

The Project Gutenberg eBook of The Second String, by Nat Gould

This ebook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this ebook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you'll have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

Title: The Second String

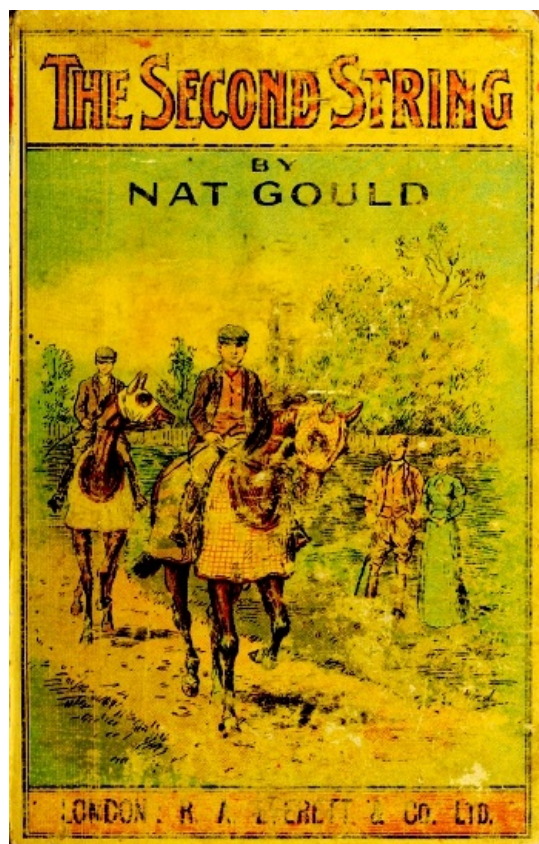
Author: Nat Gould

Release Date: April 6, 2011 [EBook #35782]

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Suzanne Shell, Mary Meehan and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at <https://www.pgdp.net> (This file was produced from images generously made available by The Internet Archive/American Libraries.)

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE SECOND STRING ***



THE SECOND STRING

BY NAT GOULD

AUTHOR OF "THE DOUBLE EVENT," "A RACECOURSE TRAGEDY," "THE GOLD WHIP," ETC., ETC.

LONDON
R. A. EVERETT & CO., