say that it showed Billy to be possessed of a cool courage of no ordinary sort when he determined on trusting his fatigued and wounded body to its inky bosom.

Quickly making up his mind, he wriggles through the springy mass of steaming vegetation upon the edge of the cliff before him,—losing quite a number of square inches of his fast-disappearing garments in the process,—and emerges from the shadows into the fierce mid-day heat of a tropical winter day.

A drop of twenty feet only has to be made to reach the silent waters at this point, for the storm-creek has cut through the brim of the crater basin a dozen feet or more; and Billy is just about to make the necessary dive—as the prickly vines around offer no friendly chance of descending by their means—when he pauses to listen once more.

There are two sounds now audible above the ordinary murmurings of the forest. The clink! clink! of the noise he has followed now comes clearly upon the ear, and he recognizes it as proceeding from the pick of some prospector or miner working a creek or gully below, and beyond the lake. There is a cheerful ring about it that strikes a pleasant chord of remembrance in the mind of the poor, hunted

wretch who now hears it; for it reminds him of happy, hopeful days with his old master. But the other sound that is upon the air, and whose purport Billy recognizes as easily as that of the unseen worker's blows,—there is no mistaking those musical whisperings that are just audible, and seem to come from that broken mass of piled-up grey and purple rock that towers above the scrub a little distance off upon his right hand. The "banked-up fires" of Billy's savage nature burst up into an energetic blaze as he hears the voices of a party of natives arranging themselves into a half circle, with the intention of surrounding and capturing some prey they have discovered. Billy correctly guesses the purport of these signals, but does not understand the exact meaning of the words, for he knows little or nothing of the coastal languages. What the natives on the rocky hill have in view is evident: it is the busy worker in the gully beyond. Billy forgets his fatigue as he glances round and satisfies himself that he has the start of the hunters, and then plunging into the water, with marvellously little noise considering the height from which he has descended, swims after the manner of a dog rapidly round the lake, keeping close to the cliffs on the side nearest to the approaching blacks.

The natives of most countries situated in the southern hemisphere, ere foreign civilization has crushed them in her deadly embrace, are good swimmers, but some of the inland tribes of Australian aborigines are perhaps able to produce the best of these,—men who can beat even the marvellous aquatic feats of Tongan, Samoan, and Maoris. The blacks of some portions of the central wilds have a fish-like proclivity for

swimming and remaining for a long time under water that is simply marvellous.

In the muddy water-holes of the great, intermittently-flowing rivers of Northern Australia, we have seen aborigines successfully chase the finny denizens of the deep pools, and bring them otter-like to the shore in their white-toothed jaws. And many a hunted black has saved himself from the cruel rifle of squatter invaders of his native land by pretending to fall as if shot into a river or water-hole, and remaining, apparently, at the bottom. They manage this artifice in various ways: sometimes by swimming an incredible distance under water to a sheltering weedy patch or bed of rushes, where they can remain hidden; but more often by plastering their heads and faces with mud, and remaining, sometimes for hours, with only their nose above water, in some corner where floating leaves, grass, or the like, afford a temporary blind to baffle their relentless foes.

Billy, although by no means as perfect a swimmer as some of his countrymen, showed great skill in the way in which he noiselessly moved through the water to the opposite side of the black lake, and hardly a ripple disturbed its placid surface, above which his dark, glistening head only thrice briefly appeared during his swim.

Arrived at the point he had started for, the young man slowly raises his face again into the hot sunshine behind the leafy cover of a fallen mass of enormous stagshorn ferns, and carefully reconnoitres the summit of the opposite cliffs for any enemies who may be watching him.

None are in sight, so Billy leaves the water and

proceeds to climb the rough side of the old volcano crater, and as the rocks are lower and less precipitous than at the place where he dived into the lake, he soon reaches the shelter of the scrub once more. A kind of rugged giants' staircase, which the overflow from the lake has cut in the ancient lava covering of the mountain, now leads Billy down into a wide, wild-looking gorge, about two hundred feet below the surface of the dark tarn above. Through the centre of this deep gully, and flanked with a dense growth of gracefully festooned trees, runs a clear, silver stream, with a cool, refreshing, rushing voice, amongst the smooth, rounded bounders in its course. Taking its rise in some limestone formation in the unknown depths of the jungles beyond, it has painted its rocky bed of a pine white with a calcareous deposit, that stands out in strong relief to the sombre hues of the overhanging cliffs that here and there jut out boldly from the verdure on either side.

Each recurring wet season sees the whitened boulders swept off towards the sea-coast by the angry brown waters of the "flushed" river, in company with the like that has collected during the interval since the previous rains, and then the fierce torrent, gradually settling down once more into the bubbling little stream as we now have it, sets to work again to paint a fresh strip of white through the twilight forest glades.

Kneeling by the side of one of the chain of snowy pools that stretches into the misty vista of graceful palms and dark-leaved trees, beneath the afternoon shadows of the gorge, is a strange-looking figure, quite in keeping with the wild surroundings,—a thin,

elderly man, with a ragged, unkempt beard and deeply bronzed and furrowed face, shaded by the most dilapidated of soft felt hats. The spare figure that Billy is now watching is covered with clothes so old, patched, and repatched that one would hesitate to pronounce an opinion as to which of the frowsy fragments formed part of the original garments. A certain yellow tone of colour, something between that of a nicely browned loaf and the lighter tints of a Cheddar cheese, pervades the "altogether" of the old man, for the iron-rust and clay-stains of years of lonely toil amongst the mountains have dyed both skin and rags of one common colour.

A thin but muscular left hand holds the outer rim of a brown, circular iron pan,—called by miners a "prospecting dish,"—and presses its other edge against the ancient's open-bosomed shirt, so as to keep the vessel firmly in position, as the keen old eyes examine its contents for the cheering yellow specks with a small pocket-lens.

Billy stands looking at the old prospector for a minute, and rightly guesses that he is one of those mining recluses, called "hatters" in Australia, some specimens of which class our dark friend has met before. In fact, Billy's curiosity as a miner himself makes him nearly forget the approaching natives, in his eagerness to ascertain if the dish now being "panned off" shows the presence of the precious metal in the locality. But this hesitation on his part is not for long. Billy has retained his European raiment at some considerable inconvenience in his flight through the scrub, for the same reason that chiefly prompts Australian aboriginals to put such

value upon the sartorial signs of civilization, and now he is to reap the fruits of his forethought.

Many an Australian bushman will shoot a native at sight, without compunction, if in *puris naturalibus*, and it is a fact that many make it a rule to do so when meeting a "nigger" alone in the bush; but the same individuals would hesitate to pay this attention to a black sheltered in that badge of servitude, an old shirt or ragged pair of inexpressibles whose wearer may possibly belong to a neighbouring squatter or police inspector.

Billy trusts now implicitly to his torn clothes to serve as a flag of truce till he can get a hearing from the man whose life he is probably about to save; and careless of the fact that the old miner has a revolver hanging in the open pouch at his belt, and that a fowling-piece lies by the pick within a yard of the thin, hairy right arm, he girds up his tatters and commences to whistle loudly as he makes his way over the hot boulders towards the curious, propensic figure by the stream-side.

The old prospector turns suddenly as the shrill notes of Billy's musical trilling echo along the rocky sides of the glen, and, dropping his dish, snatches up the brown old "Manton" by his side.

"Hold on, boss!" shouts Billy, thinking for the instant that perhaps he had been too rash after all, in leaving his shelter amongst the rocks before holding a parley with the stranger.

"Hold on, boss; you'll want your powder for warragal blacks directly, and better not waste it on 'good fellow' like me."

"Who the devil are you? Move a step an' I blow

your brains out," responds the old man, lowering the piece, however, from his shoulder.

"I'm white fellow's boy," explains Billy, sitting down on a boulder in order to show his faith in the miner's good sense, and also to give that dangerously excited old individual a chance to examine him and cool down. "I'm white fellow's boy, and I see black fellow coming after you. They make a circle to catch you. See, I have swum the lake to bring to you this news. I was hidden when I saw them first. They will try to get me now as well as you; you must let me go with you."

"Where's your boss?" asks the old miner, glancing round on all sides for any signs of approaching foes.

"My boss is dead. His name was Dr. Dyesart, Dyesart the explorer. Perhaps you've heard of him? But you had better clear before the *Kurra* (vermin) reach us."

The old "hatter's" eyes gleam suspiciously at Billy as he speaks again.

"Yer may be a good nigger. But yer too durned well spoken fur a nigger fur my thinkin'. I knew Dyesart once, and I'll soon find out if ye're trying ter fool me. But here, take the pick an' dish, and go on ahead of me down past the rock there."

Billy picks up the utensils mentioned, and, summoning up all the remainder of his strength, totters along the bed of the stream in the direction indicated by the skinny finger of the dirty old solitary, who comes shuffling along after him.

The part of the ravine the two men are now entering is even wilder than that where they first became

acquainted with each other. The ground sinks rapidly, as the increasing noisiness of the brawling streamlet indicates, as it leaps from rock to rock on its way, as if rejoicing upon its approach to freedom and the sea. Some way down the gorge, the steamy haze of a cataract climbs up the cliff sides and blots out further view in that direction, and the soft thunderings of falling waters come up the gully at intervals, as the evening breeze begins to stir the topmost branches of the stately trees.

Great black cliffs tower skywards on the left-hand side, and their grim fronts yawn with numerous caves, the cold husks of what were once enormous air-bubbles in that awful flood of molten rock that in the far-off past poured down these mountain slopes from the Bellenden Ker group of ancient volcanoes.

A few more words have passed between Billy and the ancient "hatter," which have apparently fairly satisfied the latter as to the goodness of the dark-skinned younger man, when the clamour of shouting voices behind them makes both turn round.

The sight that meets their eyes is by no means a pleasant one. Halfway down a part of the cliffs that the two men had passed only a minute or so before, a party of natives has just arrived, all of them naked, and carrying long spears, probably with the intention of cutting off the old digger's escape down the gully. These sable hunters, seeing that their quarry has, for the time, escaped them, are shouting to their friends up the gorge to join them, for a fresh effort to surround the object of their hatred and suspicion.

"Only just in time, boss!" exclaims Billy, his white eyeballs glowing like coals from their dark setting of

swarthy skin, as he watches the rapid movements of the enemy, who are moving along the summit of the cliff towards them. "Those devils got you safe enough, s'pose they'd kept you up there till dark," pointing to the open part of the gorge.

"But where will you camp? I'm tired. In fact, just 'bout done. I have walked many miles to-day, and have eaten little since three days."

"This is my camp," answers the "hatter," climbing up to one of the aforementioned caves with an agility that a far younger man might have envied. "We can keep out of the niggers' way here." And the old man coolly began to collect some sticks and leaves that lay about the entrance to the cavern, in order to start a fire, just as if two or three score of howling savages, all thirsting for his destruction, within a couple of hundred yards of him, was a matter of every-day occurrence to him, and therefore one of no importance.

Night falls quickly, and outside the cave the darkening forest begins its night chorus of many voices, day-choristers retiring one by one. The mountain teal whistle and "burr" in answer to each other; owls and night-jars scream and gurgle in the trees; boongaries (tree-kangeroos) squeak and bark to their mates, as they leave the branches for a night stroll in the scrub; and every crevice of the caves gives forth its dark legions of flitting bats, some of enormous size, who vociferate shrilly, with ear-piercing notes, as if thousands of ghostly slate pencils were squeaking in mid-air on an equal number of spectre slates.

Inside the cave, which is much larger than its small, porthole-like entrance might lead one to imagine, the

two men speedily make themselves as comfortable as they can under the circumstances. There is ample room for the fire that soon lights up the concave roof of the cavern with a cheerful, ruddy glow, and the smoke rolling out of the doorway keeps the place clear of mosquitoes, who are getting pretty lively outside already.

The old "hatter" has used this retreat as his camping ground for the last few days, whilst prospecting this part of the upper waters of the unnamed creek, that can be heard in the darkness flowing past his temporary abode, and a small but sufficient supply of flour, tea, and sugar is to be seen carefully suspended from the stalactite-like projections from the ceiling of the cave. This provender, with the remains of a couple of pigeons, half a dozen wild turkeys' eggs and some *coohooy* nuts give promise of a good "square meal," at last, to the exhausted and half-famished Billy.

"Yer've done me a good turn, and though yer are a nigger, yer welcome ter what I've got here," remarks the grey-headed old gold-seeker after a long silence, during which he has disinterred some of the aforementioned viands from an anti-wild dog pyramid of stones in one corner of the cave.

"Them blarmed devils outside hain't seen a white face up here afore I'm thinking, and I guess they'll not bother us till morning. What do you think, Charlie, or Jackie, or whatever yer name is?"

"My name's Billy, boss," replies our dark friend, who is endeavouring to keep himself awake by frantically chewing some of the sodden tobacco he has discovered in his pocket. "I think these fellows throw

spear into cave by-an-by, p'r'aps. I think best keep up here," pointing to a buttress of rock that, projecting from the walls of the cavern, provides a substantial shield against any missiles flung in at the cave-entrance. "But I know little of these fellow-blacks. I come from the flat country, this time, out by the Einsleigh River way."

"Ugh," grunts the old man in reply, and telling Billy to "have a 'doss' (sleep)," whilst his namesake, the billy, is boiling, the "hatter" proceeds to cut up a pipe-full of very foul-smelling tobacco, looking thoughtfully at the fire meanwhile.

Billy, on his part, is not slow to avail himself of his host's invitation, and sinking down upon the cold rock floor goes immediately to sleep.

If it should appear to any of our readers to border upon the incredible, that two men should thus calmly sleep and smoke in the face of danger, that to one inexperienced in the wilder phases of bush-life would appear to demand the utmost vigilance, we can only reply by offering as our defence, firstly, the old saying that "truth is oftentimes stranger than fiction;" and, secondly, that in this scene, as in each of our main incidents, we have endeavoured to sketch from memory a faithful if humble representation of an actual occurrence, in preference to indulging what latent talents we may possess in the walks of imaginative scene-painting.

Mais revenons à nos moutons. The old "hatter" sits silently smoking; sometimes glancing upwards towards the roof of the cave, where the almost obliterated representations of white and red hands—the work of previous aboriginal occupants of the retreat—

are still discernible, and at others fixing his ferret-like, bloodshot eyes upon the dark, hardship-lined face of the slumbering Billy, as the firelight dances upon its swarthy surface. Nothing appears to disturb the well-earned repose of the two men, save a small black snake that comes wriggling in to enjoy the warmth of the blazing branches, and meets with a warmer reception than it had anticipated. Then the billy at last splutters out its welcome signal, and the old digger and his companion proceed to indulge that taste that has made Australians the greatest consumers of tea, per head, in the world.

"Them *Myalls* (wild natives) don't seem to mean business to-night," observes Billy's host, when the silent meal is finished, as he hands our black friend a piece of "nailrod" with which to charge his evening pipe.

"I think they wait, boss. Watch an hour, perhaps two or three, then throw spears." Billy leans forward as he speaks to heat a piece of tobacco in the embers, in order to soften the flinty morsel, and thereby facilitate the operation of cutting it into shreds.

"I think those beggars," jerking his black thumb towards the darkness outside the cave entrance, "I think those beggars come by-and-by. "*Urraurruna* (take care); I think they come presently."

Then both men relapse again into silence, each engaged with his own unpleasant thoughts. The "hatter," although somewhat favourably prepossessed with Billy's appearance, and glad of a companion for the time being, has that instinctive distrust of a "nigger" common to most Australian bushmen. He does not care altogether for the presence of his new

acquaintance in the cave, and even considers, for a moment, what would be the easiest way of getting rid of him, and making him seek another shelter for the night. But the feeling of gratitude to Billy for the service he has rendered that day finally prevails, and the old man determines to hear the "boy" further explain his appearance in the gorge before he acts.

Billy, on his part, although naturally of a sanguine turn of mind (as indeed all his race are), and little given to ruminating upon the sorrows of to-morrow, is trying to puzzle out a plan of future operations, whose main object is to discover the nephew of his late employer. He notices the half-concealed, suspicious glances of his dirty old host, and is almost tempted to offer to seek other lodgings, when the latter breaks the silence once more.

"'Spose you're a runaway nigger? Station or police?"

"Yes, boss, I'm a runaway. But I've never worked on station. Always with the doctor. All my time mining and cooking for the old man."

"Thought yer was," grunts the old prospector, taking his pipe from between his yellow teeth for an instant; "noticed the way yer carried the pick, and guessed yer knew something about 'breaking down a face.'"

"Yes, I can do that much, anyhow," remarks Billy quietly.

"Well, that bein' so, lad, I ain't the man as would turn dog on a poor beggar, let alone a miner, be he black or white. I ain't built that way." The old man stops speaking to listen to a slight noise outside the cave for a moment, and then continues: "If yer

like to camp here longer me till I've done this gully, yer can. But just sling me a yarn about how yer came to this hole in the ranges." The speaker turns towards the fire, that has burnt itself low, and commences to rake it into renewed brightness. As he does so, his head and right arm leave the shelter of the projecting rock before-mentioned, and come between the luminous background of flames and the cave entrance.

Then Billy's prognostications are fulfilled; for some natives, who have been silently watching for an opportunity to attack the occupants of the cavern, immediately take advantage of the appearance of the old digger, and the fire embers are scattered right and left by three spears, which, however, luckily all miss their human target.

The two men leap to their feet, and Billy, snatching up the old "hatter's" shot-gun, without waiting a moment to ask the permisson of its owner, glides noiselessly into the darkness, and is lost to the view of his startled host. Presently the latter proceeds to collect the scattered fire-sticks, and adding to them the spears, which he breaks up into pieces, he relights his pipe and waits for the return of his guest. Half an hour passes in silence, and then two loud reports, followed by the rain-like pattering of bouncing shot about the entrance to the cave, and the screams of a number of agonized voices, proclaim the successful accomplishment of Billy's plucky plan of retaliation upon the enemy outside.

"No more trouble to-night," observes that individual, with a complaisant grin, as he presently returns into the cavern, striking the butt of the gun

he carries, as he walks, so as to give a jangling signal of his approach to the man by the fire, who, revolver in hand, might otherwise mistake him for an enemy. "Shot guns better at night than a rifle for this kind of work. The beggars have all cleared. None killed, I think."

"All the better, lad. All the days I've knocked about the bush, I've never shot a black yet, though I've seen a many bowled over. But they warn't bad in the old days, as they are now. These beggars here, though, are a bit *koolie* (fierce) ; and I don't blame them. They don't like to see a white face,"—the old man's countenance was about the tone of colour of a new pig-skin saddle,—"they don't like to see a white face hereabouts, for the scrub's the only place in this part of Queensland where the poor beggars ain't hunted."

The night passes without further cause for alarm, and next day, and the one after, and for several weeks Billy remains with the old prospector. And the latter, being a sensible man, and finding himself thus brought into contact with a mind in no ways inferior to his own,—albeit housed in corporal surroundings of that dark tint that has hitherto placed the unfortunate aborigines beyond the pale of civilized law in Australia, —soon makes a companion and partner of Billy, instead of treating him as a mere animal, as has hitherto been his custom with those black "boys" he has had occasion to employ.

Moreover, in our dark friend the ancient "hatter" finds his ideal of what a model "mate" should be,—strong, cheerful, plucky, frugal, and, above all, lucky. And sometimes, as the strange pair smoke their

evening pipes together in the fire-lit cave, and the thoughts of the "boss" go flying back into the dim vistas of memory, and the cruel swindles perpetrated upon him by this and that white partner of his younger days are re-enacted in his mind's eye, he cannot help contrasting them unfavourably with his present mate, whose coming departure, although he is "only a nigger," the old man begins to dread with a fear that surprises himself.

"Swelp me," the poor old solitary soul sometimes ejaculates to himself, as the chilling thought of once more being a lonely "hatter" in these awful wilds goes like an ague-shiver through his spare and bended form, "I suppose I'm getting too old for this kind of work; and if I had had a mate like Billy when I was young I would have been doing the 'toff' in Sydney by this time, like that rascal Canoona Bill that swindled me on the Crocodile, and not have had to work up to my knees in water, with the pan and shovel, at my time of life."

But it is not approaching age or failing bodily strength that is the cause of this change in the old miner's feelings, as he tries to persuade himself it is, for he cannot find it in his mind to confess he feels any attachment or affection for a "nigger." It is something very different that begins to make him feel disgusted with the idea of a return to his solitary mode of life.

Billy's new friend, like most of his class of old "hatters," became disgusted with the world owing to having been unfortunate in his choice of partners, and now that he at last finds one to suit him, his view of life becomes correspondingly fairer than heretofore.

"Billy!" one evening said the old man,—who has lately informed our black friend that he is known at Geraldtown and Herberton by his patronymic of Weevil,—"Billy! you ain't told me yet how you come to clear out from the station where you left the doctor's letter. What station was it?"

Billy, who is shaping a new pick-handle by the light of the fire, does not reply for a minute or two. When he does look up at the lean figure on the other side of the flames, he betrays a little of that sulky, spoilt-child demeanour generally exhibited by members of his race when recounting any occurrence that has been a source of annoyance to them.

"I ran away, boss, because they try and get me to show them the way back to where I planted the doctor. Mister Giles, who owns the station——"

"Who?" Old Weevil leans across the smoke towards Billy. "It warn't Wilson Giles, were it?" he asks in a low, hoarse voice, looking at the black with ill-concealed anxiety.

"Yes, Wilson was his front name. D'you know him?"

The old man withdraws into the semi-obscurity of a shadowy pile of firewood against which he is standing at the question, much like a sea-anemone shrinks into its rock cleft before an obtrusive human finger.

"Yes, I know him," growls the old man in the darkness, exhibiting an amount of hatred in the tone of his voice that makes Billy look in the direction of the wood stack with open eyes and mouth. Weevil, however, does not appear likely to be communicative, so Billy presently continues: "The doctor's last words almost were, 'Don't let any one know where

you left me save my nephew,' and so it wasn't likely I was going to tell the first man as asked me. Was it likely ? "

"Burn him ! No ! " ejaculated Mr. Weevil, in parenthesis.

"Giles tried me with one thing and then another. Offered me anything I liked, at last, to take him to the grave. Thought I was only like a station black, I suppose ! " and the speaker scrapes angrily at the wooden handle between his knees, with a black splinter of obsidian (volcanic glass) that he is using as a ready-made draw-knife.

"Then Giles has a talk with his niece,—she bosses it at 'Government House'" (is mistress at the head-station),—"and she says 'Flog the nigger ! flog him !' And a house-gin who belongs to my *Mordu Kapara* (class-family), which is *Kalaru*, hears all this as she sets cloth in the parlour. She come and tells me. Then me run away. Then me turn wild beggar again ! "

Billy, who by this time is gesticulating excitedly with his hands, curiously relapses, slightly,—as he always does when highly agitated,—into the remarkable "station-jargon" to which we have already had occasion to refer.

"Me run and run. An' Giles, he borrow the big dogs with the red eyes and thin flanks (bloodhounds) from Billa Billa station."

"I know 'em," interrupts old Weevil ; "that fellow on the Mulgrave's made a good thing out of breeding them for the squatters."

"Well, boss, I made for the scrub. But I get tired, and the stinging-tree blind me, all but. The

dogs come up close. I hear them howl, and the men calling to them. But the big dogs badly trained; they go after young cassowary, and I drown my tracks in a creek, and then 'possum' (hide in a tree) all the day."

After Billy has thus graphically given his account of his marvellous escape from the clutches of Mr. Giles, the conversation turns upon the subject of going down the creek to the nearest township, which we will christen Meesonton, after a well-known Australian explorer living in the district.

"We'll both go as far as the low scrub range, over the Beatrice creek," observes old Weevil, "and yer can work the old sluice there I was telling yer of yesterday if them cursed Chinkies ain't found it. I won't be more nor a week or so away. I wouldn't advise yer," continues the old man, "ter show yer face near the store yet awhile. That beggar Giles is well in with the perlice, and they'd knab yer like enough."

So very early next morning Billy and the old miner set out; just about the time when that earliest of early birds, the crow, has begun to think it time to commence his matutinal robberies, and long ere the sun has risen to dry the fern and scrub sufficiently for any natives to be out hunting who might notice the two men's departure. By midday our friends have followed for eight miles that only road possible through the dense jungle,—the rough, white bed of the merry little creek. Here, after a rest and a smoke, the men left the stream and clambered up the dark, clayey banks, when they found themselves on a broken, open piece of country, across which they

steered, Weevil leading, in a north-easterly direction, passing numerous little trickling creeks trending eastwards on their way. Here and there the recent footprints of aborigines were to be seen in the rich, volcanic soil; and once Billy detected the voices of natives, but said nothing to his companion about it. Late in the afternoon, after crossing some level table-lands, thinly covered with scrub, several large gunyahs (native dwellings) were discovered, and, as the evening began to look stormy, the two men took possession of one of the largest of them. These huts were similar to beehives in shape, like those of the village on the Paree river that we described in Chapter VIII., and were substantially thatched with fern fronds and that coarse kind of grass that grows in the open spaces in the scrub called "pockets" by northern bushmen. These "pockets" are treeless spots circular in form, and generally half an acre in extent, and are used by the aborigines for *boorers* (native tournaments) and dances. One of these native *Champs de Mars*, on the upper Barron river, covers quite fifteen acres, and is also a perfect circle.

It was still dark, the next morning, when Billy and old Weevil started once more on their journey; and the latter, in consequence, fell into a two-foot hole near the gunyah in which they had slept, and found himself lying on a mass of loose, rattling objects, which his sense of touch quickly told him were human skulls,—the remains, doubtless, of by-gone picnics of the good people whose village the two men had appropriated during the previous night.

Pushing onwards, our friends spent the first half of the day in climbing rocky peaks, and crossing the

dark, rugged sources of creeks, wrapped in their primeval gloom of frizzled, intricate masses of thorny vines and dangerous stinging-trees ; and, after making only three miles in six hours, were forced to rest awhile in a ragged gully, walled in by grey slate cliffs, and strewn with glistening blocks of white and "hungry" quartz.

The stinging-tree, which we have twice mentioned in this chapter, is worthy of a few remarks, for it is perhaps the most terrible of all vegetable growths, and is found only in the scrub-country through which Billy and his friend are now forcing their way.

This horrible guardian of the penetralia of the Queensland jungle stands from five to fifteen feet in height, and has a general appearance somewhat similar to that of a small mulberry-tree ; but the heart-shaped leaves of the plant before us differ from those of the European fruit just mentioned in that they are larger, and because they look as if manufactured from some light-green, velvety material, such as plush. Their peculiarly soft and inviting aspect is caused by an almost invisible coating of microscopic cillia, and it is to these that the dangerous characteristics of the plant are due. The unhappy wanderer in these wilds, who allows any part of his body to come in contact with those beautiful, inviting tongues of green, soon finds them veritable tongues of fire, and it will be weeks, perhaps months, ere the scorching agony occasioned by their sting is entirely eradicated. Nor are numerous instances wanting of the deaths of men and animals following the act of contact with this terrible *lusus naturæ*.

Billy and Weevil make more progress during the

afternoon, the country being more level and the scrub less thick; but, although both men are inured to fatigue and discomfort of all sorts, they are forced to camp early, after doing another six miles. Ragged, weary, and barefooted,—for even the most imaginative mind could hardly recognize the flabby pieces of water-logged leather that still adhere to the men's feet as boots,—the two travellers fling themselves down on the dry, sandy bed of a mountain torrent, and scrape the clusters of swollen leeches from their ankles, which are covered with clotted blood, and pick the bush-ticks and scrub-itch insects from their flesh with the point of the long scrub-knife the old digger carries.

As our friends are engaged in this painful but necessary toilet of a voyager through the Queensland scrub, a wild turkey comes blundering by in all the glories of her glossy, blue-black feathers and brilliant red and yellow head,—not the *Otis Australasianus* which is known to southern settlers as a "wild turkey" and is in reality a bustard, but a true scrub turkey (*Telegallus*).

Billy is not long in tracking the footprints of the bird back to its enormous mound nest. For this ingenious feathered biped, like her smaller contemporary the scrub hen (*Megapodius tumulus*), saves herself from the monotonous duty of sitting on her eggs by depositing them in a capital natural incubator, formed of rotting and heated leaves, which she collects into a pile, and arranges so as to do the hatching part of the business for her.

A meal of turkey eggs and roasted "cozzon" berries, whose red clusters are to be seen hanging

from parasitic vines upon the great stems around in plentiful profusion, and then the men retire to rest upon their wet blankets, beneath a great ledge of granite, upon whose surface some aboriginal artist has delineated in different colours the admirable representations of immense frogs in various attitudes.

But trouble commences with the morrow; and when old Weevil raises his stiff and patch-work form from the hard couch upon which he has passed the night, he finds Billy, gun in hand, watching something on the dim summit of the cliffs opposite their camp.

"Sh!" observes that individual, without turning his head; "plenty black fellow all about here. D'you see that beggar's head?"

"Bust 'em!" yawns the old digger, stretching; "they won't interfere with us. Let's have tucker, and 'break camp' as soon as we can."

The frugal repast is soon silently completed, but half a mile down the creek, where the aborigines have constructed an ingenious weir, armed with conical baskets in which to catch what fish may pass that way, Billy and his companion find a small army of copper-coloured natives collected on the opposite side of the stream, who wave and beckon to the two travellers to return whence they came. Their gesticulations and fierce yells not having the desired effect, a series of signals are given by them to other natives in ambush on the jungle-fringed precipices that rise with lycopodium-tasselled ledges above the heads of the intruders.

"We're in fur it now!" grunts the older man, who has done some prospecting in New Guinea, amongst

other places. "Them yellow niggers is Kalkadoones, and as like Papuans as may be; and they're devils to fight. Keep close under the cliff."

Billy guesses the mode of attack which the old digger's experience teaches him to anticipate, and which prompts his advice to his mate to seek the shelter of the rocks as much as possible. The wiseness of this precaution is soon seen. For when our friends are fairly started on their way past the rapids in the gloomy gorge, the natives commence hurling down great boulders of conglomerate. These would speedily have crushed the adventurous twain below, had they not been sheltered by the overhanging base of the precipice, which was worn concave by the river's action during floods. As it was many of the rocks bounded horribly close to the men's heads.

"I can't use my gun here, that's sartin," presently observes the old man, as he puts fresh caps upon his old companion of many years. "We'll have to clear them beggars off before we go any further." Then springing from his shelter with his rags and tangled grey locks flying in the air, Weevil makes for a rocky reef that juts out into the river, which is deep at this place, with the idea of peppering the enemy from this point of vantage.

But the Fates are against him, and sable Sister Atropos snaps her weird scissors on poor old Weevil's thread of existence. A shower of stones descends upon the wild-looking figure as it hurries towards the river, and the old miner falls an uncouth, bleeding object upon the strand, groaning heavily.

Happily, the gun has escaped destruction, and by its aid Billy, who rushes forward to defend his friend,

performs prodigies of valour that on a field of civilized warfare would certainly have gained him some such coveted distinction as the Victoria Cross.

A hurried shot at the yelling figures that are clinging to the trees overhanging the edge of the cliff in an appalling manner, and one of them comes spinning down with a sickening thud upon the rocks below. A second wire cartridge sent in the same direction is equally successful, and another of the enemy tumbles forward on to a jagged rock that projects from the precipice; while his friends, horrified at the sudden illness that has thus overtaken two of their number, stop short in the middle of a diabolical yell of triumph, and clearing off are seen no more.

Billy bathes the crushed features of the old man, whose stentorous breathing shows how badly he is injured, and the cold water revives him somewhat.

"I'm busted in my inside, lad," he murmurs raspily. "Gimme me pipe. I can't see to—— How blind I'm gettin'!"

After a pause, during which he has tried to smoke in vain, he asks to be raised in a sitting posture.

"Billy," he says, when this is effected, "you're a good boy. I'm goin' fast. Listen ter me afore I chuck it up altogether. Me legs is dead already."

The dying man has a crime upon his soul, and dreads to take the secret of it with him into the unknown which he is about to enter, so he fights gamely against the dissolution that is fast approaching till he has told it to Billy.

"Remember what I tell ye, lad. 'Twas I as stole Wilson Giles's only son. Giles had ruined my life, and (gasp) I tuck revenge. I marked the boy blue

star an' W. G. on near shoulder. Then I cleared out an' tuck him (gasp) ter Sydney."

Silence for a time follows, after which the expiring flame of life flickers up, and the last words Weevil speaks on earth are gasped out.

"God furgive me! Intended to return boy after a bit. Lost him in Sydney. God furgive me! (gasp). Goo'-bye, ole man. Let's have 'nother—— (gasp). Oh God! Jane! Jane! come back ter me!"

The old man stretches out his wounded hands as he wails the last sentence in tone of wild entreaty, and Billy feels, by the suddenly-increased weight in his arms, that he is holding a corpse.

CHAPTER XIII.

CLAUDE'S LETTER TO DICK.

"We have at various times had stories told us of the treatment the blacks are subjected to in the bush, and it behoves the Government to make strict inquiry into the whole question. By the way, where is the Protector of Aborigines, and what has he got to say in the matter?

"Oh it's only a nigger, you know;
It's only a nigger, you know;
A nigger to wallop, a nigger to slave,
To treat with a word and a blow.

"It's only a nigger, you know;
A nigger, whose feelings are slow;
A nigger to chain up, a nigger to treat
To a kick, and a curse, and a blow.

"It's only a nigger, you know;
It's only a nigger, you know;
But he's also a brother, a man like the rest,
Though his skin may be black as a crow."

"BACCA."

From the "Lantern," South Australia, 1889.

"MOUNT SILVER,
"*August 8th*, 1889.

"MR. RICHARD SHAW, *Te Renga-renga, Drury, New Zealand.*

"DEAR DICK,—In my letter to the 'Mater' I have set forth all those of my experiences, up to date, that I consider of most interest to the gentle female mind, and have omitted certain others of a more painful character. For you, old man, I preserve the honour of participating in the 'noble indignation' which at present suffuses the soul of 'yours regardfully,'—the outcome of my present surroundings of many most un-English institutions. For my pericardiac region is sickened and disgusted with certain 'goings on' in this fair colony of the British Crown, and I would fain burst into poetry—after the Whittier style—only that I am well aware that my knowledge of the properties of the hexameter is considerably less than my acquaintance with those of the lactometer.

"But ere I launch into these matters, I will roughly sketch out my doings since I posted my last letter, which I wrote at the pretty, sand-surrounded, and 'quite too awfully' tropical little port of Cairns.

"Australian hospitality is proverbial, but I have to withdraw myself as much as possible from the

'here's-a-hand-me-trusty-fren'' kind of thing, as I find it means participating in an unlimited number of 'nips' of 'stringy bark,"—a curious combination of fusil oil and turpentine, labelled 'whisky,' or of a decoction of new and exceedingly virulent rum, much patronised by the inhabitants of these sugar-cane districts. However, whilst arranging the necessary preliminaries for my journey at this little inland township, I have made several acquaintances. One, a Mr. Feder,—the manager of a German-Lutheran mission station about fifty miles from here,—who, it appears, knew my Uncle Dyesart some few years back, and may prove useful to me in my search after Billy. I have also come across an Inspector of Police, by name John Bigger, who, although I have certainly not returned his advances with much warmth, for I think him a silly old swiper, is everlastingly thrusting his companionship upon me; and, although he is apparently doing his best to make my stay here agreeable, one *can* have too much of a good thing, especially when the said good thing suffers rather from '*furor loquendi*,' in other words, is a confounded old bore.

"This inspector introduced himself to me as a friend of one Inspector Puttis, whom he says was a friend of uncle's. This Puttis sends word that Billy has disappeared from Murdaro station; but as I never mentioned the fact that I wanted to find Billy to any one here till after I received this message, I am rather at a loss to understand it altogether.

"Now my other acquaintance here—the missionary cuss I mentioned—curiously re-echoes the last words in uncle's letter, namely, to distrust the police. And

in faith I believe they're a bad lot entirely, although I suppose there are some exceptions.

"It is partly in consequence of this that I have not accepted an invitation to go shooting with the inspector to-day, and am writing to you instead.

"My old miner-friend got bitten by a large poisonous black spider at Cairns, and is *hors de combat*. So I have been obliged to leave him behind for a time with Don, who is turning out a grand little fellow. These two will follow me to Mount Silver next week, when I shall start for Murdaro station immediately. I am not wasting my time in the interim, although I itch to start, but am making myself acquainted with the ways of station-life and mining matters in this wild part of the world. If Billy arrives at the mission station, as Mr. Feder thinks he probably will, I shall be communicated with at once. But 'how do I manage without my little henchman Don?' you'll be after asking. Well, that brings me to the main subject matter of this epistle. I have a second 'boy Friday' now; and what is more, he's black as a crow, and, moreover, I *bought* him. Yes, in the year of our Lord, 1889, in the civilized street of a town in an English colony, I followed the custom of the place, and purchased the little black specimen of humanity that is now amusing a party of his aboriginal friends, over there by the town well, by imitating with a piece of stick the way I brush my teeth of a morning, which operation I noticed has amazed him muchly, and is probably indulged in by few of the whites about here.

"I travelled alone as far as this place, being anxious to get on here; and my obliging host—who talks broad Scotch, although he is by two generations a

colonist—advised me to get a 'boy,' as all black servants, regardless of age, are called here, to look after my two horses. Well, to cut the story short, I paid £2 for little Joe to a carrier whom 'mine host' informed of my wants. Joe is a great help, and according to the unwritten law of the place,—which appears to be supported by what little pulpit power they have here,—my 'boy' is, in this free land, my property, body and soul.

"Yes, coming here from New Zealand one feels as if he had somehow descended into the slave countries of Mrs. Beecher Stowe, and the odd part of it is that its very existence is unknown in England, neither in Sydney nor Brisbane to any great extent. But these places, it is true, have their own little white slaves 'always with them,' as my experiences amongst the newsboys, when I got little Don, has taught me.

"Although I did pander to the local custom, against which I am speaking, in buying Joe, I trust to do something good for him to cover this sin of mine, and will bring him back to New Zealand with me.

"Any one who boasts of being the 'free-born son of an Englishman' cannot look coolly on at the treatment of the unfortunate blacks up here in Queensland. The poor wretches one sees forced to work by brutal squatters, carriers, 'cockatoo' settlers, and others, have no hope to cheer them like those mentioned by your old American poet-friend, John Greenleaf Whittier :—

"'O'er dusky faces, seamed and old,
And hands horn-hard with unpaid toil,
With hope in every rustling fold,
We saw your star-dropt flag uncoil.'

"No, the (five) star-drop flag of Australia, heralding the (three) star drop (whisky) of the advancing army of locust-squatters, brings no hope, or mercy either, to the poor devils whose ancestral domains become their fields of unceasing and 'unpaid toil.' All the horrors depicted by Mrs. Beecher Stowe, all the sorrows sung of by the immortal Whittier, are rampant around me as I write. And it seems that it is in vain that the immorality of the horrible traffic is thundered into the ears of the various Governments—who after all are but the representatives of the squatter-kings—by various southern papers from time to time. Read the following first-rate article upon the subject, by Mr. Rose, the editor of the *Brisbane Courier*, the boss paper of the colony, which appeared on September 16th, last year.

"'Communications that have lately reached us from the north show too clearly that our people have not yet been educated to the recognition of the human rights of the original possessors of Australia. A correspondent forwards descriptions of atrocities of alleged frequent occurrence in the northern districts, the bare recital of which is enough to make one's ears to tingle. Nor are we allowed the common consolation of ignorance or sentimentalism or exaggeration on the part of our informer. For our correspondent is a well-known pressman, who has done a bit of exploiting both in Australasia and New Guinea, who admits that he has himself shot natives who would otherwise have shot him, and of whom we can readily believe that, as he says, he is "not particularly prejudiced in favour of the natives or very soft-hearted." He even tells us that he is not himself a religious man, and yet

declares that he would not think the future commonly assigned to the wicked by religious people as too condign a punishment for atrocities that have come within his knowledge. His indictment touches mainly the districts lying between Cairns and Georgetown, where, he says, the blacks are being decimated, and by Government servants in the shape of black troopers and their masters, whose "dispersion" of the aboriginals in particular localities has simply come to mean their slaughter. He speaks of men being kept for the sole purpose of hunting and killing the aborigines; he gives instances of their camps being surrounded, and men, women, and children massacred for killing cattle, when, through the white man's presence, they could no longer find game; and he tells in detail one story of the extermination of a camp simply because some blacks had been seen passing a mining station where nothing had been stolen for months. Roundly he charges the "grass dukes" and their subordinates with "murdering, abducting children for immoral purposes, and stockwhipping defenceless girls," and he condemns "each Government that comes into power for winking at the slaughter of our black fellow-subjects of the Queen as an easy way of getting rid of the native question." The *Northern Miner* asserts that this picture is not overdrawn, and that the atrocities mentioned have even been exceeded. It refers to squatters branding blacks, keeping harems of black gins, and finding their slaughtering record no bar to advancement to high office in the State. The black trooper system is, in the view of this paper, legalized murder, which reckons the life of a bullock of more account than that of a score of black fellows.

We do not vouch for the truth of these serious charges; but, if true, the horrible demoralisation of such a system on blacks and whites alike it is difficult to over-estimate; and cry exaggeration as we may, it is clear that enough remains to call for the immediate and earnest attention of the Government. Sir Thomas McIlwraith will earn the gratitude of the colony to all time if he will but exert himself for the aborigines of Australia—whose country after all we have simply taken from them by force—as Sir Samuel Griffith exerted himself for the kanakas. Surely there is as much call for a Commission of Inquiry in the one case as in the other. The recently inaugurated society for the protection of the aborigines has its work cut out for it, and has not been formed a moment too soon. We hope that the statements we have referred to will waken our people to the fact that there is a much louder call and a great deal more room for this kind of protection than is commonly supposed. We must add that the *Northern Miner*, referring to the circumstance that the Americans have tried to stay the extinction of their aborigines by granting them large reserves, scattered all over the western states, pleads, and surely with reason, that a similar course should be followed with ours. We can do it more easily now than it can be done in future generations. Most of their vices, and the very thefts for which they are so terribly punished, come from the contact with the whites into which they are driven by want, and an occasional outburst of not unnatural vengeance. If the Aborigines' Protection Association will add this to the otherwise admirable programme of their operations —if indeed it is not already practically included—

published by us the other day, and set themselves vigorously to carry their plans into effect, they will earn the gratitude alike of whites and blacks, and aid in removing a stain which will otherwise blot and burn into our future history.'

"Mr. Feder, my missionary friend, who gave me this newspaper clipping, says that Thadeus O'Kane, the proprietor-editor of another influential paper, the *Northern Miner*, has taken up the subject warmly at various times, but with little or no good resulting therefrom.

"But although I know that,—

> 'The age is dull and mean. Men creep,
> Not walk; with blood too pale and tame
> To pay the debt they owe to shame,'

and that this community is too much enfeebled by its tropic habitat to make an energetic move against the shocking system that its landholders have introduced, even if it wished to do so, yet I am at a loss to understand why that spirit of the age, Trade Unionism, has not risen against this slave business. Surely Labour, whose power, at any rate, in the southern parts of Australia is immense, must be aware of the benefit that must accrue to white workmen if the 'unpaid labour' of the blacks, now forced to work by squatters and others, were made illegal. Chinamen and kanakas are hounded down by the Australian working-man with a certain amount of reason, for beastly immorality, combined with Oriental diseases, are things to be avoided in a young colony, where all men should be healthy voters and thinkers. But why should the 'horny-handed' keep silent when the paths of labour

are clogged by the slave system,—which obtains, I believe, over a large and growing portion of Australia, —and yet shriek wildly when coloured labour of another sort competes with them at a wage only a little less than that demanded by whites?

"Before I close with some of my 'personal experiences,' I want you to note the missionary side of this question. You know I'm too disgusted with the greedy way various missionary societies have gone in for land-grabbing and land-dealing in New Zealand to be much of a philo-missionist, and we both know something of mission work in the South Seas, and that too much humbug and too many tares among the wheat—

'Of generous thought and deed were sown;'

yet I feel very friendly towards the little circle of men who have taken up the cause of the unfortunate natives of Australia. The Revs. J. B. Gribble, R. J. Flanagan, Fyson, J. Flierl, and my friend Feder here have made a hard fight for it; and a most dangerous and unthankful position these men occupy, in the midst of squatters and squatter-commissioned police who watch their every action. As it is, the fund secured to preserve and protect the natives is apparently almost entirely derived from Europe, and half of that amount I believe from Germany. Are these natives worth preserving? Well, when the colony of Victoria a few years back—as I see by a Government report—adopted a new system of education, the *first school* obtaining one hundred per cent. of marks was the RAMAH YUCK School of *Aborigines*, Gippsland. This, I believe, is a fair sample of what

can be done with the 'niggers' if properly handled, and all agree that the northern blacks are a finer race than those of the south; and, speaking of my personal acquaintance with them, I can say they compare in intelligence very favourably with our 'noble savage' in New Zealand; in fact, are, I think, much 'cuter.' Now, at the risk of making this letter too long,—and if so you can take it in instalments,—I'll just give you some of my 'personal experiences' to show you to what an extent slavery and murder obtains in Queensland.

"I had been introduced a few days since to cockatoo-squatter, who holds a small run within thirty miles of one of the civilized (?) municipalities in this district.

"'Come out and stop a few days with me,' he said, 'and if you want any native curios, or a skull or two, as you're a scientist, I'll see if Sergeant Bedad can come up with his "boys." No end of sport, can assure you.' I thought he was making a grim joke,—but you will see. A town councillor who was going my way, to visit a gold-mine up on the ranges beyond my destination, offered to show me the way. We started together, and, after about two hours' ride, as we were entering a piece of scrub, Mr. Councillor pulls out a long-barrelled revolver from his dust-coat pocket, and motions to me to be quiet. Thinking he saw a wild pig or cassowary, I let him go on by himself a bit.

"'I saw two niggers here, last time I was passing, —last week,' he explains as I overtake him,—'they were getting grubs out of that rotten tree, by the bush-layers there; but they cleared off before I could get a fair shot at them.' I needn't tell you, old man,

that I was astonished at what my companion said; and, getting off my horse to see if he was 'having me,' found the print of the niggers' feet in the black soil, the hole in the rotten tree which they had made in searching for grubs, and lastly, the most circumstantial piece of evidence to prove he was not joking, but terribly in earnest, the bullet-hole of the shot he had fired in a tree stem close by.

"Arrived at the little station, I was introduced to Mrs. Cockatoo-squatter. She was a tall, dark, lady-like person, with something particularly gentle and woman-like about her, that was very charming after the specimens of the weaker (?) sex one generally sees up this way. But she was the next one to startle my new-chum anti-slavery notions. She had no children of her own, but was possessed of two little child-slaves, who, she informed me, the local sergeant of Black Police had kindly 'saved for her' out of a camp of blacks he had destroyed four miles down the river. I saw the remains of the ingenious fish-weir erected by these unfortunates one day when out for a ride. These blacks had apparently never injured any one; but, as Mrs. Cockatoo informed me, with a gentle smile, 'they were always singing or making a noise of some sort, and disturbed the cattle,' which liked to stand in the shallows near the camp, in preference to merely taking a drink at the steep banks of the other parts of the river frontage. 'The niggers frightened them; besides, the blacks are always a nuisance.' So the camp was surrounded one night and 'dispersed,'—the meaning of which word, in this part of the Queen's dominions, I have already explained to you.

"These child-slaves, whose baby-love for each other was most touching, were naturally very pretty, as most of the native children I have seen are; but they were sadly neglected, and very cruelly treated. Their sole garment consisted of an old sack, stiff and coated with dirt, the bottom of which was perforated with three holes, one for the head and two for the little black arms. Although only six or eight years of age, these children had to chop up the firewood used in the house, fetch the water from the river, etc., and were often cruelly beaten for trivial offences. In fact I left the station, after spending three days there, chiefly on account of the painful sight always before my eyes of the cruelty inflicted upon these unhappy little 'niggers.'

"Mrs. Cockatoo told me a pleasant story, too, the first day I was at her house, illustrating the 'annoyance' the blacks had been to her husband and herself, 'till dear Inspector Nemo cleared the niggers off the hills' that surround the run. 'It was January, I think,' she said; 'yes, the end of last January. I hadn't had Topsey and Turvey (the two slave-children) very long, and I was cleaning some fish that we had got out of a net we sometimes run across the river at the old fish-weir. Bob (her husband) was away, and there were only two white men near the house. They were fencing round the dog kennel there. Bob hadn't got the dogs then,' my fair hostess added, turning her gentle eyes towards the two magnificent bloodhounds which were sunning themselves by the 'lean-to' door, and whose use I was afterwards to learn.

"'Well, I was at work, just as I am now,' she went

on, 'when I chanced to look up, and I saw two old niggers coming up from the river, and walking across the paddock towards the house. Bob had told me not to allow any niggers to cross the run or "come in" (come and work as slaves) to the station; so when they came near I told them to go or I'd shoot them. They, at least one of them did, kept on saying, "Me very good boy, me very good boy," and "Me velly hungey," and they wouldn't go away. So I got the gun, that one with the broken stock,—Bob broke it finishing an old rascal of a nigger, last time he was out with Inspector Nemo,—and I told them to go, but they knelt down and wouldn't go. So I had to shoot them, and get the men to throw them into the river. Bob said I had done quite right, but I'm afraid *you* don't think so.' This amiable couple, for they were really amiable and good-hearted in every other respect than their treatment of niggers and animals, had destroyed by poison, shooting, and hunting with 'the dogs,'—whose 'score was only four at present,' Mrs. Cockatoo informed me, laughing,—about thirty or forty aborigines in the six years since they had taken up the small run. Mr. Cockatoo reminded me, in his conversation, much of that old Periander, the tyrant of Corinth, we used to read about at school, who, you will remember, although as cruel and devilish an individual, perhaps, as ever sat on a throne, yet patronised the Arts, was fond of peace, and said 'that not only crime, but every wicked and corrupt thought, ought to be punished.' He was one of the 'seven wise men,' too, I think.

"Both my friend the cockatoo-squatter and Periander of old evidently are examples of sufferers from that

horrible disease, *cerebral hyperæmia*, that Dr. Junelle, whom I met on board the boat coming up the coast, and whom perhaps you recollect at Mercer, told me of. But this letter is far too long to be ever all read by a lazy old fellow like yourself, so 'so long,' old boy.

"Yours till death,

"CLAUDE ANGLAND.

"P.S.—By-the-bye, how is the little iron-grey filly shaping? I mean the one out of the three-quarters-bred mare I got from Matata. She ought to jump well. She's by that big chestnut horse, Saint Patrick, as I suppose you know."

CHAPTER XIV.

HECATE AND HEBE.

"Wise wretch with pleasures too refined to please,
With too much spirit to be e'er at ease,
* * * * *
You purchase pain with all that joy can give."

POPE.

IT is an hour after sundown at Murdaro station. A few lights twinkle here and there about the dusky quadrangle of low-roofed buildings, ere shadow and silence bring to a close another workday.

The giant curlew screeches impatiently to his dilatory mate at intervals from the bush hard by; the dingoes wail mournful signals on the distant sandstone ridges; and at the other side of the star-reflecting water-hole, beneath the dark group of Deadfinish gum-trees, the native station-hands and fat house-gins, their labours over for the day, can be heard crooning out their evening chants.

In the drawing-room of "Government House" the blinds and curtains have been drawn across the windows, and the light of a couple of silver-plated oil lamps shows that the apartment boasts of an amount of fine art decoration and luxurious furniture quite unusual, even in the *salon aux dames* of a "large" squatter's household.

Wealth has joined hands with taste under the direction of a graceful female mind, and beneath the shaggy, rush-thatched roof of the station building, that is really little better in external appearance than an English barn, an oasis of elegance, a "holy of holies" of refined surroundings, has arisen in the desert.

Give a cultivated human mind *carte blanche* to furnish a room after its own ideas of beauty and fitness, and it is marvellous how a picture of itself will presently be reflected in the polished completeness of the undertaking.

Character can be read in the furnishing of a room as easily, perhaps easier, than by means of handwriting. Any trained upholsterer of long experience will tell you this. A tradesman in this walk of life knows almost intuitively, after conversing with you for a few minutes, what kind of "fixings" you will most affect. Of course where "the coat must be cut according to the cloth" these remarks do not apply in such force, any more than a Napoleonic mind would discover itself to the expert in reading-character-by-hand-writing in an epistle scratched with the stiff, unexpressive point of a needle.

Göethe intimates that a man's true character can be capitally tested by ascertaining what are the things

which he considers ridiculous; and perhaps it will assist us to understand Miss Mundella's if, bearing this rule in mind, we note the appearance of the station drawing-room, late "parlour," which she has so charmingly transformed since taking over the keys of her uncle's establishment. She was not the kind of young lady to follow the absurdities of those ephemeral fashions that, from time to time, appear as plague spots to desecrate the refined interiors of even the best houses in Melbourne and Sydney. No absurd "fallals" in the shape of dusty, velvet-covered soup-ladles, forks, gridirons, rolling-pins, and the like, hung upon the walls of this young lady's audience chamber.

This latest of fashion's most offensive follies is much in vogue, as we write, in modern Australian houses, and the practice of dragging the kitchen into the drawing-room is surely to be deplored.

Doubtless the practical mind of our fellow-colonists found it useful in some cases, hence its origin. These silken effigies of culinary utensils were doubtless originally found to be fitting surroundings for the central point of attraction,—the red-faced female, likewise clothed in velvet, squatting upon the sofa; which lady's antecedents have been more associated with frying fat than burning midnight oil, and who plays her modern part of "missus" or "me lady" before company with less nervousness than she would otherwise do, were she not surrounded by the fetishes of her past career.

In Miss Mundella's drawing-room everything is reposeful, chaste, and in harmony with the idea of elegance and refinement. From the soft-toned,

tapestry-like wall-paper to the white marble statuette of Marguerite that stands before the Queen Anne mirror upon the mantel-piece, all is unobtrusive yet beautiful. A few first-class water-colour examples of Gulley and Atkinson, also some well-executed plaques, hang upon the walls. A graceful palm hangs its fronds over a rare Etruscan vase in one corner, and numerous little gems of Dresden china and Venetian glassware—the gifts of various admirers—assist towards forming a picture whose altogether is delightful, whose every detail is a work of art.

Miss Mundella, dressed in a directoire gown, of some soft, silken material of an amber colour, fringed with black lace, which costume admirably suits her dark complexion, is seated at a little rosewood *secrétaire*, and the soft, pink light from the ornamental shades of the lamps upon the centre table casts a glorifying touch of colour upon her calm and handsome features.

On the other side of the big table her uncle, Mr. Wilson Giles, is sitting awkwardly upon a low-seated chair, twirling his thumbs, and thinking regretfully of the good old days when he was allowed to enjoy an after-dinner cigar in this very room,—a ruthless edict against which proceeding has gone forth since his niece has taken the reins of power into her able fingers.

"Well, Lileth, what is it?" asks the nominal master of the house, "what is it you have got to say? Whatever it is, let's have it over quick, so as I can have a smoke on the verandah."

"Have your smoke first, uncle, if you like; but please change your coat before you come in here afterwards. You know I don't object to tobacco; but you

know those English girls, who are coming over from Simon's to-morrow night, and I want to have one room in the house, at any rate, that doesn't smell like a taproom."

Mr. Giles is not an adept at repartee; but it occurs to him to remark, in retaliation, that, unless his niece smokes herself upon the sly, there must be several rooms in the house free from the odour of the fragrant weed. He also means to ask that lady how she knows what are the true characteristics of a taproom, but his cutting sarcasms do not arrange themselves with sufficient facility for him to give them vocal form ere Miss Mundella again speaks.

"You asked me, uncle, to consider two or three schemes you mentioned to me for getting rid of the monetary responsibility that rests upon your shoulders with regard to the P.Ns. you gave to Dyesart."

"Well, what d'you think of 'em?"

"Well, uncle, I really don't see why you need trouble yourself further in the matter, now that you have placed the—er—arranging of affairs with me. But I will tell you, just to show you how little you understand this kind of business, why your ideas would not work out satisfactorily; like that remarkably risky one you tried in Sydney, and of which, perhaps, you have not yet heard the end."

Lileth adds this last sentence as a sort of cold douche, to extinguish any rising indignation her previous words might have aroused.

Giles reddens, forces his eyes out from his head a bit, and, gasping, presently returns to his normal state of weak submission.

"If the notes," Miss Mundella continues, "are to

be found where the doctor's body lies, wherever that may be, and are payable to bearer, Mr. Puttis, or any one we might send, might—I do not say would—be able to cash them for themselves, or at any rate raise money upon them. Possibly whilst trying to do this they might be asked to say how they became possessed of them, and what lawyers call *mala fides* might be suspected. Then you would probably get into trouble as well as they."

"Well, then, what d'you propose?"

"I find, also," continues the young lady, without noticing the interrupting question, "I find also that the destruction of the notes would not clear you from your liability. For by this Act of Parliament, 17 and 18 of Victoria,"—turning over the leaves of a new edition of "Byles on Bills,"—"by section eighty-seven, 'it is provided that, in the case of any action——'"

"Oh, cut it short, Lileth!" exclaims the sufferer on the low-seated chair. "Will it do to destroy the notes instead of the nephew? That's what I want ter know."

The squatter's niece continues, as if no interruption had occurred, "'In the case of any action founded on a Bill of Exchange, Promissory Note, or other negotiable instrument, the court or judge——'"

"Oh Lord, what are yer driving at?" groans Mr. Giles.

"'Court or judge has power to order that the loss of such instrument,'—now, listen to this, uncle,—'the loss of such instrument shall not be set up, provided an indemnity is given, to the satisfaction of the court, or judge, or a master, against the claims of any other persons upon such negotiable instrument.'"

Although the fair young lawyer's powers of facial command are nearly perfect, she has much ado to refrain from smiling at the muddled look of the red-faced man opposite to her.

"Don't you remember how these notes were drawn? On demand, or at sight, or bearer?" she asks.

"I'm jiggered if I do," returns Mr. Giles. "There was some talk about—of my making the notes come due at a certain time; then Dyesart, he up and says 'that might prove awkward to you, make them on demand after a certain date.' And then—but I forget how we fixed it up at last. Don't exactly 'recco-member."

"At any rate, uncle," says Miss Mundella, rising and moving towards her relative, with the dignified grace an empress might have envied, "at any rate, we can be sure of this, that if this nephew finds the notes, or even has a knowledge that you ever obtained money from his uncle under a written contract to return the same, you will pretty certainly have to pay up. I feel sure this was the meaning of Dyesart getting young Angland to come all this way up here. I can't see what else it can be. By-the-bye, I have young Angland's photograph here. Would you like to see it?"

"How the dev——" begins Giles, but correcting himself continues, "How the goodness did you come by that? You're a wonder! Swelp me if you're not."

"Oh, I made my arrangements," answers Lileth in her rich, contralto voice. And this is all the young lady deigns to reply.

Holding the photograph in her firm, white hand all the time her uncle is looking at it, Miss Mundella

continues: "And now, once for all, uncle, you will please leave the whole matter to me. You will spoil my plans, possibly, if you interfere. You can assist our mutual objects, however, in this way: you can refrain from drinking too much whilst young Angland is here. You are horribly indiscreet when you have had too much. And another thing, be ready to take any hints of mine, and don't cross me in anything I propose."

Just as the low, steady voice closes its melodious utterings, the door of the drawing-room is flung open, and a white, fluttering female figure appears upon its threshold.

It is that of an exceedingly pretty young girl, petite and (strange to say in this part of the world) rosy. A wondrous mane of golden-yellow hair falls about her dimpled cheeks and symmetrical neck and shoulders in such profusion that she has the appearance, as the lamps in the room shine upon her, of being surrounded with an aureole of silken rays of light. In fact, as she stands in the framework of the doorway, before the dark background of the passage, hesitating whether to disturb the two people in the room, her figure for all the world might be that of a miraculous picture of an angel of light, about to come to life and interrupt the machinations of those evil-minded plotters before her, who glance up anxiously at this interruption to their interview.

"Oh, papa, I'm afraid you're busy. I didn't mean, truly, to interrupt you. Shall I run away?"

"No, my dear, not at all," responds Mr. Giles, rising, and evidently glad to thus close the *tête-à-tête* with his dark-browed niece. "Come on to the

verandah, Glory, and talk to me whilst I have a cigar. There's nothing more to say, I suppose, Lileth? I leave all to you."

"No, uncle, nothing more," replies Miss Mundella, adding, "Don't keep dear Glory out too long in the cold. She's not fever proof, and the cool evenings here are dangerous to people from the south. You'll come in, dear, presently, and give us a little Mendelssohn before supper, won't you?"

"Oh yes, Cousin Lileth. But can't you come on to the verandah with us? Oh my!" Miss Glory Giles adds excitedly, as her bright glance falls upon the photograph of Claude that Lileth has allowed to remain upon the table. "Wherever did you get that? So good, too. He's not here, is he? Oh! he's a perfect darling, and saved poor Fluffy and me from—oh! such a terrible lot of larrikins. And what's his name?"

There is no knowing how long Glory would have continued her avalanche of excited encomiums and questions relative to young Angland, had she not been interrupted by her father. For the young lady before us is the damsel whose blue eyes created such havoc in our hero's breast during his short stay in Brisbane, and she is now pleasurably regarding the sun-picture of her "own hero," as she always calls Claude when relating the story of his prowess to her school-girl friends, not knowing his real name. And what better name would young Angland have desired, had he only known the honour thus done to his memory?

At the rather anxiously expressed request of Mr. Giles, his daughter, who has just left school for good, relates, without reserve, the whole story of her

adventure near the Brisbane Public Gardens. Holding Claude's photograph all the while, she winds up her breathless recital by repeating her former questions.

Miss Mundella, knowing that her uncle will expect her to take the initiative and smooth down this awkward discovery of Glory's, that bids fair to prove a complication of the conspirators' scheme against Claude, has quickly determined what course to pursue, and immediately marches her wits forward against the new danger.

"I may as well tell Glory all about it," Lileth observes, turning her dark eyes up to Giles, and signalling to him to keep silence with the nearest approach to a wink that she has ever condescended to employ.

"This young man, Glory dear," she goes on, smiling upon her fair cousin, and placing her hand upon Miss Giles's shoulder, "is the nephew of Dr. Dyesart, the explorer, of whose death we were speaking during dinner. He will, possibly, be here before long, on his way to attempt the discovery of his uncle's grave. Mr. Angland, for that is the nephew's name, was staying at the same hotel in Sydney with my brother Abaddon,—Cousin Jack you used to call him. My brother, finding that Mr. Angland was coming up here, sent me a photograph of him. I don't know how he got it. I suppose it was given to him. Now, you're not a silly school-girl any longer, and I think I can trust you with something I am about to say. Can I, dear?"

"Oh yes, Cousin Lileth. But," hesitatingly, "but it's not anything bad you've heard about Mr. Angland, is it? If it is, pray don't tell me, please.

I always want to be able to think of him as a hero."

"Well, dear," answers Miss Mundella, laughing softly, as she recognizes in this confession of hero-worship the characteristics of a simple mind that her own powerful will may some day find it profitable to employ. "Well, dear, you can still continue to do so, as far as I know to the contrary. It's nothing against Mr. Angland, but just this. You know my brother Abaddon is just a little wild. He has been so long up here, you know; and when he went for his holiday to Sydney, he got—well—rather 'rampageous' I think is a good word to express what I mean."

Mr. Giles, standing a little distance from the two ladies, wonders what on earth his niece is about to evolve from her inner consciousness.

"Now, Glory, I'd rather," continues Lileth, "I'd rather you did not inform Mr. Angland, if he comes here, that we are any connection of Abaddon's, for I believe my brother got into serious disgrace with your hero in Sydney."

"But his name, Lileth? Mundella's such an uncommon name."

"Oh, well, you see your Cousin Abaddon is so afraid of people taking him to be a Jew. He's so sensitive to the rudeness of people, although he's brave as a lion; so he always goes by the name of Smith when away from here. In fact, it is really absurd how few people, even about here, know his real name. I believe poor Abaddon, from what I can make out in his letter, took too much to drink one night, and insulted Mr. Angland dreadfully."

"Poor Cousin Jack," murmurs Glory to herself,

as, recollecting the Brisbane affair, she thinks of the sight Abaddon's face must have presented shortly after his having insulted Mr. Angland.

"Is that all, Cousin Lileth?" she asks aloud. "Oh, then I'll never mention a word about the photo or about Mr. Abaddon Smith. Ha! ha! how funny it sounds, don't it?" The young lady laughs merrily. "I only hope Mr. Angland,—ah! isn't *that* a nice name?—I only hope he will have time to stop here and have some tennis. He and I against you and Mr. Cummercropper, what fun! But he's sure to rush away again. All the nice people do," she adds, pursing up her pretty lips at the thought. Then suddenly turning to her father, she seizes his arm, and laughing and talking all at once, she drags him off to the cool verandah, where she lights his cigar for him, and chatters away about her most amusing recollections of the charming southern capital she has just left.

Mr. Giles and his fair daughter have not long been seated in the cane chairs on the verandah, when the tattoo of an approaching horseman comes to interrupt their conversation.

The fox-terrier, Spot, who has been sitting silently in the darkness by his master's chair, sleepily watching the red cigar end, as it pulses alternately bright and dull, rushes out to investigate matters; and presently all ten of the canine dependents of the station folk join in a vari-toned vocal notice of the advent of the equestrian.

At this moment Miss Mundella joins her relatives.

"That's Jim back from the muster at Bulla Bulla, I expect," remarks Mr. Giles.

"No, uncle," says Lileth in a low, strange voice, "it is Mr. Claude Angland."

Mr. Giles starts in his cane-chair, as its creaking back testifies in the shadows.

"Now, how *can* you possibly tell? You can't know that much, at any rate."

"I can't tell how I know, but it is he," answers his niece in the same tones.

Glory does not say anything, but stands up ready to catch a first glimpse of the stranger, whoever it may be.

A few minutes more and Miss Mundella's predictions are fulfilled; and ere a quarter of an hour has elapsed our young friend Claude is sitting down to supper with the station folk, after being formally introduced to all present, including Mr. Cummercropper, the high-toned and love-sick station storekeeper, by Miss Glory Giles as "My hero,"—a title which Angland in vain attempts to show he does not deserve, but one that enamoured youth intensely enjoys all the same.

Claude had felt his heart beat quicker as he "saw the station roofs,"—the place from which his uncle's last letter had reached him. A thousand emotions poured through his soul. Anxious thoughts were amongst them. He was about to meet people of whom, somehow, he had vague suspicions. Would he be welcome? Would he be even safe?

But now, as he sits next his fair-haired young goddess, a very Juventus of youth and vigour, amidst the pleasant and jovial conversation of his new friends, in a brilliantly-lighted and elegantly-furnished room, a new set of thoughts comes to oust his lately sombre

ones. He finds himself the honoured and welcome guest of an hospitable and charming circle; and although Claude is not generally accustomed to wear his heart upon his sleeve, his happy revulsion of feelings is inclining him to a dangerous revelation of his private concerns, when something occurs to sober him suddenly and put him once more upon his guard.

Claude's conversation has been mainly with his host and that gentleman's charming daughter. Mr. Cummercropper spoke only when the Arts were mentioned, and then rather incoherently. Lileth was silently watching and studying the new-comer, only putting in an odd word here and there, where courtesy demanded it. Presently the subject of music is discussed, and Glory, amongst other new songs, speaks of "Killaloo."

As the name of this remarkable ballad is mentioned, Claude's thoughts rush to the midnight scene upon the viaduct with a sort of graveyard chilliness,—the air whistled by the elegant desperado at his side, the blue-white electric lights upon the rink. Angland becomes serious at once.

Miss Mundella here, at last, joins in the conversation, and at some length condemns certain of the caprices of modern musical taste, which is a favourite theme of hers. Going on to speak of certain newly-published ballads that call forth her unfavourable criticisms, she mentions the crickets (*Gryllus*), which, according to Mouffet, are objects of commerce in certain African tribes, and are sold about, as canary birds are amongst Europeans, to the inhabitants, who like to hear their amorous chant.

"Their chirping would be irritable to the ears of

persons trained to more melodious sounds," Lileth concludes by saying, "but the caprice of those African blacks is not one whit stranger than that of those who enjoy some of the more modern drawing-room songs." Mr. Cummercropper gazes in weak-eyed rapture at his dark-eyed enchantress as she speaks, and inclines his large, pink ears unto her. He is even about to second her remarks. But he gets no further than, "Yhas, bai Joave," when he accidentally drops his eyeglass into his wine, which misfortune entirely upsets all his ideas, and renders him hopelessly nervous during the remainder of the evening.

After glancing at the unhappy storekeeper, as he clumsily fishes for his "glass eye" in the ruby-coloured Dalwood, Miss Mundella turns towards Claude, and finds him regarding her curiously.

"Pardon me," he says, as he observes that Lileth is for the instant somewhat disconcerted by the look she has seen in his face. "Pardon me; but we have surely met before. I am nearly certain of it. Will you kindly assist my ungallant memory? I confess I am puzzled to know how I could ever forget. It is hardly likely you will remember the circumstance of our meeting, when I——"

Claude suddenly ceases to speak. His features become set and firm, and slightly paler than before. Memory has come to his aid, and the bridge scene in Sydney is enacted over again in his mind's eye. All but Angland and Miss Mundella are amusing themselves with Glory's little dog Fluffy, which is begging for cheese rind.

Lileth leans forward and softly speaks,—

"Your thoughts seem unpleasant ones, Mr. Angland.

I trust that the memory of any previous meeting, if we have met, is not associated with them."

Claude again regards the grand face turned towards him observantly as he replies,—

"I thought I recognized your voice. But I made a foolish mistake. And to tell you the truth, the sound of your voice brought to my mind some very unpleasant recollections. I see I have aroused your interest. You will then pardon me if I explain under what circumstances it was that I last heard a voice so much resembling yours. I was assaulted in Sydney, a month or so ago, by two men who attempted my destruction. One of them, forgive my saying so, somewhat resembled you. But it was the tones of your voice, which are exactly like his, that at first puzzled me."

"You are certainly not very complimentary, Mr. Angland," responds Miss Mundella, smiling, without betraying in the least the agitation which almost renders her incapable of playing her part; "but I forgive you. And you must tell me, to-morrow, all about your adventure with my badly behaved 'doppelganger' in Sydney. Come, Glory!" she adds gaily to her cousin, as she rises to say "Good-night."

"We shall have to be up early to-morrow, if we are to meet the Miss Chesters at the Red Billabong. *Schlaf wohl!*" And the two ladies retire, leaving the men to wind up the evening with their cigars.

Midnight.

Of all the persons beneath the roof-tree of Murdaro head station house during the first part of that night,

Mr. Cummercropper was the only one who was successful in wooing "the gentle sleep," and it was not till early morning that slumber slid upon the souls of the remainder of the party.

For Claude, his host, and the two fair cousins, "each and severally" have their excited brains full of a reeling panorama, called into action by memory and thought, which it is far beyond the power of slumber to extinguish.

Mr. Wilson Giles's better feelings are fighting a losing battle with the more selfish promptings of his nature, which are supported by the heavy artillery of his niece's arguments.

The grateful memory of Dyesart's kindness in the hour of need; the evident affection and esteem—possibly the herald of a warmer feeling—which his daughter evinces for young Angland; the risky nature of the game that his niece urges him to continue; are all arguments in favour of a *laissez faire* policy. But on the other side there is the uncomfortable thought of losing the fruits of his life's labour,—the run that he has purchased with hardships innumerable; with blood, murder, and selfishness. Moreover, Lileth knows too much about his concerns now. Her thumb is turned downwards, and the victim of the scheme must be sacrificed.

Giles groans as he thinks how much he hates his niece. He conceives her to be a true Jew at heart,—remorseless and unswerving in her purposes. And who knows better than he, Giles, what Hebrews are. When his gay, wild-oat sowing youth was beginning to wane, had he not felt the white, unforgiving but smiling fangs of members of the race tearing at his

throat? Ah! how well he had retaliated upon the first of them who came within his power. Giles rolls over in his bed as he chuckles a hard, dry gurgle of laughter, as he calls to mind how he had schemed and schemed, and, sacrificing his sister in his revenge, had married her to Lileth's father, with the successful intention of ruining him. But his wandering thoughts always hark back to the same conclusion,—Lileth must have her way.

Meanwhile, Claude in his room tumbles about restlessly, as he thinks, alternately, of the strange likeness between the dark-eyed lady he had met that evening and the assassin of the arches, and of the fair-haired angel into the heaven of whose presence he had so strangely ascended.

Two o'clock, ante-meridian, strikes the carriage clock in Glory Giles's bedroom, which adjoins that of Miss Mundella. And ere the deep music of its coil-bell vibrations have faded in waves of dying sweetness into silence, the charming occupant of the apartment is wide awake.

All is silent in the house, and the golden-haired maiden lies deeply thinking within the cosy sanctum of her mosquito-curtained couch. Glory had heard the last part of the conversation between Claude and Lileth. It had, of course, considerably interested her. But it was not till the young lady had entered into the quiet of her own room, that she had thought of there being any connection between the murderous attack upon her admirer in Sydney and the photograph incident of the previous evening.

Glory remembers the promise of secrecy exacted from her by her cousin Lileth,—whom she looks

upon more in the light of a step-mother than a girl-companion only a few years older than herself,—and dreadful thoughts begin to shape themselves.

The merry little girlish brain is not given to much labour in the tiresome direction of induction-drawing. But where female interest is highly excited, there arises into being a more active means of interpretation than that employed by the more stolid brain of the male human when solving similar problems. This power—called by men "jumping at a conclusion"—tells Claude's inamorata hearer that "her hero" is in danger at the hands of her dark-haired relative, now slumbering in the next room.

Slumbering? No! For there is a light in there; and presently the green-baize door, that opens from one bed-chamber to the other, swings noiselessly backwards, and Miss Mundella appears holding a lighted taper in her hands.

She wears her dark morning dress, and, after addressing Glory softly, to ascertain if her cousin is awake, and receiving no answer, she moves silently out of the apartment and down the passage.

An hour afterwards one of the station "boys" rides off with a letter from the shadow of the quiet buildings.

This is the burly Cape York native called Carlo,—the executioner of "Government House,"—and as he has been enjoined, by Miss Mundella herself, to hurry over his appointed task, he is not likely to tarry on the way.

The mysterious rider's iron-grey steed—one of the famous Satan's daughters—is pawing the ground as her rider, who has dismounted, is fumbling at the

fastenings of the home-paddock gate, which opens on to the unfenced run, when he becomes aware of a white figure approaching him.

The aboriginals are great believers in ghosts, and the black horseman is about to fly in terror, when his marvellous powers of sight—good almost in the darkness as a cat's—tell him that it is the "little Marmie-lady" (the master's daughter) that is before him.

"Carlo!" exclaims Glory, in the breathless voice of one who has been running, "do you know who I am?"

"Iss. Mine know um, allite, Missee Gorrie," replies the "boy."

"Well, then, tell me where you are going?"

"Oh! mine go look longer bullockie, Marmie. Plenty fellow oberthrees sit down longer Bulla Bulla 'tation."

The black means to inform Miss Giles, whom he submissively calls Marmie, or Mistress, that he goes to look for a number of bullocks—branded with the station mark of O B 3, which he calls "oberthree"—which have wandered on to the next run.

"You tell big fellow lie, Carlo!" exclaims Glory excitedly. "You take letter; you take book-a-book alonger station."

Click, click, click! The black hears the ominous, metallic rattle of the chambers of a revolver, as the fair hands thus emphasize the demand that follows:—

"Miss Lileth give you book-a-book for Inspector Puttis. Give it to me!"

The unfortunate native hesitates for a moment, not

knowing which way to retire from out of range of the two fires between which he finds himself: the terrible retribution that will fall upon him if he proves false to "Missee Lillie's" orders threaten him on one flank; on the other is the present danger of being shot if he does not surrender what he had strict injunctions to deliver into the police officer's own hands at Bulla Bulla station.

The native mind, till trained to think after the European fashion, cares little for the morrow. So Carlo, wisely and quickly, decides to escape the near danger, come what may afterwards, and holds out a white envelope towards Glory beneath the faint starlight.

The little white fingers take the note; and, retiring a few yards so as not to frighten the horse, a match is lit, and the "fair highwayman" examines her plunder. Yes, it is the letter she wants.

"You sit down here, Carlo," Glory says, "till I come back. If horse want walk about, walk up and down," waving her hand explainingly. Then, giving the black a piece of money, she disappears. Ten minutes afterwards Carlo has the letter returned to him by the "little Marmie," and is soon flying over the spear-grass plains in the direction of the next station. Glory returns to her room, by means of the open window, as she left it, and exhausted with her bold adventure soon falls asleep.

If any sharp-eyed detective had, about this time, examined one of the dining-room windows near to which Miss Mundella had written her letter, he would have found a slightly greasy spot upon one of its panes; and, if worthy of his noble profession, he

would have been led by a process of induction to surmise that this mark had been caused by the nasal organ of some smallish person, who had been engaged not long before in what may be correctly termed as "prying into the room."

CHAPTER XV.

THE GHOST OF CHAMBER'S CREEK.

"'Mongst thousand dangers, and ten thousand magick mights."
Fuërie Queene.

NEXT morning, when Claude wandered into the supper-room of the previous night, he found a couple of fat, comely young native women, in short, light-coloured frocks, relaying the cloth upon the table for a second or late breakfast.

One of these girls on seeing Claude toddles up to him, and explains, in the ridiculous jargon she has been taught to consider English, that Mr. Giles and the young ladies have already partaken of breakfast and gone out.

"Marmie bin go out longer Missie Lillie, um Missie Gory bin go longer Marmie big fellow way."

"What name?" she adds briefly, bringing her

beautiful eyes and smiling features to bear upon Claude with awkward suddenness as she puts her question.

In reply Angland bashfully but carefully explains to the gins how his name is usually pronounced by himself and friends; but the girls only grin in return with their pearly rows of teeth, as if they are the victims of suppressed mirth. They are evidently highly amused, and even retail some joke to the diminutive Lucy, who, seeing that something out of the ordinary is going on, has popped her little black head in at the door to listen.

"What name, Marmie?" the smiling "lubras" repeat in chorus.

Whilst Claude stands puzzling over the mystic meaning of the dark fair ones before him, Mr. Cummercropper enters the room, and nodding to our hero—and thereby losing his eye-glass for a few seconds—proceeds to tediously deliver the same message Angland has already received. Claude waits till the æsthetical station-storekeeper has finished, and then begs him to enlighten him as to the meaning of the laughing girls.

"Ha! ha!" chuckles Mr. Cummercropper out of the depths of his high collar. "Bai Joave! not bad, by any means. They don't want to know your name. Picked that much up long ago. 'What name?' means, in this part of the globe, 'Which will you have, coffee, tea, or cocoa, for breakfast?' Don't it, Dina?"

Dina grins a comprehensive smile, and nods her brilliantly beturbaned head in reply to the query; and, obtaining a satisfactory answer at last to her

oft-repeated question, trots her buxom little figure away into the kitchen. After breakfast Claude spends his morning in trying to learn something of Billy; but he is almost entirely unsuccessful, as the blacks about the station are strangely reticent. The disappearance of his late uncle's servant is very annoying to Angland, and our young friend is really puzzled to know what steps he had better take next. Claude has a lonely lunch, for none of the station folk are yet returned, and Mr. Cummercropper has descended from the art student to the "rational" storekeeper, and has started off in a buggy and pair with a load of "rations" for a far-off out-station; and then, getting a "boy" to fetch his horse in from the paddock, he canters over to an out-station, where he left his miner friend and the two boys the night before.

"Well, lad, thou hast not been successful in thy work," says old Williams, Claude's digger companion as he observes that young man's disappointed face. "And that I were right to camp here I'll show ye. There's nowt save ourselves here, for they're out must'ring 'weaners.' So coome inside out of the sun, and I'll tell thee news o' Billy."

Claude watches his lively purchase, Joe, hobble the horse, and then follows Williams into the two-roomed shanty, which is honoured by the name of an "out-station house." It is merely a roughly-built hut, with walls of gum-tree slabs laid one upon another, and a roof formed of sheets of brown gum-tree bark. The studs of the building, also the rafters and purlieus, are ingeniously kept in position by neatly fastened strips of "green hide" (raw leather), and the hard grey floor and colossal chimney-place are composed of the

remains of a number of ant-hills that have been pounded up for the purpose. The material of which these hills are built is a kind of *papier maché*, consisting of wood-fibre and clay, and is in much request amongst northern settlers for various structural purposes. The termites, or "white ants," sometimes raise their many-coned mounds to a height of from twelve to fifteen feet, and these "spires and steeples," with the absence of dead tree-stems upon the ground,—another sign of the presence of these insects,—are two of the most characteristic features of the open bush-country of Northern Queensland.

Williams squats down on his hams, bush-fashion, in front of the yawning fireplace, where a camp-oven, suspended over the grey embers, is frizzling forth the vapoury flavour of "salt-junk," and after lighting his pipe proceeds to tell Claude what he has found out from the stockmen. This, to condense the lengthened yarn of the old miner, is just what Billy related of himself, in our presence, to the old "hatter" Weevil in the lonely jungle cave.

"He'll coome back here, I tell ye. For note ye, lad, he camped as long as he could at Murdaro, till they made him clear."

"Yes, I believe he was waiting there for me," responds Claude.

"Now, mind ye," continues the digger, gesticulating with his maize-cob pipe, "mind ye make every nigger round know that yer wants to find Billy, and ye'll hear of him soon, like enough. Now the more ye gets known here the safer fur ye, so wait here till the men get back. Ye can pitch 'em a song after supper and ride home with the head stock-keeper. He'll be

going up to 'Government House' to-night. Moon rises 'bout nine."

Half an hour before sundown a dust-cloud that has been slowly travelling for the last two hours across the plain, in the direction of the out-station, reaches its destination. It is now seen to be caused by the feet of a small "mob" (herd) of cows and unbranded calves. These, after much yelling and an accompanying—

> "Running fire of stockwhips,
> And a fiery run of hoofs,"

are at last forced down a funnel-shaped lane between two wide fences, called "wings," into the receiving yard of a large stockyard near the house.

Not long afterwards the head stock-keeper and his two white stockmen appear; and the former, after being introduced to Claude, and having indulged in a very necessary wash, sets the example, which is soon followed by the other men, of proceeding to work upon the evening meal. This is placed upon the table by two dark-skinned nymphs, whose airy costume consists chiefly of one old shirt and a pair of smiles between them.

The position these girls occupy in an establishment where all are bachelors may be guessed, and Claude learns, before the meal is over, that they are under the "protection" of the white stockmen, having been "run down" for this purpose some months previously.

"Run away!" laughs one of the stockmen, skilfully supplying his mouth with gravy by means of his knife-blade, as he repeats a question put to him by Angland before answering it. "Run away! No, I

raither think as 'ow Nancy was the last gal as will ever try that game agin. The black beggars know what they'll get for trying the speeling racket here. Short and sharp's our motter on this here station," the speaker adds, as his savoury knife-point disappears half down his gullet.

Upon Claude expressing a wish to hear about Nancy's ultimate fate, the men become reticent; but Claude learns afterwards on good authority that the unfortunate girl was overtaken whilst attempting to return to her tribe, and was flogged to death before the other native station-hands, "*pour encourager les autres.*"

After the whites have done their meal, the black stockmen are handed their "rations," which consist of the broken viands from the table, and such pieces of "junk" as have become tainted. The whole amount does not seem very much for the eight "boys" after their hard day's work in the saddle, and when they have further sub-divided it with their relatives at the black camp close by, their earnings for the day must appear very small indeed.

Selfishness is unknown between relations amongst aborigines. There is no *meum et tuum.* A hunter's spoil or a "boy's" earnings are given away immediately upon his return to camp; and the individual who has obtained the good things generally keeps less than his own proper share, being complimented upon this by the women in a low chant or grace during the eating or cooking of the food.

It seems probable, however, that if the right of purchasing their liberty was permitted to the station blacks, and each "boy" was allowed his *peculium,*

as instituted by Justinian, the first anti-slavery emperor of Rome, this unselfish division of each day's wage would soon become out of fashion. It is, perhaps, in order to encourage this virtuous practice of their station slaves that the Australian squatters have never followed the example set them by the ancient Romans.

The head stock-keeper, whose name is Lythe, but who is generally known upon the station as "the Squire," is a very different kind of man to his two stockmen. These individuals belong to a much lower type of humanity, and are apparently without any education whatever, save a superficial knowledge of horses and cattle.

Born of good parentage in an English "racing county," Lythe is a fair average sample of a certain class of men not very uncommon in up-country Australia. Life's chessboard has been with him an alternating record of white, glowing triumphs, and black disgrace of wild, feverish saturnalia and rough toiling at the hardest kinds of colonial work. A wild boyhood, a wilder time at Sandhurst, a meteoric existence as Cornet in a lance regiment,—with the attendant scintilla of champagne suppers, racehorses, and *couturières*,—and then he slipped on to a "black square" and became a "rouseabout" on an Australian run. Presently he rises again, by making for himself a bit of a name as a successful "overlander" or cattle-drover, and, becoming rich, moves "on to the white." He is a squatter, takes up-country, loses all, and then becomes an irreclaimable tippler. "Black square" again, and here he is, working hard to "knock up" another cheque,—a well-educated, use-

ful member of society when free from liquor; a wild, quarrelsome savage from the time he reaches the first "grog-shanty" on his way "down south," till he returns "dead broke" to "knock up another cheque" at the station.

Claude's hosts at the little out-station—who, like most Australian colonists, are as hospitably minded as their means will allow them to be—do all they can to render his visit to their rough home as agreeable as possible. They even indulge him with a few bush songs, whilst the after-supper pipe is being smoked. One of these, sung in a voice gruff and husky with shouting to the cattle all day, to the air of a well-known nautical ditty, is descriptive of the first "taking up" of the Never Never Land, and has a taking chorus, concluding thus:—

> "Then sing, my boys, yo! ho!
> O'er desert plains we go
> To the far Barcoo,
> Where they eat Ngardoo,
> A thousand miles away."

At nine o'clock "the Squire" and Claude say good-bye to the others, and mounting their horses, which have been brought up to the house across the dewy, moonlit pastures by a pair of attendant sprites, proceed leisurely in the direction of the head station.

Around the riders stretches the tranquil indigo and silver glory of a marvellous phasmagoria, painted by earth's cold-faced satellite. And accustomed to the softer beauties of a New Zealand moonlight night, Claude cannot help exclaiming to his companion upon the strange, phantom-like appearance that all the

familiar objects around him appear to have put on beneath the argent rays. Even that most unpoetical object, the stock-yard, where the imprisoned cattle are roaring impatient of restraint, seems, with its horrid carcase gallows, all dressed with a silvery, mystic robe of light, as if transformed into a spectre castle, filled with moaning, long-horned beings of another world.

"Yes, that is so," returns Claude's companion, when our young friend has remarked the curious features of the scene before him. "What you notice is just what is the chief characteristic of an Australian moonlight scene. The only real poet Australia's ever had was Lindsay Gordon. He was an Englishman, by-the-bye, and he has the same sort of weird touch running through all his poems. But it isn't so much to my mind,"—the speaker rubs his chin thoughtfully, —"it isn't that the moonlight is different here to what it is elsewhere, I fancy, so much as it is that Nature herself puts on an outlandishly-awful, God-forsaken, ghastly kind of rig-out, when left to herself in these wilds."

"That's very true," responds Claude, looking at the dreary scene of broken sandstone cliff and dead forest through which their horses are picking their way.

"Now, really, Mr. Angland, what a devilish nightmare of a place this 'outside' country is. Look at those ghostly, white-stemmed gums. I've heard those trees groan like dying men when there was hardly a breath of air moving. Why, there! you can hear them for yourself now. And, like all their kind, at midday they cast no shadow; and therefore might

well be considered bewitched, if we went by the old standard of ancient European justice, that considered this infringement of the natural laws the very ear-mark of Satan's cattle. Look at our deserts, our old volcanoes, our fishes that run about on the shore like mice, our rivers of sand, and—but we need not go farther than our wild animals. What artist—Griset, Doré, or any one else—ever conceived a more impish brute than the dingo, or a more startling caricature of a deer with grasshopper's legs than we find in the kangaroo?"

The dree wail of some neighbouring dingoes upon the distant hills comes as a sort of unearthly murmur of acquiescence, as the speaker closes his remarks.

"Why, really," remarks Claude, laughing quietly, "now that you point it out, there is really something curiously nightmare-like about Australian nature." He adds after a pause, "You would be a grand hand at telling a ghost story."

The two men canter over a smooth piece of country in silence; and when their horses have again come within easy speaking distance, "the Squire" asks Claude if he would like to hear a ghost yarn.

"I'm touchy, rather," goes on "the Squire," "on the subject of this the only ghost that I have ever seen; and I give you warning you mustn't scoff at me for believing in it. I haven't told any one about it since, —well, it don't matter when. You're not in a hurry to get to the station, I suppose?"

"Oh, the yarn, by all possible means!" assents Claude.

But his companion does not hear the reply to his question, for as he loosens the flood-gates of his

memory there rushes vividly before his mind a long-forgotten scene, like a weird picture from a magic lantern, shutting out all external things,—a scene of moonlit rock and dark, gloomy trees, of sleeping cattle, of wild and awful midnight terror.

But it is only for an instant. Then he pulls himself together, and half unconsciously lifts his hand to wipe away the cold dew that even the memory of that fearful night has called forth upon his brow.

"You must know then," commences "the Squire," after the manner of Master Tommie in "Sandford and Merton," "that, like most new chums in Australia, I wandered about a good deal over this great, sunburnt island before ever I settled down as head stock-keeper at Murdaro. During part of that time I followed the calling of an overlander. An 'overlander,' Mr. Angland,—for, as you haven't any of the breed in New Zealand, I'll explain what that is,—is Queensland-English for a long-distance drover; and a rough, hard life it generally is. Cattle have to be taken long distances to market sometimes from these 'up-country' runs. I have taken several mobs of 'fats' (fat bullocks) from the Never Never Land to Sydney, —a distance of about fifteen hundred miles.

"Now, when my story begins I was 'boss' of a road-party taking fat cattle down to Sydney from Contolbin station on the Lachlan. In fine weather, when there's plenty of grass or herbage, and water every twenty miles or so, a drover has rather a jolly time of it, after he's trained the cattle to camp properly, take it altogether: an open-air life, with just enough exercise to make him enjoy his 'tucker' (food). But, like most lines of life, there are more

bitters than sweets connected with the 'overlanding' profession. Sometimes there's no water for forty, fifty, perhaps ninety miles at a stretch,—for instance, on the Birdsville and Kopperamana track,—and keeping awake for days and nights together, you must push on (with the sun at 120° in the shade, sometimes) taking your cattle, at their own pace, along the *Parakelia*-covered sand-hills till the next water-hole is reached. And at other times there is too much water, and it is a case of swimming rivers every few miles, or else sitting down for a stream to run by for a few weeks,—riding through mud, sleeping on mud, drinking mud, and eating it too, for the matter of that, for weeks at a time. I've done that at the Wyndham crossing of the Cooper more than once. But on the particular trip I am going to refer to, the weather was more what you, as an Englishman, will understand better than most Australians, for it had been snowing hard for several nights in succession upon the Swollowie Mountains, over which our road, from Orange to Bathhurst, lay, and the air was almost as cold and chilly as it ever is in the old country.

"I never shall forget the sight that poor old Sanko, one of my native boys, was when he came off the middle watch, the first night we reached the high country. Sanko was a 'white-haired boy' when he came off watch to call me that morning, and no mistake about it, although his waving locks and beard had been as black as night the day before.

"No, Mr. Angland, he hadn't seen a ghost! You're a bit too fast.

"But he *had* seen something strange to him, and

that was a fall of snow. And when he poked his head in at the door of the 'fly' (tent) and called me, his good-humoured, hairy face was white with snow crystals. He really gave me a kind of 'skeer,' as our American cousins call it, for a moment. He looked like the apparition of some one I had known in life. I thought I was dreaming at first; and I had had fever a little while before, and was still rather weak from its effects. I mention this because the scare Sanko gave me may have made a more lasting impression upon me than I thought at the time, and had something to do with what happened the next night. All I did at the time, however, was to tell Sanko not to call the next watch, as the cattle would not shift in the snow. And rolling myself up in my blankets, I was soon asleep again.

"One of the greatest hardships of cattle droving is the watching necessary at night. All sorts of things may occur to frighten them; and when that does happen, off they rush, a resistless flood of mad animals, into the darkness, breaking each other's necks and legs, and the remainder getting lost. Cows that want to return to where they dropped a calf will sometimes start a mob. The cunning brutes will watch you as you ride past them on your 'night horse' on your way round the mob, and then slink off into the shadows, and be miles back along the track by daylight. A thunderstorm is also a frightful cause of mobs stampeding. But the worst thing to be dreaded by the drover is a deliberate attempt to frighten the cattle by cattle-thieves, or 'duffers,' as we call them, who used in my time—there's little of it done now, I believe—sometimes to steal the

larger part of a travelling herd by this means. Well, the plan of these midnight robbers is to watch till your horses have wandered a bit from the camp, and then, getting amongst them, slip their hobbles and drive them quietly away. Then, knowing you can do nothing to stop them, the rascals proceed to startle the cattle by shouting, a gun-shot, or some such means; and you are lucky if you get half your horses, let alone half your cattle, back again.

"It is necessary to tell you all this in order that you may understand my ghost tale.

"These mountains we were coming to, as I knew, had been the scene of several exploits of this kind, and it made me anxious to get through by daylight. There was a very rough lot of Cornish miners working on the hills, in the Icely gold-mines; and, rightly or wrongly, we drovers mostly used to put these midnight stampedes down to these 'Cousin Jacks.' But some of the older cattle-men upon the road, and all the inhabitants of the (then) sparsely peopled district, declared that these occurrences were due to no human interference. They said that the gorge in the mountains, that I should have to pass through to-morrow with my cattle, was haunted by the spirit of a murdered man, whose corpse was 'planted' where he had fallen many years since, with the knife of a treacherous mate still sticking in his ribs. It was this deceased gentleman's nightly constitutionals that were supposed to account for the various disastrous rushes of mobs of cattle in the mountain glen during past years. I had often heard it used as an argument, in favour of those who upheld the spectre-theory, that the camp horses had been found still

hobbled after these rushes,—an oversight of which no experienced 'cattle-duffer' would be guilty. Well, I felt rather anxious about the matter, but as I had arranged my stages so as to camp at the foot of the ranges that night, I thought I should be able to push on over the fatal pass before the next sun went down.

"You may imagine my annoyance then, on the morning when Sanko poked his 'frosty pow' into my tent, to discover that the snow would delay our progress for some hours. The creeks would be 'big' till midday, and there were several reasons why I could not camp another night where I was. I determined, therefore, to push on and try my luck.

"The sun blazed out, and the white, patchwork mantle on the blue-grey hills disappeared as if by magic. But the Fates were against us. First our horses did not turn up till late; then the cows we had with us kept on getting bogged in the muddy billeybongs, and had to be hauled out. And what with one delay and another, I saw the sunset redden the cliffs before us as we crossed Chamber's Creek and entered the pass, and knew that I must camp my cattle there for the night, and no help for it.

"Leaving my men to bring on the cattle and horses, I pricked my spurs into my steed's sides, and made him scramble up the stony track; and, after half an hour's search, found a good place to camp the cattle in a narrow part of the gorge, between two cliffs of gnarled and distorted rock. There was plenty of long grass, and the melting snow had left puddles of water all round amongst the rocks, that in the evening light looked like so many pools of blood.

"Soon the cattle arrived, and I was glad to see that, tired with their scramble up the mountain-side, they were evidently contented with their camp, and seemed likely to remain quiet all night.

"'Not so bad after all,' I said to myself, as I rode back to our camp-fire, after seeing the cattle safely put on camp.

"But the words were hardly out of my mouth when I noticed, in the twilight, a little fence of rough-split shingles, up against the cliff, exactly opposite the cattle. It was the grave of the murdered man. I knew it from having had it so often described to me. We must be then located exactly on the spot where, six years before, a mob of cattle had suddenly been seized with maddening terror, and stampeding over the drover's camp, killing two men in their wild rush, had been lost entirely from that day to this.

"Well, there was no help for it, so I turned my horse's head from the solitary corner in the rocks and rode on towards our fire. Was it fancy or what? I know not, but as I left the grave behind me I heard a sound like a low moan. It was followed by a low, plaintive cry overhead, in the air.

"'Well, this is a creepy kind of place,' I thought to myself, 'but I won't tell the other fellows my fears, but just double the watches to-night.'

"I saw at a glance, however, on reaching the camp, that my four white companions had evidently learned of the close proximity of the grave, and knew the history connected with it. And the black 'boys' had, contrary to custom, made their fire close to ours, a change that I thought it policy not to notice.

"'Now then, Sanko,' said I to that worthy, after

supper, 'you and Merrilie sit down alonger yarraman (horses) till I come.'

"The two 'boys' went off unwillingly enough,—another unusual thing that I, also, pretended not to observe. Then, knowing that no one would attempt to interfere with the cattle for an hour or two, I lay down by the blazing *mulga*-branches for a short nap, before sitting up for the rest of the night.

"I had not been asleep ten minutes, I suppose, before I woke to find Sanko tumbling off his horse by my side in his hurry to speak to me, and could see he was in a great state of terror about something.

"'Mine no like it sit down longer horses,' he grumbled, gaspingly,—his eyes rolling excitedly, as he turned his head right and left over his shoulders, as if in fear of something behind him. 'Too much the devil-devil all about. Him yabba-yabba, and make it the walk about longer *minga* (grave) longer white beggar. Mine no like um.'

"I saw that it would be useless to try and get him to go back alone, and there was evidently something that required watching. I, therefore, sent all the whites and blacks off to guard the horses, keeping one of the former with me to mind the cattle. Telling the latter to follow me 'when he was girthed-up,' I left him by the fire, and commenced to ride slowly round the cattle, who were mostly lying down and contentedly chewing their cud-suppers. The silver light of a true Australian Alpine star-lit night made the bare cliffs above stand out on either hand with an almost phosphorescent contrast to the dark indigo shadows at their feet. One could almost imagine that the rugged rocks had absorbed a certain amount of sunlight

during the preceding day, and were now themselves light-giving in a small degree,—after the fashion of those life-buoys that I'm told they cover now with a sort of luminous paint. The light of our camp-fire warmed to colour a few projecting rocks and the trunks of the smooth, white-stemmed gums, and now and then the soft, purring sound of far-off falling water came up the glen; no other sound but from the chewing cattle, and all was quiet so far.

"Suddenly my horse stopped short, with out-stretched neck and pricked ears; then suddenly wheeling round would have dashed into the middle of the cattle, if I had not checked him in time. I could not see anything to frighten him, and the cattle were not alarmed; they, happily, apparently saw nothing strange. Then I noticed that we were close to the grave. It was in deep shadow, but I could not look at it comfortably over my shoulder, and, do what I could, my trembling night-horse would not face in that direction.

"There was nothing for it; so, as I could not finish my patrol in that direction, I turned and rode round the cattle the other way. By the fire, on my return to the camp, I found my fellow-watcher Charley.

"'Look here, boss,' he said excitedly, 'there's some beggar trying to duff the cattle, and make them string this way, so I thought I'd wait here till you returned.'

"'Did you see any one?' I asked.

"'Well, I believe as how I did; but this moke got that skeered, and well—I didn't know how many there might be, and——'

"It was no time to expostulate with Charley for his cowardice and negligence, so simply saying 'Follow

me!' I turned and rode towards the grave. The place seemed awfully weird in the starlight, and you could make out little besides the white-backed cattle here and there amongst the shadowy trees, and the great pile of rocks towering upwards on either hand. The air was very cold and my feet felt dead against the icy stirrup-irons. As before, I could not get my horse to pass in front of the grave; that was now in such deep shadow that nought of it could be seen.

"Charley's horse would not come so near as mine, and both of them trembled and snorted with terror; and every moment tried to wheel round and escape from the awful Something that they were watching.

"We sat in our saddles and listened, but there were no sounds but from the reposing cattle, and the squeaking, here and there, of the branches overhead, rubbing one upon another, as a passing breeze swept sighing by.

"Presently the horses became less excited; then, for the first time that night, I was able to get my animal past the grave. I rode round the cattle followed by Charley.

"'You're right, there are duffers about,' I said; and, telling him to keep a sharp look-out till I returned, I hurried off, as fast as the darkness would allow, and, finding the men looking after the horses, presently returned with one of them. We all watched together for an hour; and then hearing nothing I 'turned in,' telling the men to call me when the morning star rose. They did so, and fearfully cold it was when I turned out. I was very glad to hear the watchers report that nothing had happened to disturb the cattle.

"'Them blessed duffers hev found as 'ow we're too wide awake fur em,' said one of the men,—who, I found out afterwards, had slept nearly all through his watch.

"I felt now that the risk of losing my cattle was over for that night, at any rate, and, mounting, rode down to them. Nothing disturbed the first part of my lonely watch; and I rode round the cattle more asleep than awake, I confess, for half an hour or so, when my steed, this time a very steady old night-horse, suddenly showed signs of uneasiness, and I found we were by the grave again.

"I pulled up, and, sitting firm with both hands on the reins and head thrust forward, listened intently. The pale light of the morning star was creeping over the face of the tall rocks. Its light would soon penetrate the shadows at their foot, and reveal the something in the darksome corner of the cliffs.

"All of a sudden there was a little rattle, as of tumbling pebbles, in front of me; and then the sound as of a sack or heavy piece of drapery being dragged over the low split-shingle fence that I knew was there, but could not see. A moment more, and a low, hollow moan came from just where the grave was situated.

"I bit my lip to make sure I was awake, and then, straining my eyes into the darkness, I could just distinguish something, what I could not make out, moving slowly towards me from the shadows.

"My horse swerved round just at this moment, and when I got him back to his old position nought could I see. I confess I was really alarmed now. Old stories of ghosts and wraiths, which I had been

accustomed to consider so much childish rubbish, rushed through my brain, do what I would to keep calm. I pulled myself together, however, sufficiently to determine to wait and see the up-shot of it all. Then the thought struck me that it might only be duffers after all, and nothing supernatural; and I could not overcome the idea that some one was aiming a gun at me in the darkness in front. I rode back once more to the camp-fire, and by that time felt pluckier again, and was thoroughly ashamed of myself. I then took up my position before the grave, determined to find out, single-handed, the cause of all the trouble.

"The blessed star of morning had risen fast since my last visit, and I could now see the outline of the tumble-down fence around the lonely resting-place of the murdered bushman. My horse was trembling as before, but with spur and knee I got him to within thirty feet of the grave.

"The starlight crept more and more into the mysterious corner. I sat and waited.

"Then suddenly I felt my hair raise the 'cabbage-tree' upon my head, and my skin broke into a cold sweat, for there I could see a curious something lying upon the mound, a something that had not been there last evening. Every moment the light grew stronger, and I sat in a helpless state of terror as I became aware of the figure of a man sitting on the grave, with awful, sorrowful face turned towards me, and bright, unearthly eyes looking into mine.

"The apparition was that of a man below the average height, and was apparently wrapped round, as far as I could make out, in a grey, soft, filmy kind of cloak. It was the rotten remains of the blanket in

which he had been buried. He moved not, but sat in awful silence gazing into my very soul.

"My horse trembled violently, but remained rooted to the spot. Then the figure rose slowly, and with eyes still fixed on mine began creeping, or rather gliding, noiselessly towards me.

"Oh, horror! I tried to shout; I could not. My tongue was dry and useless. The awful figure came slowly, slowly on. It was crouching now as if to spring upon me. Oh, heavens! Would nothing save me from that fearful, ghastly face, those awful eyes, that came nearer, nearer mine?

"There I sat in a kind of trance, watching the *thing* as it silently approached.

"Then suddenly an awful cry of agony burst forth close by my side; and from the air above, and from the dark wood behind, moans, groans, and hysterical bursts of laughter, shrill and blood-curdling, came in thick and bewildering succession.

"I nearly fainted. And, as the figure came on, and reached a spot where the early morning light fell upon it, I saw that it was a little, harmless animal of the sloth species, called a bear by Australian settlers. Others of its kind were barking and groaning their curious morning cries all round me upon the branches."

"The Squire" having terminated his story, Claude expressed his appreciation of its merits, and then the two men cantered their horses the remainder of the way to the station.

Here, after bidding his companion "Good-night," young Angland discovers that it is long past eleven o'clock; and a black boy, who runs out to take his

horse, informs him that the young ladies have retired to rest, also that Mr. Giles has not yet returned home.

So, after partaking of some supper which lies waiting his appearance upon the dining-room table, Angland goes out on to the verandah, feeling somehow more inclined for a thoughtful half-hour with a Manilla, beneath the stars, than to go to bed at once.

He sits there puffing, thinking first of Billy, then of Glory, and lastly of "the Squire's" ghostly experiences.

"Spot," he calls presently to the fox-terrier, who was sitting near him, in the flood of light that streams forth from the hall door, when he first lighted his cigar. "Spot, I wonder how you'd behave, if you saw a ghost?"

Spot, however, instead of prancing up to be petted, as he usually does when strangers take any notice of him, pays no attention to Claude's remark. So the smoker lazily turns his head round to see if the dog is still there. There stands Spot, having been apparently disturbed by something, looking down towards the dark end of the verandah, with his knowing little head cocked on one side.

"I wonder what he sees," thinks Claude; "the cat, I suppose." But turning his eyes in the direction of the dog's inquiring gaze, the young man becomes grimly aware of the fact that he and the dog are not alone upon the shadowy portico. Seated in one of the great cane-chairs, his widely opening eyes descry a dimly visible figure. It remains silent and motionless.

Claude has studied Professor Huxley's "Physiology,"

and remembers the celebrated case of the plucky "Mrs. A." and her spectral annoyances. But notwithstanding all this, on seeing the unexpected apparition near him, the young man exhibits one of those interesting automatic actions, attributable to what scientists, we believe, call "spontaneous activity,"—in other words, sits up with a start.

But before Angland has time to investigate matters, or even indulge, were he so minded, in any of those eye-ball-pressing experiments recommended by dry fact physiologists to all wraith-pestered persons, Spot had taken the initiative, and with perfect success.

He runs forward, wagging his tail, and jumps up against the chair in which is seated the mysterious figure.

"Oh my!" exclaims a musical girl's voice, the tones of which make Claude's heart beat as blithely as an excursion steamer's paddle-wheel.

"Wherever—— Oh! Spot, is that you? Why, you quite frightened me, I declare."

Then the sound of a dear little yawn is heard in the darkness, and soon afterwards Miss Glory Giles makes her appearance, and on seeing Claude motions to him to be quiet and refrain from speaking.

"Oh, Mr. Angland, I've been waiting up to see you, and I really believe I've been asleep," whispers the young lady. "Here, come with me. Be as quiet as you can; for goodness' sake, don't let *her* hear us."

Claude rises obediently; and, overcome with surprise, is unresistingly led out into the darkness on to the dried-up lawn in front of the house by his charming escort.

"Oh! hide that horrid light of your cigar, please,"

Glory suddenly exclaims, in a low, excited voice. "Somebody might see us. It's too dreadful to think of."

Then, with her warm, balmy breath fanning her admirer's cheek and her little hands clutching at his arm, she pants out to Claude the story of the intercepted letter.

"I've never liked her," Glory exclaims with pretty anger, as she finishes her account of the discovery of her cousin's plot; "but she's dreadfully clever and strong-minded, and poor papa couldn't get on without her, I do believe. But read this paper: it's a copy of the letter. She did not sign it. Ain't she cute? Meet me at the new stable before breakfast to-morrow; I go there every morning to see my mare Coryphée groomed. But I mustn't wait. Good-night!"

The little figure flits away like a fairy ghost into the darkness—silently as a moth—and is gone.

When Claude presently opens the paper that Miss Giles has given him in his own room, he finds the following words scratched upon it in pencil, in a school-girl's unformed hand:—

COPY OF HER LETTER.

"*Burn this directly you have read it. He is here, and is on the eve of discovering all. Send him the message we agreed upon at once; to-morrow, if possible to arrange matters so soon. Delay is dangerous. Burn this NOW.*"

CHAPTER XVI.

LILETH'S DISAPPOINTMENT.

"Le jour de Gloire est arrivé."

Marseillaise.

IT is much later than Claude's usual hour for rising when he opens his eyes upon the morning following his midnight interview with Miss Giles. And he remains in a sort of half-dormant condition, listening to the sound of a rich contralto voice singing a martial air, to the accompaniment of a piano, at the other end of the house.

The young man dreamily endeavours to make out the words of the song, but cannot. Though when it draws to a conclusion he is surprised to hear, as he fancies, in the chorus or refrain a poetical reference to the Christian name of the young lady who has

honoured him with an appointment at the stables for that morning. Claude, thus curiously reminded of his engagement, is not long in making his toilet and finding his way to the trysting-place; but discovering that Glory has not yet put in an appearance there, he returns to the house, and looks in at the drawing-room door to discover who the fair singer may be.

There he finds Miss Mundella seated at the piano. She looks up as she hears the intruder's footsteps, and, seeing Claude, smiles ingenuously upon him, holding out to him a perfectly modelled hand, and apologising for her absence the previous day.

Lileth is really glad to see Angland, and, odd as it may appear, admires him considerably, although she intends to wipe him out of her way at the earliest opportunity. She feels quite sorry now, as she looks up at him, not for his own sake,—far from it,—but because she thinks what a much more agreeable cavalier he would make than the flap-eared Mr. Cummercropper, who at present fetches and carries for her. And after the manner of the soldiers of opposing armies, who fraternise together during a temporary armistice ere they again fly at one another's throats, so Lileth is just as glad to enjoy a conversation with her intended victim, as she would be with any other young man who came up to her standard of excellent parts, and these youths were very scarce visitors at Murdaro.

"I hope I have not disturbed you with my playing," Miss Mundella remarks, noticing as she does so the hesitation with which Angland takes her hand. "I generally practice a little of a morning before breakfast. Are you fond of music?"

"Very fond," answers Claude, gazing with a mixed feeling of admiration and dislike at the proud, calm features of the fair object of his suspicions, as she bends over the music lying on the chair beside her.

"Is it possible such a girl can be a heartless criminal, or at least an abettor?" he asks himself, "or are appearances against her only?"

Then, to break the rather awkward silence, Claude speaks about the song he had heard when he awoke, and requests her to oblige him by singing it once more. Without any foolish affectation of hesitation she immediately complies.

"It is an almost forgotten piece of music nowadays, at least amongst English people," Lileth says. "I am rather fond of it, probably because it suits my voice." Then with perfect skill, her splendid face grandly eloquent with the military spirit engendered by the air and words, Miss Mundella sings the grand "Chanson de Roland" of the great Napoleon's time:—

"Soldats français, chantez Roland,
L'honneur de la chevalerie,
Et répètez en combattant
Ces mots sacrés,
Ces mots sacrés:
Gloire et Patrie!
Gloire et Patrie!"

"Rather an elastic kind of patriotism was that of Rouget de Lisle," observes Miss Mundella laughingly as she finishes, her eyes sparkling and cheeks warm with the *verve* she has put into her song; "most of his *chansons* are charmingly spirited, and he is credited

with fifty I think; but there are some thoroughly imperialistic, others republican, and others again legitimist,—all got up for the occasion."

"Yes," answers Claude, as the inspiriting music, combined with the fascination of Miss Mundella's presence, renders that young man gradually oblivious of his suspicions, "and he was rather fond of annexing other people's musical ideas, if the German critics are to be believed. You know they say he got his grand Marseillaise hymn from a Deutscher named Holzmann, some time before he wrote his impromptu masterpiece *chez* Baron Dietrich."

"I have never heard that sin laid to his charge before," remarks Lileth, striking some sonorous chords upon the keys as she speaks. "Are you great on musical anecdotes? I dote on them."

"Oh no. I know little or nothing upon the subject. I'm really afraid I couldn't tell you even Mendelssohn's surname, if you asked it, correctly. But I remember about Rouget because I saw the house when I was at Strasbourg, and more particularly because it was there I heard a very good story, that in my opinion eclipses anything in the way of French wit I've ever heard before or since."

"Oh, will you repeat it to me?"

"Well, I'm rather a bad hand at a story," responds Claude, "but I will try to give you a general idea of the joke, which was attributed either to Rouget de Lisle himself or to some relative of his. I daresay it has been put in the mouths of many other notables as well.

"There was a grand wedding taking place at the parish church, and the charming bride, all blushes

and lace-veil, was tremblingly signing her name in the register, when, horror of horrors, she upset the contents of the ink bottle over her wedding robes! All the vestry was in a commotion directly, and the little bridesmaids were like to faint when they saw the horrible black stains destroying the spotless purity of the bridal vestments. What a bad omen! Worse than spilling the salt at the breakfast. Everybody was about to rush forward to commiserate with the unhappy bride.

"But De Lisle's relative, or somebody else's relative, as the case may be, stepped forward, and, smiling on the woeful faces, took all the sting out of the accident; he even turned the mishap into the cause of much merriment, with a singularly happy *bon mot:*—

"'*Mais c'est tout naturel,*' he said, '*aussitôt que mademoiselle est arrivé au port, elle a jeté l'ancre.*'"

When Claude ceases speaking, Lileth shows her appreciation of his anecdote with a low, musical laugh. Then, taking advantage of the opportunity afforded her, she proceeds to give Angland a good dose of the kind of music that she observes has effect upon him; hoping that in the intervals of playing, by a skilfully conducted conversation, to worm a little useful information from him as to his plans, as he warms to her fascinations and becomes confidentially inclined.

"Yes," she says, as Angland finishes a gay description of the little concert given in his honour by the stockmen at the out-station the night before,—"yes, some of these men have naturally really splendid voices. Always in the open air, and wearing no heavy coats to confine their chests, it is not to be wondered at that they have good lungs, at any rate. Miners I

know are proverbially good singers. I have heard several at different times. Your late uncle sang very well, I believe, for example. Have you heard, by-the-bye, anything of his boy Billy yet?"

"No," replies Claude, "and I am very anxious to get on with my uncle's—— I mean, to find my uncle's grave. But as Billy is not here, and I can't very well get on without him, I suppose I can't do better than wait here for a time, as Mr. Giles so kindly pressed me to do, and see if the boy turns up."

An independent observer, noticing the looks of admiration with which Angland was regarding the young lady by the piano, would hardly have imagined that an immediate withdrawal from her company was what he chiefly desired.

"Oh, pray, Mr. Angland," says Lileth, turning towards Claude, and concentrating upon him all the will-power that a rapid glance of her glorious eyes can convey, "do not desert us just yet. It is such a pleasure to have an agreeable, educated man to converse with again. Any one who has travelled, and who knows about something besides horses and cattle, is quite a *rara avis* up here, I can assure you. I shall miss you very much when you have to go," adds Miss Mundella, with a sigh.

Claude bows his acknowledgments of the compliments paid him, and the young lady continues speaking in a low voice, looking demurely downwards, and playing *pianissimo* meanwhile that bewitching Cavatina love-spell of Donizetti's :—

"Believe me, I somehow feel a very great deal of interest in your search. It is so brave, so honourable, of you to take all this trouble merely to visit the

grave of your relative. I fancy few men would care to do that for an uncle nowadays."

Now it is one of the strange things "that no fellar can understand" how most of the best men one meets in every-day life will hasten to repudiate any assertion crediting them with an honourable or unselfish motive for any action they may have performed. It is just as if such a reason for a deed was something to be really ashamed of.

It is an odd but undeniable fact that men often take considerable trouble to make themselves out to be worse than they really are. So Claude, following the general rule, immediately endeavours to prove that he is not so good-hearted—therefore, in a worldly sense, so foolish—an individual as Miss Mundella would imagine. In fact, he swallows the encomiastic bait held out to him by that young lady.

"I am really afraid," he exclaims, "that I cannot claim that it is all affection, on my part, that brings me up this way to search for my uncle's grave. I must confess that there are more mercenary considerations mixed up with my sublimer motives than you kindly would credit me with." And here we have to record a serious mistake Lileth made. For, instead of keeping her quarry under the gentle thraldom of her music, and the attractive warmth of manner which was really more natural to her than her usual appearance of coldness, Miss Mundella began to excuse this "mercenary motive" of Claude's to him in her ordinary conversational tones.

Instantly he awakes, as it were, from the sweet confidential mood into which he has drifted, for the peculiar notes (*timbre*) of Lileth's voice have again

called up the viaduct scene to his memory; and Miss Mundella can tell by the altered manner in which he speaks, as he rises with some feeble excuse for quitting her side, that she has somehow scared him for the nonce.

But she has gained one little piece of information: which is, that Claude is aware that something advantageous to himself awaits the successful accomplishment of his expedition. "It must be the P. Ns." she thinks, as she leans backward on the sofa after he has left her.

And at breakfast Lileth makes another and rather disconcerting discovery,—namely, that Claude and Glory have some secret understanding between them. And although those young people do all in their power to conceal the same from the dark-browed mistress of the house, her keen glances soon pierce their transparent natures, and she becomes cognisant of the fact, also, that their secret is antagonistic to herself.

* * * * * * *

It is towards evening that Claude, who has been away on horseback all day, returns to the head-station, and is lucky enough to find Glory Giles by herself upon the verandah.

"Is that Don, the newspaper boy, you told me about?" that young lady asks, looking at the small, comical figure, who, on the top of a tall, lank mare, is holding Angland's horse by the station gate.

"Yes," answers Claude, "and I will introduce him to you some day before long. You'll find him a first-class youngster. But I can't spare the time to do so now, for, Miss Giles," lowering his voice, "*for I've*

found Billy, and of course I start directly on my search."

"But the false message?" asks Glory, rising, and looking anxiously up at the young man's face.

"I have received Puttis's kind invitation also," Claude replies, with a smile. "Let me tell you all about it."

Angland sits down by Glory's side, and, hardly taking his eyes off her sad, anxious little face for an instant, notices, with some relief, that the news of his departure is really unpleasant to his fair companion.

"Soon after breakfast," he continues, "that rascal Carlo came to me, and told me something in a mysterious sort of way, which I at length made out to mean that a 'wild fellow black fellow' had brought me something. I followed Carlo to the black camp,—I guessed I could not come to grief only a couple of hundred yards from the station,—and found a 'boy' there, who handed me a piece of crumpled paper, upon which was scrawled some words. They were these, as near as I remember: 'You can trust this boy. He bring you to me.' It was signed 'Billy.'"

"Ah!" cries Glory excitedly, and casting a swift glance down the passage towards Lileth's room, "and what did you do?"

There is something so charmingly attractive in the warm interest which Glory evinces in what Claude is narrating, and her sweet little face blushes so prettily with her emotion, that it is only by exerting all his self-command that Angland can restrain himself from clasping the little form beside him in his arms.

Angland, however, instead of acting thus, and at once destroying the good opinion Glory has of him,

does just the reverse of it, and withdrawing his eyes from the bewitching object of his affections, he goes on speaking :—

"I noticed at once that the black who'd brought the letter had a red ribbon tied round his forehead,—which I have often seen police and station 'boys' wearing, as a mark to distinguish them from the wild natives who may be about. I also thought that the messenger seemed to be putting on a good bit of 'side' for a warragal, and I hardly expected that Billy would be hiding at a station, and employ a station hand as his Mercury. So, remembering the letter you intercepted, I guessed that the 'boy' must be a police 'boy' *in mufti*. So, after reading the note, I thought I would test the messenger by pretending that the letter, which I was sure he could not read, was a message from Puttis. 'Here,' I said, holding out the piece of paper, 'Mr. Puttis say you take me to him. Which way inspector sit down?'

"The black looked up at me rather sulkily, I thought, as if undecided how to answer; then, after a moment's consideration, he mumbled,—

"'''Spector Puttis him sit down longer Bulla Bulla 'tation!'

"'All right,' I said, 'you wait here till I come back.'"

"And then?" asks Glory.

"Then I rode off to see my old miner, Williams, and asked his advice. When I got to the out-station I found him most jubilant, for, what do you think?—he had found Billy. Yes, little Joe, acting under Williams's orders, had been scouring the country with coloured handkerchiefs, which he gave to all the

niggers he could find. Each of these had a small message to Billy, telling him where to find me, written upon it.

"Billy saw one of these messages, and—— But I mustn't say anything further about it, Glory,—I mean Miss Giles,— for Williams made me solemnly promise I wouldn't do so to any one."

"He was quite right," remarks Glory. "Give him my compliments, and tell him that I think him ever so clever, and hope you'll bring him here when you return." Then after a pause she looks up and asks Claude a question, with her bewitching little head held sideways towards him, for her admirer's ardent gaze has somewhat disconcerted the little, golden-haired maiden.

"May I ask one thing more? You won't mind telling me *that*, will you?"

"What is it?" responds Claude, who, to tell the truth, would have gone near breaking his promise with Williams if Glory had demanded him to do so.

"I want to know how you know that it was really Billy that you have found?"

"Well, because I've seen him. We both, in fact, mutually recognized each other, although, as I told you, it is about ten years since I saw Billy in England. He, moreover, showed me an old scar I remembered upon his leg. He looks in very poor condition, poor fellow."

"Mr. Angland," says Glory gravely, "I will try and find out why poor Dr. Dyesart's boy was hunted from here. Papa says, as I told you, that Billy told one of the boys here that he had killed your uncle, and that Billy ran away when he found that the boy had told papa. But papa must have been mistaken. It is all part of some horrible plan of Lileth's." Then

standing up, and giving her tiny right hand to Claude, who holds it as if it were a precious piece of fragile crockery, she continues in a pleading tone of voice :—

"You must not think papa had anything to do with that letter I got from Carlo either. Will you try, just for my sake, to believe that papa had nothing to do with driving away Billy and writing that letter? My papa is rough, and I know you think he's cruel to the niggers,—so did I when I first came up here for a visit, but I didn't notice it after a while. But he's really very good at heart; he really is."

Glory speaks very earnestly; but suddenly, as she remembers that her father was present when Miss Mundella bound her to secrecy about the photograph, her voice falters, and she hesitates whether she ought to tell Claude all or not. But Angland interrupts her thoughts by speaking.

"If your father was the worst fellow going, and had kicked me out of the house, instead of treating me very hospitably, as he has done, I would forgive him, and vote him first class, because of his being your father. And now 'good-bye' till I return."

Claude finds the dreaded moment of separation, now that it has at last arrived, harder even than he had anticipated. There is a curious lump in his throat that renders the farewell words difficult of expression.

Glory, on her part, although she bravely endeavours to appear the cheerful, laughing creature as Claude knew her first, in order to ease his pain at parting, is not successful in carrying out this innocent piece of deception. And, to tell the truth, Claude, although grieved to see her sadness, which this affected cloak of gaiety does not conceal from the eyes of her lover,

yet cannot help taking comfort to himself therefrom. For man's love is a more selfish sentiment than it is generally regarded to be, and differs in this respect especially from woman's, which, if more eccentric in its taste, is certainly more thoroughly disregardful of self-interest than that of the other and more practical sex.

Claude, on his part, feels that what he would like to say to the golden-haired girl, that glances at him with such tender blue eyes, would not offend, perhaps not even surprise, his *inamorata*. But Angland has a gentleman's strict notions of propriety and integrity, and having already decided in his own mind that he has no right to speak those words that hover on his lips till his present mission is fulfilled, he refrains from doing so.

Of course, whilst transmitting this fact in our history to paper, we feel that our hero will appear very foolish to certain of our readers. He, however, acted as he considered correctly, according to his lights, and no man can blame another for doing that; although they can pity his mistaken ideas of right and wrong to their heart's content, if they feel so disposed.

"Good-bye, Miss Giles," he says at last, huskily; "for the service you did me the other night I can never repay you. There is only one thing I would like you to do, and that is, I have no time to write to my mother now before starting, if anything should stop us coming back again from the wilds, would you mind writing to her? It would comfort her to hear from some one whom I've spoken of already in my letters to her."

Then he is gone, and Glory, returning to the house, enters her own room and "breaks down." Lileth, hear-

ing her cousin sobbing in the next room, and having been apprised of the arrival of the false messenger, smiles to herself as she guesses that Claude has started for his last appointment on earth, and mentally congratulates herself upon the successful beginning her scheme has made. But she is somewhat astonished and disconcerted on presently being informed by Carlo that Inspector Puttis's messenger is awaiting Claude's return. Inquiries made of Glory through the door of her room—for having a sick headache that young lady does not appear at the dinner-table—only elicit the fact that Angland has departed, having requested Miss Giles to convey his compliments and adieux to Mr. Giles and Miss Mundella.

Before retiring to rest Lileth indites a long letter to Inspector Puttis, of which the following is part :—

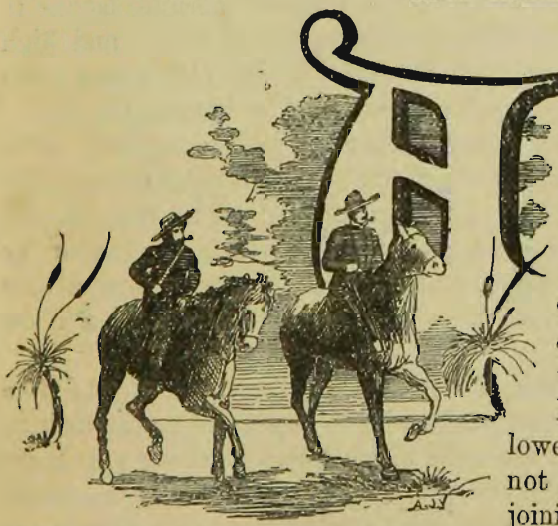
"Your letter plan has missed fire. The boy you sent was somehow suspected by A., and Carlo tells me that he heard your boy confess to A. that you had sent the letter. You can do what you like with your boy, of course, but I hope you will remove all chance of his again denouncing you. I shall send Carlo to you next week, when I hope you will be able safely to dispose of him. Carlo and your boy are both too dangerous now to be about. A. has started, and I had Carlo out after them, and he tracked them some miles towards the Flat Top ranges. He believes that Billy is with them, as they are travelling on the track of some blacks who arrived on the run from the hill country yesterday. Come over here as soon as you finish your western patrol, but beware what you say before Glory Giles ; she is not so foolish as she looks, and met A. down south. The two are great compatriots.'

CHAPTER XVII.

EN AVANT!

"Boot and saddle, see the slanting
Rays begin to fall,
Flinging lights and colours flaunting
Through the shadows tall.
Onward! onward! must we travel?
When will come the goal
Riddle I may not unravel
Cease to vex my soul."

ADAM LINDSAY GORDON.



AFTER leaving Murdaro "Government House," Claude, in company with his little follower Don, was not long in rejoining his party at the out-station. Here he found the pack-horses all ready, and Williams and Billy just concluding a

lengthy confabulation as to the best route to follow. So, there being nothing to delay the immediate departure of the expedition, a start was called, and some twenty miles travelled before darkness necessitated a camp for the night.

It is now three o'clock A.M. The chorus of crickets that has thrilled through the warm night air since sunset is gradually dying into the solemn stillness of the darkest hour that goes before the dawn.

The stars overhead throb with a clearer light than heretofore, and when some eccentric or sleepless insect breaks the hushed mantle of shadow resting upon the world with disturbing squeak or chirp, the ear jumps and strains into the deep, black silence with an intensity that is almost painful.

Now, through the dark aisles of ebon-stemmed gum-trees, the first white stain of morning begins to blot out those stars near to the horizon, and high above the topmost branches of the tall, gaunt trees the pure lustre of the morning star heralds the day.

Round the grey embers of the camp-fire, upon which remains the impress of last night's damper, the figures of the party lie motionless in their tossed coverings of red and blue blankets, and near by stands the billy, containing sodden tea-leaves, where the last man on watch drained the cold tea ere turning in.

Each man's saddle is his pillow, and beyond is a vague litter of pack-saddles, bags, and snaky-looking surcingles; amongst which Don's retriever pup keeps guard against the prowling, cowardly dingoes, whose blinking eye-stars have circled the camp during the dark hours.

Suddenly the hush of night seems broken by the brisk chirping of a small pied-tit, called by Australians a shepherd's companion, and, as if in response to the volatile little creature's busy notes, the morning breeze comes with a soft, murmuring rush, and flutters through the long, pendant gum-leaves as if fair Nature was softly sighing ere she awoke to the heat and toil of another tropic day.

Claude, whose anxiety makes him a light sleeper, is roused by this peaceful *réveille* and opens his eyes, and then, raising himself upon his elbow, he throws off the blanket that has encompassed him during the night and is now wet with dew, and looks around. In a semi-circle by the camp-fire lie his companions, their limbs outstretched in various unstudied positions of utter repose, and over there, against the widening band of eastern grey, he can see the black form of old Williams, who, mounted and armed, is taking the last watch.

Although only a short time in Australia, Angland has already travelled over two hundred miles with horses through the bush, and has consequently already experienced some of the vicissitudes inseparable to that mode of progression,—straying horses and such "chances of the night" amongst them.

So his first thoughts are common to all equestrian travellers through the interior wilds, namely, "Where are the horses? Shall we be able to break camp early, or must we track some of the brutes back to the last camp?"

But Claude is relieved from much anxiety on that score by reason of the watches that have been kept during the night; so he proceeds to finish a hurried

toilet and afterwards awaken his slumbering companions.

There is always a great deal of vexation, and often danger, in waterless country, attending the loss of horses whilst travelling in the bush, and we pause in our narrative to remark upon a certain marvellous faculty possessed by many Australian bushmen of long experience.

During many years, often for months at a time, these men have listened anxiously for the sound of their horses' or bullocks' bells,—at sundown when they turned in, during their wakeful moments through the night, and with redoubled anxiety in the early morning. It is therefore hardly surprising, taking all this into consideration, that these men gradually get into the habit, if we can correctly designate the new-born power by that term, of still being able to hear the bells, even when fast asleep, in which they resemble Erckmann-Chatrian's murderous innkeeper, in *The Polish Jew*. But what is far stranger, having done so they can remember all about it next morning; in which they differ from those gifted somnambulistic individuals one reads about who write poetry and solve difficult problems during their slumbers.

Many bushmen will wake up out of the deepest sleep if their bells wander too far away, or if these cease their jangling for too long a period; but those "old hands," who are the particular object of these remarks, will be able in the morning to tell you as much about the wanderings that the horses have made during the previous hours of darkness, as if they had been watchfully awake all night; will unhesitatingly state to the "boys," when these youths go horse

hunting in the morning, where Bob, with the "condaminer" bell, has got to, and which direction Boco, with the goat-bell, took with his part of the mob, when the horses began to feed at two o'clock.

It is still dark when Claude gives the usual bush signal for all hands to wake up, by shouting out "Daylight!" Little Don gives Angland a wide, steady look, till, his wits gathering themselves together, he repeats the word interrogatively, and after sleepily rubbing his eyes, proceeds to put on his boots, thus completing his attire.

Far away across the dark plain, upon the bush-fringed edge of which the party have camped, the faint tinkling of several of the horse-bells can be heard,—blessed sounds; and, more to the left, the thump, thump, of the big "frog" bell on Claude's horse Charlie. Another hour and the buzz of the awakened insect world will drown all sounds more than a few hundred yards away, and therefore it behoves those who perform the matutinal horse-hunting duties of a caravan, such as that which Billy is about to pilot across the desert, to imitate the policy of the proverbial "early bird," ere the daily plague of flies have made their noisy appearance.

So whilst Claude and Williams are preparing breakfast, Billy and the two boys are away after the horses; and these animals, being all good campers, are soon rounded up and unhobbled, and come racing in towards the smoke of the camp-fire, biting and kicking, as if they highly appreciated the delightful feeling of being rid once more of those horrible gyves of chain and leather.

"Say, boss, I want to speak to you bime-bye,"

Billy observes to Claude, after breakfast, as he leans across the saddle of a pack-horse to give a finishing pat to one of the pack-bags before he tightens up the surcingle.

Claude nods a signal that he has heard the remark, from where he is fixing a bunch of hobbles to another horse's neck, and presently intimates that he can give the black youth his attention, by begging him to "fire away."

"You know, boss, I was very sick gin I come up to station," Billy observes in a slow, sulky sort of voice.

"Yes, I expect you were pretty bad when you'd finished your journey from my uncle's grave," replies Claude.

"I bin tell you yesterday," the dark youth goes on, "all about the wild fellows' camp where I stay; where I come from three days ago."

"The village where you've lived since the old digger you were with got killed? Yes, I remember about it. Are we near to it?"

"Yes, boss. Now I think this way. I was very sick when I get this far from where I plant the doctor, and I wonder sometimes if I able to pick up my pad (tracks) after all this time. I remember country near grave; not this way. You see, I was very sick this end of the stage."

"I understand, Billy; but what has that to do with the wild fellows' camp?"

"Just see here, boss, I think I better go to black camp and get two boys—one won't come without a mate. These people very good at the track. They find my old pad, and bime-by, when I come to country I know, boys come back. You like?"

"All right, Billy," complies Claude, "but will you be able to get the blacks to come? They won't like to leave the ranges, especially to go along with white folk. And I don't blame them, either."

"Well, you see, boss, the doctor, he bin to their camp two, no three time, and they like him. He very good to them. When the old hatter get killed by them cussed Kalcadoones, I think to myself, I make tracks back to this camp, and by-and-by doctor's friends come along and I hear of them."

"And I'm very glad you had the 'savez' to do so," responds Claude, patting Billy on his shoulder.

The black's eyes brighten at the praise given him by the master to whom he has begun to transfer those dog-like affections lately left objectless by the death of Dr. Dyesart.

"The wild fellow," he continues, "bin very glad to see me when I come along. There was *komorbory tuckout* (plenty of food). I tell them doctor was dead, and me like to live with them for a time."

"Can you talk their language, Billy?"

"No, boss, but there was two runaway boys with them. One, he come from down Boulia way," the speaker waves his black arm towards the south-west. "This boy speak my language a bit, and I bin mining with the doctor in his country and know his——" the speaker hesitates for want of a word, and then gives a number of flourishes with his hands, to express to Claude the masonic-like manual signs by means of which the members of some tribes are able to communicate with each other, to a great extent, without speaking.

"Well, get these boys if you can," interrupts

Claude; "but don't you think you can do without them?"

"No, I think it good to get the boys," replies Billy quietly but firmly.

"How long will you be away," asks young Angland, slightly expressing by the tones of his voice the annoyance he feels at this fresh detention.

"I come back with boys to-night or to-morrow. 'Spose you camp next water-hole—'bout twenty miles. I tell Joe all 'bout it last night. He knows place; he bin there."

"But, Billy!" exclaims Angland, as a thought suddenly strikes him. "Look here, if white fellow send 'boys' to track us they will see your track up to village. You'll get your friends up there into trouble if you don't mind what you're about."

"All right, boss," replies Billy, smiling a smile of superior wisdom; "you see it bime-by."

Both men have for the last half hour been cantering after the rest of the party, who, with the pack-horses, are on in front. Presently Claude's companion signifies his desire that they should proceed less quickly, and then, pulling his horse into a walking pace, Billy throws his reins over his steed's head, and holds them out to Claude. Our hero takes them, and looks on in silence, wondering what the black youth is about to do. Sitting sideways on the quiet animal he is riding, Billy next proceeds to divest himself of his boots and hat, which he fixes firmly to the dees of his saddle, and then producing a pair of queer, mitten-like objects made of emu-feathers, he fastens them securely upon his feet. He now motions Claude to lead his horse under a big gum-tree that stretches its great branches over the

cattle track they are following, and suddenly rising into a kneeling position upon his saddle, he clutches a branch above his head, and lifts himself clear of his horse into mid-air.

"Me leave no track into bush this way," the black cries from his perch, his dark face covered with a big, oily, triumphant smile, and Claude, turning his head as he rides on, sees Billy swinging from tree to tree, like some great anthropomorphic ape, into the heart of the dark forest on his right.

Angland has heard of the feather slippers used by the natives of some parts of Australia when particularly anxious to abstain from leaving any dangerous trail behind them during their peregrinations, but Billy's are the first he has seen. And on catching up to Williams, and telling him of the method in which the black youth has taken his departure, the old miner spins Claude so many interesting yarns about the ingenious devices employed by the aborigines to avoid being hunted down by their native or foreign foes, that he determines to get up an exhibition of some of them when his pilot returns with the two new auxiliaries.

But, leaving little Joe to lead the rest of the party on to the next water-hole, let us follow the dark-skinned Billy on his way to the village. This young man has learned a good deal about the kind of country he is now traversing during the last few weeks, and, moreover, he has journeyed to his friends' hamlet more than once before from about the same point where he has just entered the forest. So he wends his way in a fairly straight course, and is not more than three hours doing the seven miles of rough

travelling that has to be got over before he reaches the vicinity of the *Myall* camp. After leaving the forest at the foot of the wild range, his way lies for the greater part up the dried-up bed of a mountain torrent, that has cut its way during countless ages through the enormous mass of grey granite of which the mountain is composed. High above the dark boulder-strewn path of the storm-stream, the grim old cliffs rise on either hand, their broken fronts decked here and there with clinging tufts of herbage, and crowned with overflowing wealth of perennial vegetation of the dark forest on their summits. Here and there the outcrop of a quartz reef stretches across the path with great, teeth-like projections of white, flinty rock, and now and again the brown face of what is a waterfall after the rains necessitates a bit of climbing. At last the traveller reaches the crown of the watershed, and follows the rocky ridge of the range northwards for a couple of miles. The forest, that has hitherto consisted chiefly of various kinds of *eucalypti*, some of which give off an almost overpowering odour much resembling peppermint, now changes its character suddenly, for here is the edge of the basaltic "top-dressing" that covers the bigger lines of ranges, lying to the eastward, with its characteristic vegetation.

Billy, arrived at this point, sits down to rest awhile near a mound of stone chips, which is the sole monument remaining of a past generation of aborigines who once had a stone-axe manufactory here. A number of "wasters" and half-finished adzes, made of basalt, are lying about, and at a future day, no doubt, will grace some museum, when the old chip-heap has been discovered by some prowling ethnologist. Over Billy's

head swings the flat nest of a king-pigeon,—built, as is usually the case, on the extreme end of a bough, —and thousands of beautiful insects, notably some gigantic green and day-flying moths, are making their erratic, aërial promenades through the glades bordering upon the gloomy jungle.

No white man's eye could have detected the slightest sign of the track that Billy now commences to follow, but to an aboriginal it is a fairly clear one. Here and there an overturned stone, a broken twig, or a crushed leaf make it patent to the young man that some one has passed this way towards the village only a short time before. This is a cheerful sign for Billy, knowing as he does that so great is the fear that his friends the villagers have of being discovered by the neighbouring squatters, that it was highly probable they might have shifted their camp upon his leaving for the station. Presently the traveller stops and glances at a palm-leaf that is lying across the almost invisible track he is following. It has apparently fallen there naturally, but the black understands its signification, and immediately alters his course. And after a rough scramble down the precipitous sides of a densely scrubbed ravine, he comes to where he can hear the sound of voices below him. Creeping like a snake amongst the dank, humid undergrowth, Billy gets near enough to recognize the sounds as proceeding from the vocal chords of a party of the friends he has come to interview. So he begins a low guttural chant to apprise those beneath him of his arrival.

"*Kolli! kolli!*" (Hush! be silent!) one of the talkers ejaculates, and the talking ceases immediately. Soon afterwards, without heralding her approach by

Lumholtz Among Cannibals

the slightest noise, a woman stands before our black friend, clad only in the undress costume of her native shades; and after a few brief words of recognition have passed between her and the new-comer, the former returns to her people below, and reporting "all serene," a united chorus of welcome invites Billy to descend to them.

Had a civilized European been present at the meeting in the merry woods, and had he been able to have understood the meaning of Billy's opening chant and the reply chorus, he might have been forcibly reminded of certain of the musical dramas of the old world.

The happy, beribboned peasant of the operatic stage has for years borne the brunt of many facetious remarks, simply because he cannot indulge even in the most commonplace conversation without surrounding his words with a shroud of fascinating trills. Yet here in the Australian woods and plains we find the untutored savage, like the wild birds round him, doing the same kind of thing, and much given to confabulatory chants and choruses. It truly would seem quite within the bounds of possibility that ere the joyous dwellers in Arcadia had relinquished their independent notions and simple acorn diet before the incoming flood of European civilization, they really did "carry on" in the harmonious manner in which they are represented to us to-day by the gifted authors of modern opera.

But whilst we have been thus sadly digressing from our story Billy has climbed down to the aboriginals in the gully below, and finds he has been following up a hunting party that, having been out all the morning,

is now on its way home. Half-a-dozen men, armed with *womeras*, spears, and *nulla nullas*, stand waiting for him to appear. Most of them are resting on one leg, the sole of one foot being pressed against the inside of the other leg at the knee joint, after the local method of "standing at ease," their spears or a neighbouring branch being used to keep their bodies in a state of equilibrium. One of the men, the runaway station boy spoken of by Billy to Claude, who belongs to the former young man's *Mordu*, or class-family, steps forward and welcomes the new arrival by embracing him. Then, after a few guttural ejaculations, the party forms Indian file and proceeds villagewards; three or four women carrying the hunters' game, which consists of a couple of rock-wallaby and a few bandicoots, bringing up the rear.

As the natives get into the vicinity of the village, they take every precaution to leave no track behind them, and each individual enters the thicket in which the little collection of *gunyahs* is ensconced by a different route.

It is quite remarkable how the inhabitants of these scrub hamlets manage to travel to and from their habitations, for years sometimes, without leaving anything like a beaten track which might attract the notice of a passing foe.

The huts comprising the village into which the hunters are now entering are of the universal pattern affected by Australian aborigines throughout their great island home. Their form resembles that of a half-spread mushroom or a very squat beehive. But instead of being plastered over with red or yellow clay, as are the domiciles of the natives of the open

country, these gunyahs are simply but securely thatched with palm-leaves.

This common type of dwelling is worth notice as being rather remarkable. One might have expected to have found that the present race of Australian natives, who are unmistakably the descendants of Papuan immigrants, who have intermarried with an inferior and puny aboriginal race, would have copied the well-built houses of their near neighbours and relatives the New Guinea blacks. Both races of people have the same name for the land they inhabit, calling each Daudée, and many of their marriage laws and religious ordinances show a common and probably Indian origin,—the occasional worship of the crocodile (*Sebara*) and snake being a case in point.

Possibly these small houses were necessitated by the absence of the bamboo, which supplied their foreign ancestors with such splendid building material. And the form of the dwellings may have originally been devised to imitate the spinifax-crowned mounds so common upon the sand-hills of the plain country, for to combine the advantages of an elevated position and one of comparative obscurity in a village would be a distinct gain to a community in a savage land from the increased protection they would afford.

A few shrivelled old crones, who are sitting scraping and scratching themselves at the entrances to their several residences, commence a low howl of welcome upon seeing the good things brought by the returning hunters, and presently other men and women appear upon the scene—the latter carrying their fat, bright-eyed offspring in elegantly shaped

wicker-baskets, which are made so as to be conveniently carried in the hollow of the back by bands of plaited grass passed round the forehead. Several brilliantly painted shields for use in native *boorers* (tournaments) and wooden dishes are scattered about, and a curiously carved stick—a sort of almanac, which is the property of the old man or father of the village—stands in front of a large gunyah at one end of the semi-circle of dwellings. A meal is now prepared by the younger women, consisting chiefly of such dainties as the roasted flesh of wallabys and a big kind of carpet-snake, which has been preserved till tender by being kept under water for some days, with a few side-dishes of grasshoppers, roasted grubs, wild-figs (*yanki*), and various kinds of berries; and these delicacies being consumed, Billy proceeds to disclose the object of his visit. Whilst speaking, however, he judiciously distributes some brilliantly coloured handkerchiefs to the male villagers, who are chewing an aromatic kind of resin, obtained from a scrub tree much resembling the kauri (*dammara*) of New Zealand. After a great amount of talk, in which the women join at times, one of the runaway station boys and a tall, long-legged *Myall* finally agree to return with Billy, and the old father of the little community brings the business to a close by observing, "*Vai mollie moungarn*,"—intimating thereby that the sun is fast declining towards the mountain tops, and that the men had better start at once.

A touching scene of parting now takes place between the men who are about to join Claude's party and their families. Again and again, when on the point of marching off, do Billy's recruits return to fondle their

Lumholtz p177
vi mollie mongan

children once more before leaving, and it is only by the promise of fabulous wealth—a blanket and tomahawk apiece—that the two blacks are at length persuaded to tear themselves away.

Australian aborigines have always a great affection for their children; these seldom cry, and are never beaten, or indeed corrected, save when breaking any of those sacred laws, regarding the mysteries of which we shall presently speak, in which case terrible, even diabolical, punishment ensues.

It is nearly sunset when at length the three men set off, and after some rough travelling in the dark a clear spot in the jungle is reached, where they rest till the moon rises, when they again push on.

The grey hours of the next morning see Billy and the two other blacks arrive at Claude's camp, some time having been spent towards the end of their journey in removing all signs of their tracks where they left the bush.

"At last!" cries Claude exultingly, as, a few hours afterwards, he takes a parting survey of last night's camp, to make sure that nothing has been left behind; "at last I am really *en route!*"

The rest of the party are gone on in advance. The neighbouring water-hole looks up at the white-hot sun above it with its thousand eyes of water-lilies in their gorgeous robes of white, yellow, crimson, and violet. On the low trees round about numbers of large crows —those scavengers of the wilds—are croaking their harsh cries of impatience: "Augh, augh, ah-h-h-h." These sable rascals are never absent from an Australian traveller's camp, and appear like magic when he lights his billy fire. Hardly has Claude mounted to

ride after his companions, when the crows swoop down by the cold ashes to fight and squabble over the odds and ends that lie about. At two o'clock arrives the hottest time of the day,—it is really as warm as any living thing can stand with safety,—and as the expedition crawls along over the burnt-up, reddish soil of the plain, upon which withered tufts of various kinds of coarse grass appear at intervals, Claude feels certain that he has never been in such a thirsty-looking place before. Everything around, trees, grass, and all, looks as if fashioned out of brown paper and sprinkled with dust.

A few dark-brown kites—similar to those that Angland has seen some years previously at curious Cairo and barren Aden—sit panting with open beaks on the hot branches of the stunted quinine and gutta-percha trees, too overcome by the heat even to move as the party rides by, almost within arm's length of them. The country round about, as the horsemen get well out into the plain, is almost a dead flat; the only difference in level being the long, wide, gentle rises which, like ocean waves, cross the shimmering expanse of heated earth from east to west, at distances apart of about a couple of miles. Every kind of animal life is gradually left behind as the travellers push on; not even a kite, or a "gohanna," as old Williams calls the ignana-like lizards that are generally common throughout the bush, is to be seen. The weary horses wade patiently through the dust, which is so fine that it rises into the air on the slightest provocation. The horizon is a level circle of monotonous, grey-brown tree-tops; the middle distance sunburnt, reddish clay, grass that reminds one of the

harmless, necessary doormat, and dusty tree-stems; and the immediate foreground is hidden in clouds of dust, so fine, so penetrating, that Claude feels his throat to resemble the interior of a lime-kiln before half the day's journey is done.

This desert country, however, is left behind by the time the dull-red sunset has begun to tinge the pillar of dust raised by the horses of a lovely rose colour, and at last a *détour* is made from Billy's old tracks in order to reach a water-hole known only to the *Myall* (native) pilots. And Claude blesses his black friend Billy, in his heart, for having procured the guides, as he sees the horses prick their dust-covered ears, and liven up as they sniff the refreshing odour of the little mud-surrounded pool of dirty liquid.

The next few days' travelling are monotonous in the extreme. Sometimes the party toil over red deserts, whose sterile surfaces offer hardly a mouthful, even of withered grass, for the horses, and where no water can be found with which to refresh the suffering animals. For the country has suffered from a continual drought for two years or more, and the moist mud which still remained in the water-holes that Billy luckily came across, on his late journey to Murdaro Station, has all disappeared.

At other times the horses pick their stumbling way over rough and semi-mountainous tracts of country, that stretch on all sides in an apparently interminable and dreary treeless waste. Here and there, however, little patches of far better country are traversed, where water and dried but highly nutritious herbage is to be found. On arriving at one of these oases when the expedition has been nearly a week "out," Claude,

acting by his friend Williams's advice, determines to spell his horses for a day, and camps by a rocky pool, fringed with a feathery belt of dark she-oaks. Close by rises a flat-topped little bit of light-red sandstone covered with euphorbia trees, and, upon the morning after his arrival, Claude proceeds to explore this elevation, taking with him the runaway station boy, who can speak a little broken English, and has introduced himself to Angland by the name of General Gordon.

The view that meets Claude's eyes from the summit of the scalloped and overhanging sandstone cliffs well repays the trouble he has taken in scrambling up their tawny sides. Numerous other fortification-like projections are to be seen on all sides standing up, like weird islands, above the surface of the haze-bounded expanse of rolling desert.

He sits down and drinks in the weird, harmonious picture of desolation before him, and, as he does so, some lines of Pringle, the explorer-poet of South Africa, float into his memory:—

> "A region of emptiness, howling and drear,
> Which man has abandoned from famine and fear;
> Which the snake and the lizard inhabit alone,
> With the twilight bat from the yawning stone;
> Where grass, nor herb, nor shrub takes root,
> Save the poisonous thorns that pierce the foot."

Then glancing downwards over the little patch of verdure round the solitary water-hole, where the grey smoke of the camp-fire and the colour and commotion amongst the moving men and horses formed a little gem of life in the vast setting of deathlike

stillness around, Claude's thoughts take a serious turn, and he enters into conversation with his companion General Gordon, with the idea of discovering if the aboriginal mind has any notions of a Supreme Being as conceived by Europeans. But although the black has been amongst station civilization for some years, and has even been interviewed by a clergyman of the Church of England upon the subject of his soul, his answer is hardly satisfactory:—

"Yes, boss, mine know alle 'bout Gord. Missionary him bin tell me, 'Gord alle same ole man sit down longer sky.' Missionary tell me *budgerie* (good) you yabber (say), yabber, 'Give it to-day mine damper, give it to-day mine tuck-out.' Mine bin yabber, yabber, plenty long time; oh, plenty long time. But," added the speaker in a sulky voice, evidently disgusted with the treatment he had received, "but *bale* (not) mine get it tuck-out, bale mine get it lillie bit tuck-out." General Gordon turns to catch and swallow a grasshopper, and then, shaking his woolly mat of hair, further expresses his opinions, in the following remarkable language: "Bale mine think it Gord sit down longer sky. No good de ole man. Him only like it white fellow; no like it poor black beggar."

Claude ventures to calm the ruffled feelings of the General by suggesting that in a future life black fellows may possibly have a better time of it.

"Yes, boss," excitedly exclaims the "boy," his face altering from an expression of injured worth to one of perfect faith in his noble existence. "Yes, bime-by mine bin kick out" (By-and-by I die).

The speaker points eastwards, as his race often

do when speaking of dying. "Bime-by me kick out, then me jump up white beggar. Me jump up stockman. *Budgeree* (very good), mine like it."

Claude tries to conceive what the General finds in life worth living for when he can look forward with pleasure to a future life as a stockman, which, in common with most station blacks, he evidently firmly believes in.

Our young friend unconsciously follows the lines of reasoning laid down long since by a celebrated wit, when he finally concludes that it is probably the same with blacks as with whites, in that, "By the time the emptiness of life is discovered, living has become a fatal habit."

Old Williams now joins Claude upon the hill-top, and, looking carefully round about him on the ground as if in search of something he has dropped, presently deposits himself upon a chocolate-coloured block of sandstone with a grunt of satisfaction.

"Mind where ye sit doone, lad," he observes to Angland, through clenched teeth, which hold a grimy old maize-cob pipe; "this hill is just the very place for snakes."

The words are hardly uttered, when the black boy, who is standing behind the white men, suddenly ejaculates a guttural exclamation, and dashes his *nulla nulla* (a three-foot club of heavy wood) down upon a small branch-like object, lying on a ledge of rock close to where Claude's feet are resting.

"A cussed death-adder, by all that's blue!" exclaims Williams, as both men start up, and bending over the cliff observe a little light-brown serpent that is writhing on the rocks below.

"A narrer squeak you've had of it, my son," the old miner observes, wiping his brow with the back of his hairy hand. "If you'd happened to move your foot, it would have been a case of death in less than twenty minutes. There ain't no cure for their bite."

General Gordon, acting under orders from the elder white man, now fetches the snake from where his well-directed shot had thrown it, and Claude shudders slightly as Williams, pointing to the crushed remains of the dangerous reptile,—which is only about two feet in length,—proceeds to direct his friend's attention to a curious horn-like projection which sticks out from the tail end of the hideous, slug-like body.

"Some say that this 'ere's got a poison fang in it, but I don't believe it," the old miner observes. "It's against Nature for the warmint to have a sting at each end. It can do all's fair with the fangs it's got at its business end, I take it.

Claude nods his acquiescence.

"This 'ere horn is just for helping the devils to jump. They move when they're skeered jest like them yellow grubs in a cheese. And I believe they use this prong to catch hold of, just like this."

The speaker, to exemplify his meaning, takes a springy stem of dry grass between his finger and thumb, and, bending the two ends towards each other, allows the fragments to fly off into the air.

The black boy, who has been watching this object lesson in ophiology, roars with delight at the ingenious method Williams has employed to explain the snake's mode of progression.

"Hah! hah! *Illa perrachie* (the snake) him make

it the buck, alle same little fellow *waddy*" (woodie: piece of wood, stick).

By which remark Claude infers that the native, whose experience amongst snakes must of course be very great, fully endorses the old miner's theory; although, had our young friend known the polite readiness which most aboriginals manifest for corroborating anything affirmed by a white man in their presence, it is questionable whether he would have placed as much reliance upon General Gordon's evidence as he did.

It is now getting too warm for the men to sit or stand still, for there is no wind; indeed, not the slightest movement of the air. So Claude and his companions rise and stroll across the hot, flat fragments of rock towards the other side of the table-topped hill. Here and there a lively lizard or an emerald snake attracts the eye for an instant, but little else of interest is to be seen. Presently, however, Angland stands in amazement before a level expanse of rock; for he is apparently upon a sandy sea-shore, from which the waves that left those ripple marks have but just now ebbed away. He can almost imagine that he hears the surf still rippling over those almost red-hot stones at his feet, so recent does everything appear. Here lie numerous shells of the succulent and delicious *pipi*, at the sight of which Claude's memory flashes back to many a delightful picnic in the land of the Maori; star-fish, echina, seaweed, cockle-shells, and mussels, or rather their ghostly semblance in hard, brown silica, are scattered around on all sides where the last wave left them.

Clambering down the other side of the hill, where

a fall of rock has recently occurred, Claude finds in the geological section thus formed an open page in which to read the history of the country. At a little distance below the surface of the old sea-bed, volcanic dust is mixed with the grains of silica that form the rock,—drab-coloured dust, such as fell at Krakatoa and Tarawera. This gradually gives place in the lower strata to a volcanic conglomerate, composed chiefly of rounded masses of felsite, ferruginous clay, burnt to a cinder, and silicious, iron-stained nodules. The old sea-beds have long ago received the red-hot ejecta from some great eruption, and then, the land rising, gradually pushed back the ocean. Next come the centuries during which the resistless sea rolls again over the land, and once more retiring the waves cut much of the old ocean bottom away, and leave the flat-topped, island-like hills as the travellers see them. And upon the last page Angland sees the sandstone rock before him with its fossil *exuviæ*, and its surface sheltering a few miserable euphorbias, where passing birds have dropped undigested seeds. The poor grass struggles here and there to clothe the barren, ugly rocks, during the few months in every two or three years when it has the opportunity of growing. Perhaps Nature will one day add another and a brighter chapter to this history of the wilds of central-northern Queensland—a chapter of forest life and copious rains. It may be so ; but, at any rate, Claude, looking round him, decides that man has come upon these deserts too soon—some five thousand years too soon.

When night falls upon the little camp beneath the rocky cliff, and the first watch—consisting of Don and the two natives from the Myall village—have

gone on duty, Billy spreads a saddle-cloth upon a flat stone by the camp-fire, and commences to mix some flour and water thereon into a thick paste, preparatory to cooking to-morrow's bread.

He has made a discovery that morning, whilst bathing in the water-hole with the boys, and it appears to him to be such an important one that he is rather puzzled how to act. So instead of droning a song or keeping up a lively chatter with anybody who happens to be near, as he usually does when at his culinary occupations, he frowns over his work and remains silent.

The ruddy light of the hot pile of embers, that he has just fashioned into a glowing nest for the reception of the damper that he is now manufacturing, falls on his thoughtful face. Presently Claude notices that Billy is strangely quiet, and, seeing his preoccupied air, puts the cause down to one of those troubles to which all bush-cooks are at times heir.

"What's up, Billy, not made it wet enough?" Angland asks, referring to the loaf the black is making.

"Oh no, boss," answers Billy, keeping his black fingers moving in elliptic spirals in the little crater of dough before him. A fight is going on in the darkie's mind as to whether he shall keep his discovery to himself or tell Angland; in which latter case he knows his secret will ultimately reach and render happy the man he most hates on earth. But the young fellow's dependent and affectionate disposition wins in the end, and, after he has raked the last embers over his cookery, Billy turns to Claude determined to reveal his thoughts to his new master.

Williams is asleep at a little distance from the others, his bush experience inclining him to take his night's rest away from the light of the camp-fire, that might show his out-stretched form as a tempting target for the spears of any avenging aborigines who may be about.

"You remember, boss," Billy begins, as he lifts a piece of glowing charcoal with his bare fingers to light his pipe,—"you remember what I told you about when them cussed Myall blacks killed old Weevil?"

"Yes, I think I remember all you mentioned to me, Billy," responds Claude. "There was something the old hatter told you when he was dying that you said you could not understand altogether. You said, I think, that you had missed a good deal the old man said in the excitement of the moment."

"That's jest it." The black looks sadly into the fire at the remembrance of his old friend's death, and then, glancing round to see that he and Claude are alone, continues, "I had forgotten what the old man said. Now I remember. He told me he had stolen a boy pickaninnie of old Giles's from Murdaro Station, long time ago."

"You told me that much, I remember, the day after we started on this trip."

"Yes, I not forget that; but old man say, 'I mark that boy on shoulder, on near shoulder. I mark him with blue star and the front letters of Giles's names, W. G.'"

"Well," inquires Claude as the last speaker pauses, "but what became of the boy? You didn't tell me if he told you that."

Billy does not answer the question, but goes on

puffing at his pipe, even now undecided whether to reveal his secret. Presently, with a sort of groan, he turns him towards his master and asks,—

"Where you get that lillie fellow Don? I think him very clever boy."

"I got him in Sydney," replies Claude, laughing. "Are you concocting a plan to palm him off on Mr. Giles as his long-lost son, you rascal?"

"No, boss," responds the dark youth thus addressed, in an injured, pettish tone of voice that shows that his feelings are hurt by the light way in which Claude has treated his question.

"No need to 'coct a plan. Don, he got the mark on shoulder, all the same Weevil tell me 'bout."

"Nonsense!" Claude ejaculates,—he is perhaps rather too much given to making this remark when surprised,—"I know the mark you mean; it's a bruise he got the other day when his saddle turned round on Kittie, careless young devil."

"Oh, all right, boss; I 'spose I get blind now," Billy replies in an offended tone, for nothing insults an aboriginal more than to distrust his keenness of vision. But his clouded expression dissolves into a sunny grin of satisfaction, as he sees that the information he has imparted to Angland has apparently excited a far deeper interest in Angland's mind than he had supposed it would.

What Claude's first thoughts are upon learning that which seems likely to turn out a most fortunate discovery for himself and several other persons besides little Don may easily be guessed. He conjures up happy pictures in his mind, that for the most part are variations of one glorious central idea,—Wilson

Giles, with weak tears of joy dribbling down his purple countenance, presenting his golden-haired fairy of a daughter to the man who has recovered for him his "little Georgie."

And if these mental sketches of our young friend's are rather selfish ones, and more redolent of love and Glory than of the mutual gratification upon meeting that the long-separated father and son will soon enjoy at his hands, it is but natural, after all, that in Claude's present state of mind it should be so. But cold second thoughts and chilly doubts soon come to tone down these brilliant visions. Then a half-conceived suspicion as to whether Billy and Don—or perhaps Billy alone—might not have concocted the story of the blue marks upon the boy's shoulder duly presents itself; to flee away, however, before the knowledge that the tattooing and subsequent healing of the wounds produced thereby would take longer than the whole time the two individuals concerned have known each other.

For various reasons, at any rate, Angland determines not to investigate the subject further that night, and, as he rolls himself up in his blankets prior to going off to sleep, he tries to call to mind all that he has heard about the lost child.

During the second watch, which he keeps in company with his little purchase Joe, Claude remembers that Glory had told him once about a severe accident that happened to her baby brother not many months before he disappeared. It had occurred when some visitor at Murdaro head-station—who was rocking himself in one of the chairs upon the verandah and had not noticed the approach of Mr. Giles's tiny

son and heir—had heard a sudden scream at his elbow, and discovered that the rocker of his chair had crushed some of the child's tender little toes.

"Ah, when I examine Don to-morrow morning," Claude thinks, "I will notice if his toes are intact. I am glad I remembered this, as it will possibly throw some light upon the mystery."

As Angland looks up in thought at the purple dome above him, where "the stars burn bright in the midnight sky," suddenly a great meteor appears, and blazes into brightness as it comes in contact with the world's elastic shield of air, and then sinks with a graceful, downwards streak of brilliant incandescence into earthly obscurity.

"What makes that fellow star fall down?" Claude asks of the owner of the small, dark figure standing by his side, who is gazing up at the purple-set jewels of scintillating worlds above the watchers' heads.

Joe, in reply, grins fondly up at his friend and owner,—his white teeth glistening under the starlight as he answers, "Me know,"—and, taking a match from his pocket, proceeds to explain what to his mind appears to be the correct solution of the cause of meteoric phenomena. Striking his match and pretending to light an imaginary pipe, and putting on a slily grave countenance, which in the darkness, however, is lost upon Claude, the boy says,—

"Me think great, big, one Master,"—pointing to the heavens,—"Him want um smoke um pipe. Strike um matche,"—acting the process meanwhile,—"and puff, puff,"—pretending to smoke. Then Joe makes a movement with his hand, and drops the match slowly to the ground, which, with its bright, smouldering

end, gives a remarkably faithful representation of a shooting star on a very small scale.

Claude has often been struck before with the "smartness" of his diminutive henchman, and many a weary hour has the boy enlivened with his grotesque sayings and doings. But Angland is particularly interested in this last piece of evidence of Joe's histrionic powers,—the more so since it is the first time the youth has expressed a belief in a supreme "great, one Master." But just in order to prove that the aboriginal mind—as represented by the little specimen of the race that is now following Claude in his midnight march round the slumbering men and horses—is practical, as well as theoretical, perhaps we may be excused if we linger, for a moment, to relate another comical little instance of Joe's ingenuity. It happened when Angland and his companions were on their way to Murdaro, and amused our hero a good deal at the time.

Little Joe, upon becoming "by right of purchase" one of Claude's goods and chattels, had been presented with a suit of slop-made clothes and a tiny pair of boots. These latter shortly disappeared. Whether the boy sacrificed them as a parting gift to one of his numerous brothers—all male blacks of the same class-family stand in this relationship to each other—when the party left Mount Silver, or whether they were stolen, as Joe stated was the case, never transpired. But, anyhow, a few days afterwards, the black urchin, who did not relish being the only one of the party to ride bare-footed, chanced upon an extremely ancient pair of what had once been elastic-sided boots lying upon the site of a deserted camp, and straightway

determined to appropriate them to his personal adornment. Dismounting from the tall steed he is riding, two small black feet are carefully inserted into the sun-dried derelicts, and with a grin of satisfaction Joe prepares to mount. But as he lifts his right leg over the horse's back, the enormous boot thereon—which is absurdly too large for the diminutive limb—tumbles off upon the ground. Again and again the boy tries, with the same result. The "boss" is calling, but it will never do to leave the treasure behind. Joe has no string to fasten it upon his foot, but he soon solves the problem. Running round to the other side of his steed, he seizes the stirrup-iron and securely jambs this into his prize; then mounting, he places his foot therein, and joins the other riders, looking very proud and haughty, with the dilapidated old leather coffins swinging at his horse's girths, in ludicrous contrariety to the spindle-like shanks which, decked with short white trousers, rise from them.

* * * * * *

The next afternoon Claude finds an opportunity, as old Williams and he ride side by side behind the trackers, to tell his friend of Billy's discovery concerning Don's supposed parentage.

"I bathed with the boys myself this morning," Angland says, "and took the opportunity of checking what Billy told me about the mark on the youngster's shoulder. It's there safe enough."

"You didn't tell the boy about all this, nor Billy neither?" inquires Claude's companion.

"No, of course. I don't intend Don to know anything about it at present, and I told Billy to keep mum about it."

"Ah! it's what I call a rum yarn now," remarks Williams, as he muses over what he has just heard. "If it had been any one else nor you had found the boy, I'd have said they had salted him against the chance of making a rise out of old Giles."

"Salted Don?" repeats Claude interrogatively, looking at the old miner, and wondering at the strange expression he has made use of. "What do you mean by 'salting' him?"

"Don't you know what salting a mine is?" asks Williams in return.

"Well, I fancy I've heard that term applied to some kind of mining swindle," replies Claude.

"Exactly so, my lad. And after I've explained what 'salting' is, you'll understand what 'salting' a boy is." Old Williams is never happier than when explaining some mining term to a new hand who will listen patiently, and, when started on such a theme, —especially if a chance of bringing in old reminiscences occurs,—he must be allowed time to run down. Claude has already learned this much about him, so does not attempt to check his elderly friend when he sees him settle down comfortably in his saddle to begin his discourse.

"Salting a mine," Williams goes on, "is getting rayther out of fashion; leastwise there's a many easier ways bin invented of late years—and safer ways too, mind ye—of making a 'wild cat' look like a fust-class, boniefied speculation."

"Well, tell me first what the old system, the 'salting,' was like," interrupts Claude, fearful that Williams will wander yet further from his subject unless kept in the groove.

"Salting a mine, lad, accordin' to the old way of doing business, was just firing some gold dust into a 'face' in order to sell out well or float a company."

Claude remembers that Williams has already informed him that a "face" is the exposed section of a reef in the workings of a mine in distinction to the "backs," which is that part of a lode unworked and above the lowest levels.

"There is better ways nowadays than this kind of 'salting,'—such as using chloride of gold and the like, —but get a good syndicate together to help ye, and it will do all the dirty work for you and float anything." Stopping every now and then to persuade his horse to walk a bit faster, Williams continues, "Some say as how the term 'salting' originated this way. On a new field, especially if tucker's scarce, as it often is, there's always a lot of hungry dogs about. They'll steal anything they can grab hold of, from your last piece of damper to a pair of boots. Now it ain't quite the go ter shoot these ere 'canine tithe collectors,'—that's what I calls 'em,—for their owner might come down and arguefy in the 'love me love my dog' style. So yer puts salt in yer gun, and the dog ain't killed, but he don't come hankering around agin where he finds he'll only get condiments and nary a bit of meat. I don't like to shoot any man's dog," observes the lecturer feelingly, "let alone a camp-mate's, and I'm always sorry fur the brutes when they go off yelling after getting a charge of salt."

"Yes, I suppose so," observes Claude, who, thinking of certain appropriate lines, proceeds to quote them :—

> "Sympathy without relief
> Is like mustard without beef."

"But what has this 'salting a dog' got to do with 'salting a mine'? I can see now, at any rate, the origin of 'saving one's bacon,' for I expect the dogs would make a bee line for home on finding themselves thus salted down,—but why all this about dogs? You don't think any one has been firing salt into Don, do you?"

"No, lad," Williams says, "you don't take me. In the rough old diggin's we always used to empty our revolvers about sundown, if we did it at all. Those who made the most show about doing this were mostly new hands, but that's neither here nor there. I mean you wouldn't hear no firing after nightfall. If there should happen to be a shot fired it was either a murder or a robbery, and the whole camp would turn out. But if it turned out to be only a hoax, the boys would skylark round, and mayhap the man who started the fun would have to put on a roller bandage instead of a shirt for the next few weeks."

"I see," remarks Claude, knowing that it is of no use to attempt to hurry the old miner, who always moves towards the main subject of his remarks after the manner of a hawk approaching its prey, namely, in circles.

"Well, some chap invented this plan of punishing the dogs, and then firing at night got to be quite common. Instead of turning out when you heard a shot, you'd say ter your mate, 'Oh, some one's cur is gettin' salted.' By-and-by all kinds of shooting got to be called 'salting,' and from that, not only firing gold into a reef, but every kind of swindle, went by the same name."

"You've explained it very well," Claude says, as

Williams closes his remarks, "and, as regards little Don, I thought myself it might be a try on till I examined his feet, and found that the toes on his left foot have evidently been damaged at some time or other." Angland then discloses to his companion what Glory Giles had told him about the accident that befell her baby brother, which we have related for the benefit of our readers.

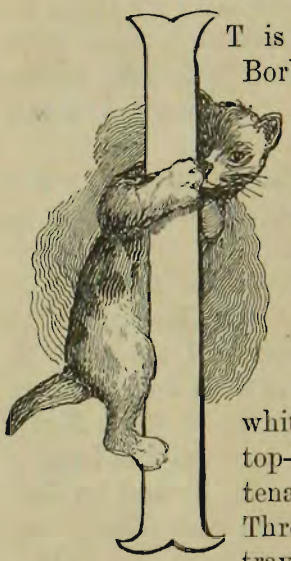
"And now, Williams, what ought I to do? I somehow feel I should send Don back to Giles at once. I might send Joe and General Gordon with him, but it would be risky work with one water-bag. That's the only reason, as you know, I've not sent Gordon and his mate back before."

"Send him back!" exclaims the elder man; "not a bit of it. Providence, lad, has given yer the boy to keep for a time, and it would be going agin yer luck to send him back. Don't you go out of your way to chuck what Providence has lent you, just to oblige a man who you don't count as a friend, anyhow. A very obliging man is another name for a fool, take my word for it. Besides, how do you know these Myall blacks wouldn't knock both the boys on the head if they got a chance? They would do it, and no fear they wouldn't, if they thought Don was Giles's son. Wouldn't they like to get square with old Giles! He has polished off a good many of their relatives, if you ask me. No!" adds the speaker in a voice that shows he puts his foot down at what he says, "we'll all go back together. You'll be able to play this trump card, my son, better when you've got some more in your fist, as Providence is going to give you shortly."

CHAPTER XVIII.

A STATION SKETCH.

"The proper quarry of mankind is man."



IT is about eight o'clock P.M., at Borbong head-station, which lies at some fifty miles' distance from Murdaro, and the evening meal being over, half-a-dozen men are settling down to enjoy an after-dinner smoke in that sanctum of Government House, the boss's "den."

Most of the bronzed, manly figures before us are dressed in white linen, and one wears the long top-boots and spurs of a sub-lieutenant in the N.M. Constabulary. Three of the other men are passing travellers, and although quite unknown to the hospitable manager of the run, till a couple of hours since, are made none the less welcome on that account, after the laudably generous custom that obtains on the better class "up-country" stations.

One of these strangers is the new manager of Hanga run, who is on his way northwards to take charge of his new scene of labours, and the other

two are mining speculators up from Brisbane to look at a new find of silver in the neighbourhood.

"Now, gentlemen, make yourselves at home," observes Mr. Browne, in the loud, resonant voice of one who is accustomed to give outdoor commands. "Here are some cigars that ain't bad. You'll have to excuse me for a bit, but I'll be back by the time you've filled your glasses. I just want to see about the horses for to-morrow." Mr. Browne retires, being followed from the door by a battalion of enormous cats, who, with tails erect, stalk noiselessly after their master, whose sole hobby is breeding animals and training them to perform all kinds of unfeline feats.

The manager's guests proceed to make themselves comfortable upon various seats about the rather roughly furnished room, and an observant eye might have noticed that the older frequenters of the house studiously avoid the neighbourhood of a certain chintz-covered sofa standing near the door, which is known to them as the favourite roosting-place of their host's strange pets.

The room in which the smokers are assembled has no ceiling, and the rafters of the thatched roof can dimly be descried in the gloom overhead. Upon the log walls, which are scantily covered with a mutilated covering of scrim, a few coloured almanacs and pictures from the illustrated papers have been pasted. A dusty, little-used book-case and a well-supplied gun-rack—fit emblems of the unequal amount of influence exerted by peace and war in the locality—occupy two opposite corners of the room by the door, which, hanging upon green-hide hinges, has evidently at some time or other formed parts of various packing

cases. This is the "den," otherwise the sitting-room and office, of Mr. Browne,—where that splendid specimen of humanity writes his diaries, does his obtuse calculations as handicapper for the neighbouring Jockey Club, and pays his hands,—and the absence of a ceiling is not without certain advantages, as may be perceived after a number of guests have been loading the air for the best part of a warm summer night with fragrant clouds of incense in honour of the Genius of Bachelordom.

"Wonderful lot of cats about the place!" exclaims one of the mining speculators, moving suddenly off the aforementioned chintz-covered sofa, and proceeding to stamp and shake himself as if he had come in contact with a lively ant-hill. "I've always admired Henry the Third of France because he hated cats."

The other men smile knowingly at each other, as if they had expected him to vacate his seat before long, and one explains, "That's the cats' seat; there ar'n't any over here."

"Talking of cats," observes the station storekeeper, who, being the distant relative of an Irish baronet, is considered a person of some importance in the district, "it wouldn't be a bad ideah, bai Joave, to twain some of Bwowne's cweatures for the hill-country, where the dawgs cawn't work properly. How did you manage to get along yesterday, Mr. Morth?" The last sentence is addressed to the young sub-inspector.

"Oh, not so badly," replies the police officer, as he knocks his cigar end off upon the leg of his rather rickety chair. Mr. Morth is a youngish man, slim and active as a greyhound, who glories in his work from a sportsman's point of view. "Oh, we didn't

do so badly. We got another lot besides the party your boys put us on to. But that broken country at the back of the Black Rock is the very devil. Fifteen miles, sir, we had to track the beggars after we left our horses, and then they'd have got away if there hadn't been old people with them."

"You lost a boy, didn't you?"

"Yes, worse luck. Poor old Jet lost the number of his mess. We got the beggars against a cliff, and when they found they were in a trap they rushed at the boys. I never saw a nigger harder to kill than the rascal that knocked Jet on the head. I put six bullets into the beggar before I dropped him."

"Niggers bad up my way?" asks the new manager of Hanga Station.

"That's not in my patrol, so can't say," replies the sub-inspector.

"I think you will have a deuce of a lot of trouble up there," observes the storekeeper. "Your predecessah allowed the beggars to wandah all ovah the wun. Spoilt them all togethah. Weally one could not go neah a water-hole without seeing some of the black devils camped there. They came in from all the other stations wound."

"Oh, I'll soon alter all that," remarks the Hanga manager with an oath.

"Milby was the boy with niggers," says a dark-eyed man at the other end of the little table, as he glances up from the American cloth cover before him, upon which he has been amusing himself by imprisoning sundry stray ants in a complicated maze, traced with the wet bottom of his tumbler. "Did you ever meet him, Lawrence?"

The individual addressed, who is a cattle-drover of a superior kind, replies in a husky voice that he has not only met him, but was with him some time in the Northern Territory the year before.

"He was a beggar to shoot niggers," this gentleman adds, "and no mistake. Why, hang me, if he didn't order six cases of Sniders up to the station when he first took up that MacArthur country."

"What on earth did he want with that lot?" asks the new manager of Hanga run.

"Oh," replies the drover, "he said the niggers' heads up that way were so precious thick that his boys would break all their gun-stocks if he didn't keep a good supply of 'em."

A general laugh greets the news that the red-faced drover has just retailed concerning this latest piece of eccentricity of the famous Milby.

"I was with him for two years up at Hidamoor," observes the dark-eyed man. "He hadn't a single 'boy' on the run; they was all *lubras* (girls). He used to tog them out in trousers and shirts, and they made jolly good stockmen. Does he do that still up north?"

"Yes," replies the drover, "they all do it up there. He lets his white stockmen have two *gins* (women) apiece. I brought a couple down with me to the Springs last trip; give them to Boker there."

"Milby's a smart fellow all round," remarks Mr. Browne, who has just entered, dismissing all save two of his furry following, these latter taking the seats demurely upon the chintz-covered sofa.

"Yes; first time I was out with Milby," continues the manager, stooping to use the tobacco-cutter, "we

got nicely on to about a dozen buck niggers near Wiseman's water-hole—you know it, Lawrence? Well, I saw Milby taking a long feather out of his pocket when we'd grassed all the black devils, and wondered what he was going to do with it. Hanged if he didn't send a 'boy' round to each of the beggars we'd knocked over to tickle their noses.

"'What's that for?' I asked. 'Oh, you'll see,' said he. And sure enough presently the 'boy' with the feather ranged up alongside a nigger who'd been shamming. I'd tried the beggar before with a match, in the ordinary way, and he hadn't shown a sign. I thought I'd have died o' laughing," the manager continues, after moistening his inner man, "when I saw the beggar twitching his nose as the feather tickled it; he couldn't for the life of him keep it still. That was a very good 'dart' of Milby's; we'd have missed that buck without the feather dodge."

"Oh, that's an old trick," remarks the new manager of Epsom; "they always used it about Kimberley when I was through there with horses before the rush."

"Ain't you station-folk a bit rough on the niggers about here?" inquires one of the two burly individuals that we have already introduced to our readers as mining speculators. "I've had a good all-round experience with 'em, as you may guess, when I tell you I'm the original prospector of the Mount Walker. Now I've had to shoot one nigger in my time, but only one; and I was living amongst them, you might say, for about twenty years, till I made my rise at the Mount."

"Oh, ah!" drawls the storekeeper, bestowing an insolently pitying smile upon the simple-minded individual who thus dares to find fault with one of the pet

institutions of the "squattah" nobles of the country. "But you must remember there's a deuced lot of difference between wunning a wun and wunning a mine, Mr. Walker." This remark smells so strongly of a sneer that the black Cornish eyes flash angrily across the table, till, observing that the storekeeper is a foe that is hardly worthy of his steel, Mr. Walker calms down again.

"Maybe, maybe," he goes on, "but I'm a practical man, and I look at everything in a practical way. I don't blame you gentlemen for potting a nigger for cattle spearing. I'd as lief shoot a man as a dog black or white, if he tried robbing me too often. You mustn't think, gentlemen," Mr. Walker goes on, as he observes that he has decidedly not got "the house with him," "you mustn't think I'm presuming to teach you anything about how you ought to manage your own affairs. But it's always been a good stout argument of mine that it's waste of good bone and muscle, as the country can't well spare, all this shooting business."

"What would you do with the cussed vermin? Can you tell me that, eh?" asks the Epsom manager, winking at Mr. Browne with the intention of attracting his attention to the observations he is about to make. "You'd go in for making miners of them, would you? It strikes me somehow that you miners ain't very fond of coloured men knocking round the diggings. Look here, Mr. Walker, the miners played it pretty low down on both the niggers and the chinkies at the Palmer rush, for one place, and you know as well as I do that it was near as a toucher that the Johns (Chinamen) didn't get kicked off Croydon last year.

Look at the Kimberley rush, too ; the niggers ain't learnt to fall in love with what they've had from the diggers there."

Mr. Walker knows that these accusations are correct, but is not going to be led into an argument as to whether miners or cattle-men are the "roughest" on the native population, so he answers the last speaker as follows,—"I'm not arguing whether it's right to shoot the blacks or not, but whether, looking at the thing fair and square, in a practical, common-sense, business way, it's a sensible thing to do."

"Yes, that's the talk," remarks his mate of chintz sofa notoriety, who has hitherto refrained from argument.

"But," continues Mr. Walker, "as this gentleman here has got hold of the Chinese Question, I'll tell him that, talking as a miner, I think you'll find most of us think this way." The speaker whilst arguing takes a pencil from his pocket, and from the force of old associations makes as if to draw the plan of an imaginary mine upon the table-cover. "We'd let the aboriginals mine if they like to ; it's their country after all, and they've a right to do that, at any rate. In fact, lots of them have done mining ; the first big nugget got in Queensland was found by a nigger at the Calyope. But foreign coloured men is different altogether."

"Ah, but these niggers are a useless lot of devils, and they won't work unless you make 'em," observes the drover.

"Well, mate," Walker says, laughing, "they suffer from the same complaint as many whites do if they won't work unless they're driven to it ; that's all I can say about that. But as to their being no use, I don't know how you'd be able to get on without the

'boys' to muster, track, and drove. And I've seen blacks near Adelaide who've become farmers, and they're just as good as lots of the Europeans farming near them. And on the Russell diggings we couldn't have kept going if we hadn't trained our 'boys' to bring us tucker from the township. I've got a couple of 'boys' with me now as can carry a two-hundred of flour for a mile without resting. Now there ain't a man in this room could do the same. I'm open to bet on it." Mr. Walker, like most modern Hercules, is much given to judging of a man's value by the amount of physical power he has at his command; and this rule of the one time miner is not a bad one to go by, for as a general thing the most practically useful members of society are those strongest in wind and limb. *Mens sana in corpore sano.*

Just as Mr. Walker closes his remarks a knock comes at the door, and the manager's favourite house gin pops her red-turbaned head into the room.

"What do you want now, Oola?" Mr. Browne sharply inquires of his grinning handmaid.

The dark-skinned girl glides forward, keeping her long-fringed eyelids turned bashfully towards the earthen floor, as the men stare admiringly at her buxom figure, and then, lifting her beautiful soft eyes to her owner's face for a brief instant, remarks that "Charlie bin come up," and hands to the manager a piece of paper.

"Oh, a note from my brother Jim!" exclaims Manager Browne, looking meaningly at Morth.

"Ah, anything fresh?" asks the gentleman addressed, his eyes brightening. During the late controversy he has maintained a most masterly neutrality.

"Tell you directly; if I can make out his pencil scrawl."

After sundry screwings of the managerial eyebrows, and bendings of the managerial back to the lamp upon the table, Mr. Browne ceases snorting smothered anathemas at his relation's bad handwriting, and looking up motions with his finger the sub-inspector, whereupon both men leave the room together.

"Thought it safer to speak to you out here, Morth," observes the manager, as soon as they are beyond earshot of the station-house. The police officer replies by nodding his head, but remembering immediately afterwards that it is too dark for Mr. Browne to see this signal of acquiescence, he proceeds to convey his meaning by observing, "Just as well."

"I told you about the weaner," goes on Mr. Browne, "that Jim found speared last week up Agate Creek, didn't I?"

"You did. Has Jim picked up any tracks yet?"

"Yes. It's like this: I sent Jim out with a couple of 'boys' to see if any of our beasts had gone over the Murdaro boundary. Well, he writes to me he's come across the tracks of a party of horsemen going north. Thinks it is that explorer fellow who was stopping with Giles."

"By Jingo! they'll have a dry trip of it," observes Morth, who has just crossed a corner of the northern desert on his way to Borbong.

"Yes, but he's picked up a Myall black,—to show him the water-holes, I suppose. Jim noticed the beggar's tracks besides the horse's hoof-marks, and guessed that it was a warragal, because if it had been a station black he'd have ridden one of the spare horses."

"That was smart of Jim," remarks the police officer.

"Oh, the young 'un has got his head screwed on level. But to continue: Jim ran the tracks back, and then sent for Bogie—the best tracker we have—to have a look at them. Bogie spotted where three niggers had come out of the scrub."

"Ah!" interrupts Morth, with a laugh, "I'm glad I waited."

"Bogie," continues Mr. Browne, "knows every black's track around, and he swears that one of those which Jim found is that of a nigger who cleared out from Murdaro lately; what was his name now? Never mind that, however."

"Oh, you mean that boy of Dyesart's," observes the sub-inspector.

"No, I don't mean Billy—that was the name of Dyesart's boy." The manager suddenly stops speaking, and smacks the palms of his hands together,—an impromptu manifestation of delight, for a new idea strikes him that satisfactorily clears up a mystery contained in his brother's note. "Why, *that* explains it!"

"Explains what?"

"Why, don't you see, what puzzled me was how this explorer got hold of a Myall. They are pretty shy of whites. But I guess this Billy, that you've just reminded me of, has been camped with some lot of blacks about here, and has joined this party. Won't Giles and Puttis be mad; they've been raising Hades to get him. And he's been camped close by all the while! Ha!" Mr. Browne laughs out loud, and then informs his friend how he has long suspected that

there must be a camp of runaway niggers in the direction where Jim has found the tracks.

"You'd like me to take the 'boys' up there then, I suppose, before I go on," observes the police officer. "The clouds on the hills this evening looked like rain. Nothing like a wet night for stalking a camp, so many noises going on in the scrub."

"No, old man, my idea's this," rejoins the manager, taking Morth's arm, and walking him back towards the house. "I'll put Jim up to letting Bogie and another good tracker we've got watch for these blacks coming back into cover,—that they won't go far with the exploring expedition I'm pretty certain. I'll arrange, in the meantime, for the Bulla Bulla and Murdaro people to be ready to join us, and we'll clear all this end range; I've often intended to do it."

"Will Giles turn out, d'you think?"

"Turn out?" exclaims Mr. Browne; "he's the most energetic old cock I ever came across where a nigger's concerned. Besides, one of these is a runaway of his. Oh, he'll come fast enough!"

It is finally arranged for a select party of sportsmen to join Morth and his troop upon the return of the three natives to the scrub,—who, as our readers have no doubt already guessed, are Billy and his village friends,—and thus, whilst combining the business of exterminating sundry nests of human vermin with the exciting pastime of a big game shooting-party, at the same time assist to carry out that line of Native Policy that obtains *to-day* under the *régime* of three out of five of the Australian Governments of Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE GRAVE.

"Sleepe after toyle,
Port after stormie seas,
Ease after warre,
Death after life,
Doth greatly please."

SPENSER'S "*Faërie Queene.*"

"

IT was there he fell, boss. He struck right on top of them gibbers (stones). I caught at him, and fell too,—there's the mark where I struck the mud by the broken stem of that cooliebar there."

It is Billy who is speaking, as, with tears in his eyes, and his affectionate heart overflowing with genuine

grief, he looks up at the rugged cliffs and points out to Claude and Williams the place where Dyesart met with his fatal fall.

On the ninth day out from Murdaro the expedition has reached the long blue line of gum-trees, towards which it has been toiling since daybreak across the desert plain. And here, at no great distance from the little water-hole, near which the horses are now being unsaddled by the rest of the party, Claude pays a first visit to the lonely mound where, beneath a protecting cairn of stones and tree-stems, his explorer-uncle has begun his long, well-earned rest. As the young man stands there in the scanty shade of she-oaks and box-trees, a thousand solemn thoughts gather around him. What strange power is it that has seemed to guard and guide his footsteps so far in the fulfilment of his appointed task? Will it pilot him to the end? And what is to be the climax of this journey? By Claude's side is Don, who has filled out wonderfully since our hero found him a little waif upon the Sydney streets. The boy, not having been enlightened as to his parentage, still bears his old name, and Angland making more of a companion of him since Billy's discovery, has noticed with delight that the youth, who by a strange procession of circumstances seems likely to become his brother-in-law some day, is developing a kindly disposition and an engaging manner.

Billy now arrives and unearths a small tin box, the contents of which Claude feels much tempted to investigate forthwith; but, acting on Williams's advice, he postpones the operation, and determines to make the most of what remains of the day in searching for the supposed mine at the "Golden Cliffs,"—which our

readers will remember as being set down upon the secret map discovered by Angland on the back of his uncle's posthumous communication. About two miles from the grave there rises, white and weird against the violet sky, a barren, isolated mountain, or rather a collection of rugged peaks. And thither, across the red, rock-strewn plain,—bounded by a phantom sea of desert mirage,—the white men and Billy proceed, and, having traversed the gentle slope that rises from the dried-up course of the river to the hill, they now stand beneath the shadow of the rocks.

"And you carried my uncle all the way to the water, over those gibbers, without once putting him down!" Claude exclaims, as he stands wiping the moisture from his forehead at the summit of the boulder-strewn glacis that surrounds the mount, and hears once more the story of the accident. "Why, you were hurt yourself!"

"When I carry the doctor I *pikaued* (Anglicé, carried) all I cared about in the world. 'Spose that made it easy," Billy replies simply, and leaning his head upon his arms against a rock, he allows his exuberance of emotion caused by the painful remembrance to wash itself away in tears.

As Angland regards the weeping black he cannot but feel half ashamed of his own want of feeling. "Surely this is rather incongruous," he thinks, "that Billy, who after all is only an aboriginal servant of the dead man, should thus appropriate the position of chief mourner, whilst I can look on with only a strange, solemn feeling in my heart, and certainly with dry eyes. But it seems all like a dream to me. Of course, however, with Billy it's very different."

Williams calls at this instant and disturbs the young man's meditations.

"Look here, Mr. Angland!" The old miner's short, thick thumb points to a copy of the secret map which he holds in his toil-worn hands.

"Here's where we've got to go; follow the dotted line. Right up the gully there." The old man points to a narrow opening in the side of the hill, not far from where they are standing.

"Yes, but we must find out where this place marked by the cross is, Williams,—the point of departure, you know."

"It's here, lad. The doctor knew the boy'd lead us to where the accident happened; and see, there's the gully. A storm creek running from some hollow in the hill I take it to be."

Billy meanwhile observes what is going on with some considerable surprise, for this is the first inkling he has received of the existence of a map of the hill —so carefully had Dyesart apparently guarded the secret that he wished only to reach his sister's child.

The men now move on again, Williams leading, and enter a dark, gloomy defile, the walls of which, rising to a height of some eighty feet, are composed of rain-furrowed masses of hard, grey mud. Enormous flakes and slabs of transparent gypsum protrude from the sun-dried mass in places, and some of these, catching the rays of the afternoon sun, blaze and scintillate like gems of priceless value. The gorge is, in fact, just what Williams has termed it, a storm creek, and the dark cliffs of hardened clay on either hand are formed of *débris* which has washed down from an open basin or depression in the centre of the mount.

After following the watercourse upwards for two or three hundred yards, Claude and his companions find themselves in a great, crater-like valley, about three hundred yards across, grey and blasted, a picture of desolation. On all sides rise the sun-scarred domes of mud-springs of various sizes, some of which are twenty feet in height, but all appear non-active; in consequence, no doubt, of the long drought. Around the valley, across which Williams proceeds to lead the way, stopping here and there to consult his map or examine a stone, is an encircling, battlemented array of strangely weird and broken cliffs, some three hundred feet in height, of a hard, flinty rock, varying in colour from light red to pure white. At intervals along the scarped and tortured summit of the precipices strange, turret-headed peaks rise like giant sentries posted upon the heights to guard its sacred loneliness, and these, as the sun lowers in the heavens, cast protracted shadows over the silent, ghastly valley below. In many places heaps of honey-combed boulders of a kind of quartzite, which have fallen from the overhanging cliffs, form slopes that reach halfway up the walls of this wild-looking amphitheatre, and here and there the explorers have to turn to avoid the mysterious openings of vast, ancient fumaroles, whose orifices and walls are grandly blotched with black, purple, and Indian-red incrustations.

At last Williams comes to a halt where numerous nodules of ironstone-clay litter the ground, and, turning towards Claude, places his hand upon the young man's shoulder, and whispers in a mysterious and impressive manner "that them's the 'Golden Cliffs.'"

Stretching across the valley, and apparently barring further progress in that direction, is a dark mass of brown and purple rock, which Claude can see differs in many respects from the material of which the other cliffs already passed are composed.

But why "golden"? There seems nothing, as far as he can judge, to make the sombre pile—which appears to be some kind of ironstone deposit—worthy of the auriferous title bestowed upon it on the map. Claude's heart sinks within him. He knows what a gold-bearing reef is like; he has seen plenty in New Zealand, and some also about Cairns and Mount Silver, but there is no trace of a reef here. But perhaps Williams has made a mistake. The map is examined and re-examined with the sole result of proving that the old miner has guided his companions correctly. Then Claude begins, for the first time since he started, to feel that he has been somewhat rash in going to all this trouble, risk, and expense when after all the mysterious message from his uncle may have been only the result of the feverish promptings of a brain disordered by accident, and at the same time haunted with the desire to leave something behind for that loved sister from whom he had been estranged so long.

Neither can our young friend gather any comfort from either of his companions, who, although far more experienced than he is with rocks and minerals, seem also puzzled and disappointed. But happy is the man who, under adverse circumstances, can gather fresh stores of energy and strength such as now come to relieve Angland from the desponding frame of mind into which the frowning, barren rocks have

plunged him for the moment. The memory of a loving, girlish face comes like a peaceful messenger of hope to cheer yet softly chide the heart that fails when it should be strong for her sake. And Claude remembers that, however barren his journey through the desert may prove in other ways, the strange message from the dead has been the cause of his meeting Glory, at any rate, and a deep feeling of thankfulness makes his heart glow with renewed determination and courage.

At the foot of the cliffs Williams and Billy are closely examining the rocks. The former, breaking off chips with a short-handled prospecting pick, bends now and again to observe a likely fragment with a pocket lens; whilst close by the black boy is at work shovelling up the sandy soil from between the fallen fragments of stone with the blade of his tomahawk, winnowing the same cleverly from hand to hand for the canary-coloured particles of heavy metal, that, judging from the sulky look of the operator, have not yet come to reward his busy efforts.

"What do you make of it?" Williams turns to Angland at the question, and, carefully pocketing his lens, stands looking up at the cliff with his arms akimbo.

"Well I'm blowed if I know, to tell you straight, Mr. Angland. I don't see nary a colour. Fact is, I've never seen anything like this before." As the old man speaks he affectionately pats a boulder by his side. For just as an M.R.C.S. loves to meet an interesting and complicated case of human infirmity, to correctly diagnose which will redound to his credit in the scientific world, so does old Williams, enthusiastic

prospector and geologist that he is, feel quite a warm regard for this strange mass of rock whose hidden secrets it is now his business to unravel.

"It might be a big kind of gozzon out-crop,—the rock's got a lot of iron in it, there's no doubt about that. An old mate of mine used to say,—

"'Es thut kein gang so gut
Er hat einen eisernen hut.'

He was a German, but a good miner for all that, and quite right about an 'iron hat,' for them's the best reefs. But," Williams goes on as he heaves a sigh, "blest if this is a real gozzen out-crop either. And, moreover, it ain't likely-looking to my thinking."

"Well, it can't be helped," says Claude, watching the stalwart old miner's face with some amusement as he stands rubbing his stubby chin, and screwing up his mouth and eyebrows, like some art-critic engaged in reviewing an enormous piece of sculpture. "I'll carry out the instructions in the letter, and if it all turns out to be nothing,—well, I can't help it."

Both men hear a shout at this instant, and Billy, who has climbed up the cliff a little way, is seen waving excitedly to the white men, and calling to them to follow him to his elevated perch. Claude is not long in scrambling up, but he has to descend again to assist Williams, whose knees are getting a bit stiff with age, although the muscles of his arms and shoulders are as good as ever. Arrived at Billy's post of vantage, the black proudly shows them a remarkable tunnel opening into the cliff: it has smooth, shiny walls, and is evidently not the result of human labour.

"Look!" the dark youth shouts, stooping and pointing to the floor of the cavern, upon which the winds of heaven have spread a thin covering of desert sand; "look!"

A compound exclamation of surprise and annoyance bursts from two pairs of lips, for there, stamped into the soft, yellow carpeting of silicious particles, are the marks of numerous human feet. Not those that wandering natives might have made, but boot-marks, and, what is worst of all, apparently quite fresh.

"Somebody been here afore us," exclaims Williams. Claude simply looks downwards, and whistles a musical execration.

Billy, who stands behind, grins extensively as he sees the discomfited faces of his white companions, and hesitates for the best part of a minute before he proceeds to relieve their minds. Then he whispers huskily,—

"That been the doctor come along here."

"Dr. Dyesart! What on earth do you mean?" exclaims Claude excitedly, as the wild hope of his uncle still being alive flashes through his brain. Billy, like most persons possessed of some superior instinct or talent, can hardly appreciate the fact that others may be deficient in the same, so he grins again when he finds that the white men are still unable to distinguish between an ancient and a recent footmark.

"How long since my uncle was here?" asks Angland sharply. But our hero's hopes are dashed out of sight as Billy replies sadly,—

"He been dead over four months now."

"How the dickens are these marks so recent then?"

"They very old, boss," replies the black, and turning

away, he lights a match, and boldly leads the way into the black mouth of the natural tunnel, which slopes downwards at an easy incline.

All the men are smokers, therefore provided with the means of producing an impromptu illumination. Claude carries his matches, after the fashion of most settlers in the New Zealand bush, in a small but stout glass bottle,—the moist atmosphere of the Land of Ferns rendering this precaution necessary,—and as he creeps after his black guide, he examines the dark, glossy surface of the walls and roof of the cave, which are covered with ripple-like corrugations. The party has not proceeded far, when Claude slips upon a long, smooth object lying across his path, and as he falls is horrified to hear Billy, who is immediately in front, sing out that a snake has bitten him. In an instant the party are in darkness. Williams has tripped over Angland, and the black boy having leapt wildly upwards against the rock overhead—with a force that would have demolished any but an aboriginal skull—lies rubbing his head where he has rolled to, which is some yards on in advance, for the tunnel descends pretty steeply here.

To be left thus suddenly in perfect darkness, in a steep, subterranean passage, with the dread possibility of coming in contact at any moment with a furious and probably poisonous reptile, which has just bitten one's companion, is an awkward if not an uncomfortable position to be placed in. But in addition to this our friend Claude has had all his breath crushed out of him by the superincumbent Williams. It is not surprising, therefore, that some seconds, which appear minutes, elapse before a match is struck and a light

thrown upon the scene. It is then discovered, to the great relief of poor Billy, and for the matter of that of all three men, that the snake-bite which the dark youth is expecting every moment to prove fatal has been occasioned by Claude, who, stepping upon a dead bough, has caused it to turn over, and inflict a wound upon the black's hairy calf with the broken end of one of its lateral branches.

A few other pieces of wood being also found lying about, torches are now manufactured; and by the extra amount of light thus procured, the travellers discover that they are following a kind of tortuous, rocky artery, from whose jetty sides numerous vein-like smaller channels open in all directions. In places the tunnel widens, and the red glare of the flames dances upon the polished surfaces of curious, twisted columns, stalactite-like roof pendants, and marvellous bunches of natural filigree-work.

"Well, this is a rum kind of diggings!" exclaims Williams presently. "Did you ever see anything like this before in your travels, Mr. Angland?"

"I was just thinking that it is a sort of black edition of some of the limestone caves I've been in," replies Claude, adding, "But they're as miserably wet and cold as this is hot and dry."

The explorers have now been some fifteen minutes in the tunnel, and the white men have decided to return, and prospect the cave further upon the morrow, when Billy, who is some way on ahead, shouts "Daylight!"

A minute afterwards and the party stand blinking their eyes on a kind of undercliff, overhanging another valley, similar in some respects to that which they have already traversed, but smaller in size and with

a much fairer aspect. For here and there trees and shrubs are growing amongst the fallen rocks, and these, although stunted and bleached-looking, convey a certain softening effect to the otherwise wildly barren slopes. It is as if the goddess Flora had once smiled into the valley of death long ages ago, and some of the gentle radiance of her glance still remained behind to tell of her passing visit. And there, too, are a couple of wallaby, of the rare black and chestnut kind, skipping noiselessly away from the immediate vicinity of the intruders, to sit motionless upon adjacent boulders, watching with awful tameness the movements of these strange visitors who have come to disturb them in their quiet domain.

On either side of the valley, which, sloping westward, opens upon the desert plain below, rise the scarped and pinnacled buttresses of great, crumbling granite cliffs. These grey heights are crowned with a dark-red stratum of rock, which Claude recognizes as part of the desert sandstone formation, which has, in all probability, at one period covered the greater portion of Northern Central Queensland.

It is now getting late in the day, so a council is held as to whether to retire campwards by the road they have come, or by proceeding down the valley to return on the outside of the hill, which they will then have passed completely through. The latter route is quickly selected, and the rosy tints of sundown are just beginning to stain the whole landscape when our friends commence clambering over the boulders towards the lower ground. The route selected lies over and amongst enormous masses of coarse-grained

porphyritic granite, from whose weather-worn surfaces great square crystals of feldspar project, catching the sun's ruby rays and flashing them back amidst the glints of light off flakes of ice-like mica. And Claude, looking round him, thinks of the valley of gems into which Sinbad was carried by the mighty Roc, and how, perhaps, Dr. Dyesart may have also recalled that wondrous Eastern story, when he, the first and solitary explorer of the mountain, saw the jewel-like crystals blazing round him on the rocks. The descent to the valley is not by any means so *facile* as the bird's-eye view taken from above seemed to promise; and a small precipice presently necessitates our friends to travel along to the left, beneath the undercliff upon which they had emerged when leaving the tunnel. A hundred yards brings them to a great black buttress, which, projecting from the cliff, threatens to bar the way. But the active Billy, who declares he sees signs of the doctor having been in that direction, soon finds a narrow ledge, and by its means the rocky corner is safely rounded, after a rather risky passage. And here the men are suddenly arrested in their further progress by a most strangely beautiful sight.

A large portion of the cliff immediately before them, probably from the action of some ancient earthquake, has fallen forwards into the valley below, leaving exposed a bay or recess about three hundred feet in height and nearly as much across. The walls of this kind of alcove are formed of some dark rock, but here and there it is blotched and clouded with an almost luminous coating of iridescent colours—such as one sees on soap-bubbles and decaying glass—that

burns and shimmers in green, golden, and violet hues, as though a hundred rainbows were trembling on the sombre surface of the mountain steep.

Around the summit of the semi-circular precipice is suspended a kind of rocky cornice composed of great icicle-like pendants, as if some mighty torrent of lava plunging over the cliff had suddenly cooled in mid-air and become converted into stone.

Some of these o'erhangings appear to be tipped with burnished copper, others with silver, others again shine bright and golden against the dark, purple shadows behind. And all of them in the evening light—which bathes the whole scene with a soft crimson veil—glow and blush like molten drops of metals oozing from the edge of the wonderful rocky valance above.

Some little time elapses before the men have recovered sufficiently to speak; and then it is the sun which, sinking with true tropical celerity, releases them from the enthralling beauty of the scene. And, as the glowing hues fade into cold indigo shadow, each individual member of the party experiences that curious emotion—a mixed feeling of relief and disappointment—which some of our readers may remember to have been keenly sensible of, when, as children, the green-baize curtain dropped slowly upon the limelit fairyland of their first pantomime.

Then are three tongues unloosed, and three pair of legs hurry their owners toward the darkening cliffs.

Claude, being gifted with a scientific and artistic mind, forgets to think about the practical value of the discovery, and exclaims characteristically, "That *is* beautiful! I wonder what's the cause of those colours!"

Billy, remembering the prismatic tints of a material sulphide known to miners by the name of "peacock ore," concludes that what lies before him is an immense deposit of the same, and shouts gleefully, "Copper!" To which Williams, who likes to have a good-humoured "dig" at his black companion when he advances any opinion upon mining matters, observes "Grandmother!" and further explains, for Claude's benefit, "that them colours are iron oxides. Couldn't think at first where I'd seen the same kind of thing before," he adds, as he stoops to pick up a piece of stone, "but I recollect now. It was just the same as this here on the top of Mount Morgan, when they first opened up the top bench, only on a much smaller scale."

"Mount Morgan eh!" exclaims Claude, as he hears the old authority at his side compare this discovery of theirs to the richest gold-mine in Australia.

"Oh, don't you jump to conclusions yet, Mr. Angland," observes Williams, whose lengthy experience amongst those most disappointing affairs, gold-mines, has left him incapable of putting any faith in one till he has fully examined it. "Many a man's burnt his fingers with the idea that because stone resembles the Mount it's auriferous. It don't follow in the least."

It is late when the men reach camp, but, tired as he is, Claude spends the greater part of the night in making assays of the specimens of stone brought back from the mount; and so interested are Williams and Billy in the experiments that they sit round the blazing logs with him, keeping up a running fire of mining anecdotes, and lending him a hand, when he requires it, at pounding pieces of stone to powder in a

big iron mortar with a heavy pestle, called technically a "dolly."

Having Angland's diary before us as we write, we perhaps cannot do better than copy an extract therefrom which was, apparently, written on the next evening to that on which our friends discovered the now famous "Golden Cliffs":—

"Weather: fine, clear, hot.
"Barometer: 29·250, 29·350.
"Thermometer: 72, 84, 91.
"Minimum last night: 52.

"Spent day prospecting 'Golden Cliffs.' There is no doubt but that, like Mount Morgan, the formation there is the result of a vast thermal spring, and what I took to be a hollow in the cliffs is the half of the old basin, the other half having fallen into the valley. My rough assays made last night of the best specimen of stone, gave a result of about fifteen ounces to the ton.

"By grinding the stone very fine under water, in an agate mortar I have fortunately brought with me, I can obtain more than half the gold in the stone, as shown by assay. Neither W. or B. can obtain a colour by means of the ordinary panning process. Williams says this is what he expected, but he is one of those worldly-wise people who seldom venture an opinion till they are certain to be right.

"Our Myalls say the name of the Mountain is *Pillythilcha Doolkooro*, which seems to mean, according to Billy, the Valley of Glowing Charcoal. There appears to be a belief amongst the blacks that the place is the abode of *Kootchie*, or devils; also that all

men are unlucky who go near the hill, and those who venture into its secret valleys will surely die. Billy and Williams both agree, for a wonder, that there is a strong probability of this being the Sacred Hill, that, according to them, is believed in by the natives throughout Australia as the place from which *Moora-moora*, the native Supreme Being, will some day arise to protect them from the cruelties of the white settlers.

"To-morrow Williams leaves for Palmerville to register claim, and on his return I shall go to Murdaro with Don. Killed a big black snake just now which had crept under my blankets."

CHAPTER XX.

A "DISPERSING" PARTY.

"Greet her with applausive breath,
Freedom gaily doth she tread;
In her right a civic crown,
In her left a human head."

INSPECTOR PUTTIS, N.M.P., is pacing the verandah of Borbong head-station house. The hour is early, and although the active little man was one of the liveliest of last night's party of bronzed and loud-voiced men, who held wild carousal till the "wee, sma' hours," he is up betimes, as usual, to enjoy a cup of tea in the cool morning air, and issue instructions for the day to the "boys of his troop. The loose verandah boards creak under his diminutive Wellington boots, as with military strut he marches to and fro; and each time he reaches the end of his beat and right-about-faces to

move back again, a sable crow upon a native orange tree hard by, who is acting as sentry to some feathered thieves by the kitchen door, raises his hoarse voice in a warning *caw*.

The Inspector's head is bent forward, and after a custom of his when thinking deeply, he carries his hands folded behind his back. This morning they rest upon an empty revolver case, suspended from the wide, white-leather belt which he always wears when upon active duty.

If the man before us would only cease frowning at the boards, and, arranging his thoughts, give us the benefit of the same in words, they would probably be after this fashion :—

"Yes, I don't see how he can miss me this time. And the risk is not so very great, as we shall have rain enough to-night, or to-morrow at furthest, to drown any tracks. I will take his horses away ; then either himself, or one, perhaps two, of the blacks, will have to go after them. The rest will be easy. If his body ever is found, and it's not likely, they will think he was in the black camp and got shot there, and, as everybody round about here will have a finger in that affair, nobody will dare to make a fuss about it."

A loud flapping of wings, as the crows at the back of the house fly off at the approach of footsteps, now arouses the Inspector from his meditations.

"Ah, Yegerie !" he says, as his black orderly presents himself, and stands "attention" after duly saluting his officer.

"Why didn't you report yourself here to me directly you arrived ?" Puttis adds, for, casting a rapid glance at the boy, the Inspector—having almost as sharp

an eye as the best tracker in his troop—has discovered some wood ashes upon the new arrival's boots.

Yegerie, who has just returned from doing a piece of special duty, has waited to warm his cold, stiff fingers at the camp-fire before hobbling out his horse, and he trembles now before the master who seems to see and know everything. Inspector Puttis does not appear to expect his black trooper to answer the question put to him, but marches up the verandah and back again. Then he halts opposite Yegerie, and examines him as to how he has performed instructions given him.

"Everything right?"

"All lite, Marmie," replies the boy, saluting again. "Mine bin come up werry slow. Mine bin come longer ribber. No leabe it any tracks" (Anglicé, All right. I have been delayed by following up river bed, in order to leave no tracks).

"What tracks you see?"

"I bin see tracks longer six yarraman. I bin catch it; see um mob" (I have seen the tracks of six horses. I have seen also the party). "I bin see one white beggar, one pickaninnie white beggar, three black beggar. One fellow Myall, him make it the walk all about longer mob" (One wild black walked alongside the party).

"Ah, that's right! Who's on guard at the camp?"

"Sambo and Dick, Marmie."

"Run ring round camp. Report to me if you see a track directly. That'll do. Dismiss."

The boy salutes and disappears silently.

We pause here to explain that on the vast majority of up-country runs the native station-hands reside

in villages of huts, built by themselves in close proximity to the head and out stations. No other aborigines are allowed even to cross the run, far less to live on it. On the arrival of a "rounding-up" party or a police troop at a station, a guard is generally placed over the station black camp, to prevent any of its inhabitants giving the alarm to such runaway blacks, or Myalls, who may be camped—in contravention of the squatter's decrees—in the vicinity. The police officer has just commanded Yegerie to walk round the camp and see if there are any signs of such a messenger having escaped the sentries and set out during the night.

Half an hour passes, and then the musical clatter of cups and plates is heard in the dining-room, as the breakfast things are laid—or, to speak more accurately, flung—upon the long table, in serried rows, by a laughing, chattering bevy of dark-skinned damsels belonging to Mr. Manager Browne's harem.

There are few up-country bachelor squatters but solace themselves for the absence of white ladies by indulging their leisure moments in the society of a private, selected circle of native girls—popularly known as the "stud gins." Many of these dark-eyed houris are remarkably handsome, and after a year or two at "Government House" they are relegated to the black camp for the use of the black and white station-hands.

But to return to Inspector Puttis. With his usual abstemiousness he drank but little last evening, and his nerves are in perfect order for the day's, or rather night's, work before him. He is, of the whole "rounding-up" party collected beneath the hospitable

roof of Borbong head-station house, the only one that feels much inclined for breakfast that morning.

So when Charlie, the clean, yellow-faced Chinese cook, informs him that the morning meal is "all lie" (Anglicé, all right, or ready), he turns immediately towards the glass-door of the dining-room. But just then the rattle of a buggy coming at a furious pace towards the station arrests his attention, and he waits to see who is so rash as to drive so fast over the rough ground.

"Giles, for a tenner!" he mutters half out loud; "no other fool would drive like that."

The dust cloud occasioned by the arrival of the vehicle presently subsides, and, amidst a crashing of breakers suddenly applied and a volley of blasphemy, a pair of reeking horses are pulled back on to their haunches. Then a red-faced, burly form clambers slowly down from the trap, and after kicking an attendant "boy" gives him some directions, and waddles hurriedly towards the house.

"Well, Puttis, I've found you at last."

"Morning, Giles. Want me particularly?" inquires the police officer.

"Want you? Yes, by Jupiter! Haven't I driven all night from Bulla Bulla to try and catch you?"

"Indeed!" observes the smaller man, keenly observing the excited face of Mr. Giles, as he mops it with a red silk handkerchief. "Come in and have a nip."

The squatter half turns, by force of custom, towards the door, then he stops, and says hurriedly, "No, I won't. Here, come outside. I want to speak to you first."

"You've had good news, Giles," remarks the Inspector, his sun-dried cheeks wrinkling up into a grin, and exposing his large, canine teeth.

"How the devil do you know?"

"Never mind, old friend. What have you to tell me?"

The men stroll out by the kitchen garden, where Giles takes a seat upon a low, rustic gate, beneath a sweetly scented gum-tree. Looking nervously round about to be sure that they are alone, the owner of Murdaro turns to his companion, and in a low voice asks, "What have you done about Angland?"

"Nothing," replies the Inspector; adding hurriedly, "Did you tell Miss Mundella you were coming to see me?"

"Thank the Lord, I'm in time!" exclaims Giles, quite ignoring the question put to him. "Now, listen ter me, Puttis, and don't interrupt. Firstly, you mustn't interfere with Angland. I'll explain why directly. Secondly, I'm going to repudiate my agreement with Lileth."

"Stay!" exclaims Puttis, half shutting his eyes and causing his parchment cheeks to warp once more into a sardonic smile. "In that case, must make fresh bargain."

The low, wooden gate groans beneath Mr. Giles, as he shakes his podgy sides with a series of defiant laughs, which he raps out with a double, postman's-knock-like abruptness.

"Ah!" thinks Inspector Puttis, looking at him, "he has the air of a man who holds good cards. Wonder what his game is?"

"I am going to repudiate my agreement," repeats

Mr. Giles. "I am going to repudiate everything." His voice grows more cheerful and confident as he proceeds to disclose his intentions. "And if you're the sensible chap I take you ter be, you'll just listen ter what I've got ter say."

The police officer leans over the low gate, and, nodding his head as a sign that he agrees to keep silent, prepares to listen. "I've had a letter from Angland," the squatter continues, "which has altered my opinions of him. He writes from Palmerville to say he's just returned from where that—where Dyesart the explorer pegged out." The sonorous clanking of a bullock-bell, the signal for breakfast, here interrupts the speaker. "There's tucker ready, so I'll cut short what I was going to say. Angland writes to say he finds as I'm indebted to him, as heir to Dyesart, for a large amount; but don't intend pressing me, as was his uncle's wish. And then, blow me if he don't say that he wants to marry Glory! When I told the gal blessed if she didn't seem to expect it. And lastly, what d'yer think of this? If he ain't found my little Georgie!" The speaker's sensual face looks almost handsome for an instant, as a momentary blaze of parental pride and love warms the sinful old heart. "Yes, he's found my little Georgie as I lost six year ago!"

In the excitement caused by disclosing the news of the discovery of his long-lost son and heir, Mr. Giles springs from the gate, and after performing a short *pas seul* upon the ground,—much resembling the clumsy prancings of a pole-prodded street bear,—he turns to Puttis, and suddenly seizing his hand wrings it violently.

"How did *he* get hold of boy?" asks the Inspector, as the squatter resumes his seat upon the gate.

"Oh, I'll tell you all about that another time." Mr. Giles's face has resumed its ponderously would-be cunning expression as he goes on: "Not only that, but it appears Dyesart had just discovered a whacking big mountain of gold, or something of the sort, up there, just before he kicked the bucket,—a sort of second Mount Morgan, and I'm to have a share in it."

Inspector Puttis faces round at this, and beneath the stern, determined stare of the little man, Mr. Giles feels and looks very uncomfortable.

"Congratulate you on your luck. Lost son restored. Rich son-in-law. Debts forgiven. But,"—the police officer grins as he growls the next words,—"but you'll not forget your friends? Awkward rather if Angland should happen to hear of your late contract with your niece, eh?"

"We won't have a row about it!" exclaims Giles weakly, avoiding the Inspector's gaze; "why should we? And look here," he adds in a tone in which the bully gradually becomes discernible,—"look here, I've got copies of certain letters you've received from Lileth about Angland. Ah! that's got you, has it? And I can prove you received them, that's more. You can't prove I had anything to do with 'this arrangement,' as Lileth calls it. I defy you to do it."

"Don't try it, old friend," observes Puttis, pulling his moustache; "don't try it. I've got the 'joker' to play yet. Don't forget that."

"You mean my nephew," responds Giles. "I've squared him all right. And I can prove, moreover,

that it was you got him a hiding-place at Ulysses. Can you beat that?"

"Yes!" hisses Puttis, whose inventive genius is only equalled by a valuable faculty he possesses for bringing all kinds of novel resources to his aid upon an emergency arising. "D'you remember the musical box Miss Mundella received from Brisbane a month ago?"

"What has that got ter do with all this?" asks Giles, looking in a puzzled way at the calm, firm face that is grinning coolly up at him.

"Well, old friend, musical box all sham. 'Twas a phonograph. All your talk taken down. Even your swear words." The speaker pauses a moment, then adds, "Have another card to play. Do you want it?"

Mr. Giles remembers the fact of a so-called musical box having arrived at Murdaro, which Lileth had informed him, and with perfect truth, had been broken in coming up from the coast, and would not play. Like all ignorant persons, he has an almost superstitious dread of the more modern appliances, of which he has read such wonderful stories in that sole source of his information regarding the outside world, the weekly press. It never for a moment enters his head that Puttis is "bluffing him," to use a colonial term. Giles has been flattering himself up to this minute that he is at last free from the machinations of his tyrant niece, and the horrible thought that she has still got him in her power, and can reproduce his late conversations with her by means of a phonograph, so flurries his loosely strung brain, that for a time he becomes quite unable to see that, for their own sakes,

neither Puttis nor Lileth are likely to take that step, even if it were in their power to do so. It is not so much that he fears how he might suffer in body or estate at the hands of Angland, should his villainies be made patent; but rather a sneaking, cowardly horror of what his circle of squatter acquaintances would think of him, should they discover by means of this threatened *exposé*, how he, Giles, the man who has always loudly affected to consider woman as an inferior creation, has been all this time guided, even governed, by one—and a young one at that.

Before a minute has elapsed, however, the squatter has recovered considerably from the effects of the shock that Puttis's words have dealt him, and his wits are sharpened by the very desperateness of his position.

"That's mighty clever of you both, that is," Giles says, with an attempt at a careless laugh—which breaks down as he catches sight of the Inspector's watchful, grinning face. "Look here, though this plan of yours might hurt me with Angland, what good will it do you? You'll all be in for conspiracy to defraud."

"Pshaw!" exclaims Miss Mundella's *fiancé*, "Angland won't prosecute his father-in-law. We stand behind the father-in-law. But here's Browne coming to drag us in to breakfast. Say, what about deed of partnership in run for Lileth? Must I play my joker?"

"I'm going to repudiate all that, I tell you," replies Giles doggedly. "If you're fools enough to bring it into Court, I'll swear I was drunk or something."

Inspector Puttis grins again, and, drawing an

imaginary card from his pocket, leans forward as if to play it, and speaks in a low, hurried voice, for Mr. Browne is slowly approaching.

"Once upon a time there was a stockman on Nango run; let me see, he was head-stockkeeper if I remember rightly. He had a sister, and her only fault was a blind devotion to the interests of her brother. She was——"

"Curse you, what d'you mean?" gasps Giles, going through the eye-bulging and general inflammatory symptoms which we have already had occasion to describe.

"The owner and manager of Nango at this time," continues Puttis in a louder voice, for Mr. Browne, seeing his friends are evidently busy, has moved away again, "at this time was a wealthy young man, who had been bred and born to believe in the Jewish system of salvation." Mr. Giles continues silent, though breathing stentorously. "A successful trick was played upon the Hebrew squatter."

"Don't go too far," gasps Giles, adding pleasantly, "or I'll wring your blooming neck."

"I won't risk it, old friend," laughs Puttis coolly. "I've shown you corner of card. How d'you like it?"

Mr. Giles does not appear anxious to criticise the appearance of the figurative "joker," and remains silent.

"If things must go to Court," the Inspector continues in a careless tone of voice, "we'd have to show a reason why you should have made present to Lileth of share,—a *quid pro quo*. Now, a certain agreement made between her mother and you would nicely suit our purposes, I think you take my meaning."

Both men again remain silent for a time, then Inspector Puttis closes the interview with the following words, by which he routs his opponent entirely, "You know me, Giles; I don't shirk at the hurdles. If too high I'll break the timber. Now Lileth's entitled to this share and more. I'm not very partial to half-bred Jewesses generally, but this one I know to be an heiress, although she's not aware of it herself. Besides, she's the niece of a very dear old friend." The little man grins up at his big victim, with the same kind of smile that no doubt a small spider puts on, could we but catch it doing so, when in the act of putting the finishing turns to the silken hammock in which it has managed to swaddle an intrusive blue-bottle.

"Yes, friend Giles, I've started on last lap. Don't stand in the way. Will be worse for you. Don't want to tell Lileth how she came to be heiress. Would spoil my chance with her. Would hate me. Secret need never be unearthed. But if you attempt repudiation, or Lileth goes in for jilting me when she gets her own again, then out comes my trump card, my little 'joker.' Now, old friend, let's go to breakfast. Hope you've got a good appetite."

An hour after this conversation, Inspector Puttis despatches a native trooper with orders to recall two others, who are watching a party of horsemen approaching Borbong run.

After some clever manœuvring the "boy"—known officially as Native Constable Dick—succeeds in discovering his fellows, without attracting the attention of any of the members of the cavalcade which has been under their surveillance, and the three blacks return together stationwards. Not long afterwards the

travellers, who are Claude, Don, Joe, and the two desert trackers, prepare to camp just within the Borbong boundary, by a water-hole lying in the course of Agate Creek. Close by on their right hand rise the dark, bush-draped heights of the rocky promontory forming the boundary between Murdaro and Borbong runs, in whose fastnesses Billy had waited for Claude's coming.

"Big fellow rain come alonger night, *muckerie*" (Anglicé, heavy rain to-night, friend), observes General Gordon to Don, as the two return from hobbling out the horses; and the white youth, to whom Claude has decided to impart the secret of his birth upon the morrow, goes straightway and informs our hero what the native meteorologist has prophesied.

"Well, we'll have to put up with wet jackets, my boy," answers Angland, "for Billy and Williams have got our tents with them at the mine. But perhaps," he adds, looking at the darkening cliffs, "we'll be able to get a dry roost for the night up there somewhere, if there are any caves about. Tell Gordon I want him." The black villagers, whose hamlet is only some four miles distant, fortunately know of a suitable shelter, and soon the party are spreading their blankets beneath an overhanging, smoke-discoloured slab of granite, some fifty feet above the plain. Down below, beyond the water-hole, the horses are feeding upon a patch of herbage, whence comes the musical jangle through the darkness of a solitary bell, which is clanking against old Rupert's busy jaws.

Claude feels very happy as, forming one of the picturesque group round the fire, he sits smoking

beneath the rocky portico. To-morrow, all being well, he will feast his eyes and soul in the presence of the girl he loves so well ; to whom, blessed thought, he can now, being wealthy, approach honourably as a suitor for her hand and heart. To-morrow he will see his little friend Don—now "George," but always to be Don to him—welcomed to a home where a parent and sister await him. To-morrow, taking his uncle's cloak upon his shoulders, he will begin the great Work of Humanity to which the dead explorer has asked him to dedicate half of the vast wealth of the "Golden Cliffs."

To-morrow the wonderful prophecy concerning the mysterious *Pillythilcha Doolkooro*—whispered and repeated for many cruel years by trembling slaves and fugitives in fireless camps—will begin its humanizing fulfilment : a bright to-morrow of mercy for the unhappy race that Dyesart had pitied, beginning with the emancipation and protection of the villagers who had succoured the doctor's faithful servant Billy—without whose devoted courage and assistance the "Valley of Glowing Embers" would still be waiting for a hand to rouse the great slumbering Mooramora to defend His children.

Claude sits smoking long after his companions have fallen asleep, for his brain is far too busy with happy thoughts for it to become drowsy. By-and-by he notices that Gordon's prognostications are about to be fulfilled, and rain-clouds are flying across the starlit heavens from the north-east,—dark, shadowy masses of vapour, "like flocks of evil birds," heralding an approaching thunderstorm.

"If the creek rises we shall be cut off from the

horses," thinks Claude, as he hears the awe-inspiring mutterings of thunder echoing down the valley.

"Suppose I must go out and turn the brutes back this way myself," he says to himself, adding in a louder voice, "Here, Joe, you young rascal. Come, turn out and lend me a hand." But the youngster sleeps on, or pretends to do so, and Angland, hearing the heavy drops of rain that, like skirmishers before the advance guard of the shower, begin to pat, pit-pat, plop around, thinks that it is a pity to disturb the boy, and determines to go alone, as the horses are at no great distance, and so save the youth a ducking.

Angland therefore rakes up the fire into a blaze, so that it may serve as a beacon to guide him on his way back to the camp, and as he steps forth into the darkness he hears the buzz of a heavy tropical rainfall coming nearer and nearer over the forest leaves.

Stumbling down the hill the best way he can in the darkness, over awkward boulders and through detaining brushwood, Claude soon finds himself upon the plain. The horse-bell sounds delightfully near at hand, and crossing the bed of the creek with some difficulty, he finds it already knee-deep in water, although quite dry when he passed it three hours before. Another minute or two and he is alongside of the bell-horse, and by stooping can distinguish the heads of several of the others standing out against the lighter sky on the horizon like inferior silhouettes. Then, as if some one had pulled the string of an enormous shower-bath suspended in the great black cloud overhead, down comes the rain in one mighty cataract that

floods the plain around with tons of water per acre in as many seconds,—a true tropical shower that will fill the half-empty water-holes in a few minutes to overflowing. It is not long, however, before the downfall lessens in violence, and then, using old Rupert as a blind, Claude drifts gradually towards the other horses, which are momentarily revealed by the white glare of lightning flashes. Some of the animals are naturally rogues at any time, and now are doubly difficult to approach, having become timid and treacherous under the combined effects of heaven's fiery and watery display.

After a hard fight, however, a series of highly scientific strategic movements brings the work of unhobbling to a close, and mounting his own mare barebacked, which Claude knows he can reckon on as a good swimmer, he drives the little mob of horses across the level ground, now six inches deep in water, towards the river. An almost constant succession of lightning flashes shows to the rider the frightened animals before him for the first hundred yards,—then, suddenly, the electric display ceases, and the rain pours sullenly down; and Claude finds himself sitting on a wet, trembling steed in perfect darkness, without the slightest idea of which direction he ought to pursue in order to find the camp, whose fire he has long lost sight of.

Our young friend, whose bush experience has not been lengthy enough to teach him to trust his steed rather than himself in such an emergency, now goes through the usual bewildering tactics of a new "hand." One minute pushing on hurriedly, the next stopping to listen for Rupert's bell, anon trying to retrace his

steps, till he is completely lost, and as cold and miserable as he was jolly and warm half an hour before.

By-and-by the storm begins to withdraw from off the face of the sky like the black edge of a magic-lantern slide, and a patch of starlit heaven shows towards the east, shining all the brighter apparently for having had such a washing.

Claude now gradually makes out that he is close under a cliff, and strains his eyes into the darkness to see more; when, hiss! and the blackness before him is suddenly dissolved into fire. A blue-white column of flame has leapt from the cloud above and struck the earth close in front with frightful force, and everything around whirls into sparks, chaos, then silent darkness.

For, unconscious of the mighty crash of thunder that, like a thousand exploding shells, follows instantly upon the flash, Claude is lying stunned and bleeding beneath a tree against which his frighted steed has thrown him, on the other side of the valley to that where his camp amongst the rocks is situated.

CHAPTER XXI.

FATE'S AVENGING HAND.

"Thou hast said well; for some of you there present,
Are worse than devils."

The Tempest.

TAKING advantage of the storm whose parting fusilade has left Claude *hors de combat* for the time being, Manager Browne's "rounding-up" party, under the skilful generalship of Inspector Puttis and Sub-Inspector Morth, has completely invested the native village upon the rocky promontory.

It is made up of strange constituents, this murderous shooting party. Squatter J.P.'s are there; youthful "rouse-abouts," some of these youngsters only a few years released from the sanctified thraldom of a Christian home in the old country; reckless, godless

stockmen; a colonial legislator, who has made a name by howling for separation from England; and numerous blacks, oiled, naked, and anxious for their work to begin.

There, in the darkness, around the unconscious villagers, amongst wet, dripping rocks and slimy brushwood, crouches a bloodthirsty circle of Native Constables, naked, save for a cartridge-belt and a red band round the head, and armed with Snider carbines and tomahawks; and with them are a number of no less sanguinary white men.

Regardless of the majestic fury of the roaring elements overhead, of the heavy, drenching rain, of dangerous snakes and poisonous thorns, and with the fierce, sweet love of slaughter warming each individual's heart with its terrible excitement, the cruel cordon has shrunk its wreath of death nearer and nearer around its slumbering prey; and now some thirty pair of eyes are watching the small glimmer of the black camp-fire, and thirty fingers itch to pull the smooth, cold triggers against which they rest.

On all sides is the noisy dropping of water from the leaves, and occasionally a dead bough, sodden with moisture, and thus suddenly grown heavy, breaks from its parent tree, and crashes through the underwoood with startling echoes.

But it is not our purpose to describe the sickening scene of murder and rapine that follows, when towards four o'clock Inspector Puttis gives the revolver shot signal to commence the holocaust. We have already rendered to our readers a faithful account of a similar occurrence in an earlier chapter. To those gentlemen who, taking a special interest in such kinds of sport,

have honoured our pages by perusing the same, we will respectfully point out that they can obtain their fill of it by making their way to up-country Australia. Partly for the benefit of such "sports," and partly for another class of reader, our publishers have deemed the late Dr. Dyesart's map of the "Wicked Island" worthy of reproduction with this our narrative of his nephew's adventures.

So, instead of "potting" a few "buck" niggers, or tomahawking a woman or child, or otherwise assisting the police (Queensland Native Mounted) in the execution of their duty, let us follow Mr. Wilson Giles and watch his movements and actions, which more nearly affect our story.

It having been reported to Mr. Morth that a party of runaway "boys" are encamped a few miles from where he is assisting his senior officer in the development of his plan of attack, the sub-inspector, taking a few native troopers with him, starts off to investigate matters in this new direction, being accompanied by Mr. Giles and a few other gentlemen.

After a dark ride of an hour the party reach the cliffs which Claude Angland has descended only a few hours before, and, leaving their horses with a couple of station-hands, creep silently through the shadows after their black guide.

Presently each man feels, rather than hears, the whispered order to halt, and Mr. Morth glides forward like a snake to reconnoitre.

As ill-luck would have it, at the time when the police officer raises his keen eyes above the edge of a sheltering rock that commands a view of the camp, the only members of Angland's party in sight are

General Gordon and the Myall black, whose friends, a short distance off in the village, are in like imminent peril to themselves. Both are naked; for having discovered Claude's absence, and guessing something of what has happened, they are about to set forth in search of him. Don and Joe lie in the deep shadow of the rock and are invisible; neither does the feeble illumination afforded by the wood embers reach the blankets, pack-bags, and other civilized impedimenta, and warn the scout that what he takes for a warragal camp is at present occupied by the "boys" and belongings of a white man.

On the other hand, Morth recognizes Gordon, as he stoops over the fire for an instant to light his pipe, as a runaway from Murdaro Station. So crawling backwards to his waiting friends and troopers, he commences to arrange them quietly round his intended prey.

The early morning sky is now clear and star-studded, and in another hour or two another day will have begun.

The men creep forward amongst spiny grass trees, rocks, and tree stems, but are not yet in position, when, above the roar of the creek hard by and multitudinous noises of a water-laden scrub,—all veiling the approach of the foe from the occupants ot the granite shelter,—comes the muffled sound of a distant rifle volley.

The stalkers hear it as they slink through the darkness, and know that their friends have commenced their work of destruction at the village. The runaway "boy" Gordon and his Myall friend hear it also, and guessing its fearful import spring to their feet and

stand trembling to listen, as the faint echoings of a few more single shots follow the first discharge.

The tall black forms of the aborigines before the firelit granite background offer too tempting a pair of targets for certain of the younger members of the attacking party to be able to further restrain their sportsmanlike proclivities.

Out from the blackness two rifles spit forth their ringing, sparkling tongues of flame, and Gordon, leaping upwards without a cry, tumbles forward into the shadow of the rocks below the camp.

Then the crash and blaze of many rifles follow, as other figures, startled and hesitating in which direction to escape, are seen moving past the fire.

Mr. Giles, who is the nearest of Morth's party, covers one black form rapidly and pulls the trigger. As he does so the cliff echoes with a wild, boyish scream of mingled agony and terror.

There is something so piercing in that note of anguish, something that seems so like some echo from the past, that hardened as the squatter is by a large previous experience of such scenes, he feels a passing pang of remorse tapping at his heart-strings.

Morth and the other men are scrambling back down the hill ; some making for the horses, others for the creek. For, as though bearing a charmed life, the Myall, having hitherto escaped unhurt from the hail of bullets aimed at him, is now bounding over the plain with the speed of an antelope towards the river's angry tide.

Giles thus left alone—for he is not the kind of man to hurry after the others—reloads, and then

turns to descend the cliff; but something makes him alter his mind, and without knowing exactly why, he clambers up to the ledge whereon his victim is lying.

As the squatter's head rises on a level with the camp, he starts as if he had been bitten by a snake; for the dull red glare of the fire shines upon pack-bags, blankets, billies, and other objects, that tell him at once that a terrible mistake has been made, and that this is no wild blacks' camp, but that of some party of travellers.

Then fearful thoughts begin to paint a vivid prophecy in his mind of what is to follow.

And forgetful of his age and the stiffness of his limbs, he drags himself frantically upwards, till, upon the granite platform, he sinks upon his knees where two little forms lie almost side by side before the glowing embers.

Then, as if mocking the horrified wretch's agonizing fears, the fire flares up before the rising morning breeze, and upon the side of a leathern satchel suspended from a bough hard by he reads the name of Claude Angland.

A sickening odour, resembling roasting pork, is beginning to make the air heavy around, and a little pulseless black hand lies cooking on the ashes. But Giles sees nothing with his staring eyeballs but one small, pallid face, that even in the ruddy light of the fire lies white as marble upon the dead body of a ragged-coated dog.

No need for Giles to search for the marks by means of which Billy and Claude had discovered the identity of the long-lost child.

With fearful, awful clearness the distracted man sees his dead wife's features in those childish ones now gasping at his feet.

A groan bursts from his lips,—the deep moan of a soul too paralyzed with torture to feel further torment for a time.

Raising the child into a sitting posture, Giles madly tries, with shaking fingers, to wipe away the dreadful froth that is oozing from poor Georgie's mouth.

As he does so, his touch seems to rekindle, for a moment, the waning spark of life within the boy's fragile frame. The pallid lips open to gasp out their last words on earth, and Giles, bending to catch them, hears Don murmur,—

"Don't 'it me. Ain't doin'——"

Then the expression of pain fades off the child's features, and a smile of peaceful restfulness comes to take its place, as with a sigh the curly head falls back on Giles's arm, and the spirit takes its flight. And at that moment Giles—as Giles—dies too. His feeble brain, whirling round with a wild and ever wilder rush of fearful changing scenes and thoughts, suddenly breaks down.

A madman lifts the dead child from the ground, and, leaping over stocks and stones with a fearful, ape-like agility, vanishes into the darkness.

And none witness the false step in the dark or hear the maniacal howl, as, from a cliff hard by, a form resembling that of Murdaro's owner, clasping something to its breast, spins downwards into the angry waters of Agate Creek.

CHAPTER XXII.

LAST WORDS.

"Hear a little further,
And I will bring thee to the present business
What's now upon us; without the which this story
Were most impertinent."

The Tempest.

"SYDNEY, N.S.W.,
"*March* 10*th*, 1890.

"MR. RICHARD SHAW, *Te Renga-renga, Drury, New Zealand.*

"

EAR DICK,—I have at last a few hours to myself, during which I can sit down quietly, here in my room, which overlooks the Botanical Gardens and 'our beautiful harbour,' and write to my relatives and friends.

"I was very glad to get your letter yesterday, and learn that you are all well up to date. As for myself, I am pretty well, thank you. After

getting rid of the ophthalmic troubles which seized upon my eyes whilst I was lying ill in the fly-pestered north, I went to Brisbane, where, of course, I got low fever. My trip to Melbourne,—Smelbourne the *Bulletin* calls it, and rightly,—which is the dirtiest if the most go-ahead city in Australia, however, set me up and fattened me, but also gave me typhoid fever. It was only a slight touch, however, and the return voyage to Sydney has put me on my legs again.

"Since last I wrote I have pretty well arranged all my affairs on this side of the water, and you may expect to see me in New Zealand before very long. I may as well run over the chief items of interest that have eventuated since I last wrote, before setting forth for your edification the outline of the scheme that I shall probably adopt for carrying out my uncle's idea of ameliorating the condition of the Australian aborigines.

"In accordance with my uncle's half-expressed wish, in the letter of instructions which I discovered at his grave, I have made my respected friend and adviser, Mr. Winze, a quarter proprietor in the marvellous 'Golden Cliffs,' and he has started for the north to superintend the erection of the chlorination plant at the Mount, where already a small village has sprung up in the desert round the 'doctor's' no longer lonely resting-place.

"Glory is still staying with her friends in Brisbane, and I am starting by to-morrow's boat to interview her upon a very particular subject, the result of which confabulation I will communicate to the 'Mater' next mail.

"I have gathered no information which tends to throw any fresh light upon the terrible occurrence at Agate Creek. I was so long laid on the shelf at the shepherd's hut at Borbong run that the perpetrators of the crime—if a crime was committed—upon the night of the storm had ample time to hide all traces of it. At any rate, when I revisited the site of the camp amongst the rocks, there was not the slightest indication of anything wrong having taken place there.

"Giles's body, as you know, was found, and so was Morth's. The latter, a police officer, was drowned trying to swim his horse across the creek after a fugitive black fellow. The former probably met with his death in a similar manner. I cannot think that Giles intended to attack us, having, as I have ascertained, received my letter previously; besides there were too many witnesses about. I rather expect that Giles and Morth's party mistook our camp for that of some Myall natives. It is by no means the first time such a mistake has occurred in the colony. And cannot we see the finger of Fate in all this? The sins of the father, Giles, visited upon the child, my poor little friend Don. I miss the little fellow tremendously.

"The people in the neighbourhood of Murdaro keep very close about the affair, as all the powerful squatters round had a hand in the 'rounding-up' party that destroyed Billy's villager friends, and with little doubt our camp as well. It would be a very risky work to attempt an investigation. To tell the truth, also, I have not pushed for an inquiry into the matter for fear of something turning up that might prove an extra source of pain to Glory, who has been fearfully

cut up, poor girl, as it is, with the double loss of her father—of whom she was very fond—and her brother, to whose return home she was looking forward with so much pleasure.

"Glory is supposed to be under the impression that it was the flooded state of the creek that caused the loss of the *père et fils;* but I am afraid the poor girl has an inkling of the dreadful truth, or rather what I take to be the truth.

"Miss Lileth Mundella, to whom I had the pleasure —to cut a long story short—of communicating the fact, which I learnt from certain papers I found at the grave, of her uncle Giles having unjustly kept her out of a large share in Murdaro run, has apparently already made good use of her new position as an heiress, for she writes to say she is about to marry a wealthy squatter near Bourke.

"Inspector Puttis has therefore been jilted. Nor is this the only misfortune that has befallen this gentleman,—who, although personally unknown to me, took a good deal of interest in your humble servant, as you are aware, some time since,—for he has, upon the 'recommendation' of the Commissioner of Police, resigned his commission in the Black Corps.

"Mr. Missionary Feder, with whom I am in business communication, informs me that Puttis's late *fiancée* has probably been the cause of this energetic officer's enforced withdrawal from public life.

"And now with regard to my uncle's letter of instructions and scheme.

"It would seem from the papers which I discovered in the tin box addressed to me at the grave, that

my uncle Dyesart was what is called a disappointed man, and that the lady who jilted him afterwards married Giles and became the mother of Glory. Mrs. Giles died in giving birth to little Don, or rather George.

"I gather that the wild speculation or gambling —call it what you will—in mining concerns, that ultimately caused uncle to begin life again in the colonies, was the outcome of this disappointment. And that this, combined with a hope to be able to return my mother's fortune, which had gone with the rest, had more to do with my uncle's ceaseless wanderings, than any real belief in the wonderful Golden Hill that he had been told of by the dying miner. It was during these wanderings that my uncle was shocked with the treatment of the aborigines by the whites, and he has commissioned me, or rather desired me, which amounts to the same thing, to use a considerable part of the wealth thus suddenly placed in his hands for the amelioration of the condition of the Australian blacks. Dyesart had intended publishing a book upon this subject, and I quote the following from his MSS. in order to show you a sample of his thoughts. After recounting a number of cases of cruelty that had come within his personal knowledge, he says:—

"'After habitual crime, especially after that which involves cruelty, the human mind, so prison and other authorities say, loses that correcting sense of right and wrong which John Stuart Mill, and other experts in Socialism, tell us is one of the foundation stones of a stable social system. This sense is as valuable—perhaps more so—than those of seeing, hearing,

et cetera. Taking it for granted that it is by the senses alone that we hold any communication with our fellows, it follows that any individual must have his mind impaired, as far as those particular senses of which he has become bereft are concerned. And that such an individual's mind may not be further impaired by the privation of such sense or senses, arises only from his not endeavouring to reason about things concerning which that sense or those senses could alone give him information. He compares only what he perceives, and therefore continues to make comparisons which, however limited, are still correct. For example, there are not uncommon cases of men who, as regards colour, do not know green from red; or again, where taste is concerned, a much commoner case, cannot tell the difference between '47 port and a poisonous concoction of logwood, sugar, and other ingredients. Such defects or impairments are commonly discovered and avowed by the persons affected, and they rely on the judgment of others concerning those things of which they have themselves no accurate sense. A man could not assert, without fear of being judged insane, that green was red; and, following the same argument, can he say without undergoing a similar risk that a cruel, cowardly, or murderous action was either than what it is? If, however, his sense of right and wrong are missing, from hereditary taint or the benumbing influence of criminal companionship, he may possibly believe such actions to be commendable; but whilst in the society of sane persons, with minds of the usual capacity, he will hardly express his own contorted opinion—say, that taking pleasure in the slaughter of defenceless and

healthy men, women, and children is an honourable action, and worthy of a brave and good citizen.'

"It is not so much the ultimate destruction of the aboriginal race, as it now exists, that my uncle seems to have hoped might be prevented, nor did he apparently deplore that such a thing should take place eventually. He says that a native race, in order to survive the changes wrought in its surroundings by the incoming of a foreign and superior civilization, must have within itself the power of being able to change its customs and mode of life, and of rapidly adapting itself to the new order of things. It must, in fact, be like that singular animal, the armadillo, of South America, which, having altered most of its habits since its native wilds have become the home of European settlers, has, so far from dying out, increased in number of late years.

"It would appear that my uncle doubted whether the Australian aborigines possess this necessary power to any extent, although he mentions cases of blacks who have become useful colonists as farmers in N.S. Wales and South Australia.

"His two main arguments against the present attitude of the Australian Governments, as regards the native population, are, firstly, the great amount of harm that this rampant demon of cruelty and slavery is working upon the foundations of the growing national life of Australia; and, secondly, the fearful waste of useful lives resulting from this inhuman policy.

"He says that the intermarriage of a certain class of European settlers with the native women would be 'a consummation devoutly to be wished,' and

that this should be encouraged in every possible way. In the rougher parts of the colonies a European woman is out of place as a settler's wife. She becomes more or less debased, and cannot, upon a return to civilization, so readily resume the more artificial style of life as can her husband.

"Native women, on the other hand, make first-class wives under such circumstances, and the resulting half-caste progeny generally make useful members of society in those cases where they have a fair chance afforded them of doing so.

"He then goes on to point out, by means of numerous examples, how offshoots from various European nations have derived renewed physical vigour from crossing with the dark-skinned aboriginal inhabitants of different parts of the world, and gives instances of men who, belonging to families which exhibited those infallible signs of a decaying race, failing teeth and hair, have, by marrying with Australian and New Zealand native women, become the parents of children of splendid physique and good mental powers. 'Spain,' he says, 'threw away the chance that Providence once gave her of becoming perhaps the mightiest nation upon earth, when she destroyed, instead of intermarrying with, the natives of South America, who had a superior civilization to that of their conquerors.'

"Now for the plan I propose to adopt :—

"I shall endeavour, for a commencement, to work through the machinery of Missionary and Aborigines' Protection Societies already existing. In such cases where I find officers of the Black Police drawing salaries as 'Protectors of Aborigines,' I shall en-

SLAVE MAP OF MODERN AUSTRALIA.

deavour to draw the attention of the public to the grim joke thus perpetrated, by means of newspaper articles and pamphlets, to thus get other persons appointed.

"From my uncle's and my own observation, the weak point in the present missionary system, as carried out in Australia, is the fact that, after the raw material —the native children—have been converted, by education, into an article worthy of a place in the civilized world, there is really no market for it.

"As a rule, the girls begin life as servants, are led astray, and finally become prostitutes, or the concubines of settlers or squatters. The boys generally are relegated to the black camp with their uneducated brethren.

"I therefore propose to endow each native girl with land and capital, upon her passing a certain time and standard in one of the farm schools I shall establish in various parts of the country.

"Any white man making one of these girls his wife will obtain a quantity of land and small amount of capital. I am pretty certain that the Governments of the various colonies would assist in such a movement by giving the land, as it would ensure its being settled by a good class of settler. These at present form the main body of wandering "wallaby" men, who seldom marry,—chiefly from want of funds and suitable partners,—for the white women who would marry men of this sort make neither desirable wives nor healthy mothers.

"I will also endeavour to get reserves placed aside for the natives, as is done in New Zealand, and there farm schools will be opened. In these reserves adult

natives can find a safe refuge from the squatters, and will be registered. If they assist upon the farm, they will receive payment for same in kind. No attempt will be made to force civilization or education upon the adult natives, as this never has any practically good results. The children and young natives will be brought up apart from the adults. Infanticide, which is now the rule, not the exception, amongst station blacks, will disappear as the natives are granted protection, a means of earning food, and relief from the burden of keeping their offspring. Boy natives, after passing a certain standard at the farm school, will be apprenticed to various tradesmen and farmers, and will be granted land or capital, after becoming proficients in their special line of business, wherewith to start upon their own account. Inspectors, accompanied by interpreters, will constantly perambulate the country with the object of informing the natives of the advantages offered by these schools and reserves, and for the purpose of prosecuting any one committing atrocities upon the aborigines. Premiums will be offered for a series of articles and papers upon the best means of protecting and utilising the native race.

"Having given you this rough outline of my plan, I must bring my epistle to a close. Perhaps I could not commence my campaign better than by writing an account of my search for the grave. By Jove, I will! I append a newspaper cutting, showing that some one else is moving in the matter.

"Yours regardfully,

"CLAUDE ANGLAND."

(" *South Australian Register.*)

"THE BROTHERHOOD OF MEN.

"THE CONDEMNED PRISONER JACKEY.

" *December* 16*th*, 1889.

" We publish to-day two letters called forth by the Court proceedings in the case of Jackey, the aboriginal who at the last criminal sittings in Adelaide was found guilty of murder and sentenced to be hanged. One of these, signed 'Gauntlet,' is directed to the treatment said to be commonly meted out to the blacks on distant stations, and more particularly in Queensland. The writer, who informs us that he speaks from personal observation and from information gained from thoroughly trustworthy sources, in reality only repeats an oft-told tale. The atrocities practised upon the natives in various parts of Australia—sometimes in retaliation for treacherous and barbarous acts committed by them, but very often without any such excuse—have been horrible, and even now it is undeniable that there are some who think as little of enslaving or even shooting a black as of killing a mangy dog. This certainly cannot be said of all run-owners. Even in the far interior there are men who have gained the confidence and goodwill of the aboriginals by treating them with kindness and giving them fair payment for what they do. There is too much reason to believe, however, that the system of compulsory service, or, as 'Gauntlet' describes it, of downright 'slavery,' accompanied by cruelty, does prevail. The protection professedly afforded to the natives in remote portions of the country is a protection only in name.

They are practically at the mercy of the settlers, who, if they are so disposed, can ill-treat them with impunity. What chance has a native of having his testimony believed as against that of a white man? He has to grin and bear the kicks without receiving any large amount of salve in the way of halfpence. It is quite time Australia recognized better its duty towards the blacks, and gave them the full benefit of the protection of the laws to which they are made amenable. With all respect to the tribunals of justice, it is impossible to say that the trial of Jackey for murder was satisfactory. We say this without reflecting for a moment upon the judge or jury,—who conscientiously exhausted every available means for getting at the facts, and who could not on the evidence well have come to any other conclusion than that which was arrived at,—but it is impossible not to feel that the prosecution had immense advantages over the accused. And this brings us to the letter appearing elsewhere signed 'Veritas.' If the facts are as there stated, and it is as an eye-witness that our correspondent—who will doubtless be easily identified by those chiefly interested—writes, Jackey, on his way down to Adelaide, was treated with shameful brutality. Had the luckless creature been already found guilty of the worst crimes in the calendar, he could hardly have been dealt with with greater severity, but in point of fact, according to the maxims of British law, he was at the time an innocent man. It was, of course, necessary to take all reasonable precautions for preventing his escape, but will any one say that this object could not have been secured without subjecting him to such inhuman treatment as 'Veritas' describes? Had he been a white man the picture

drawn of him heavily manacled, forced to sit hour after hour upon camel back in a most painful position, under a broiling sun which heated the irons upon him until they burned him, would arouse intense indignation throughout the length and breadth of the land. And why should it be different when the victim of such usage is a black fellow? The matter is one that should be strictly inquired into, as well in the interests of justice and of humanity as of the aboriginals, who are necessarily so heavily handicapped in their dealings with white men."

FINIS.

12409

- 2 FEB 1998

LA TROBE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
C 96519 9237 B
BUNDOORA GENERAL
A823.2
V877b
VOGAN, A. J. (Arthur James)
The black police : a story of modern Australia
BRN : 854158
13 MAR 97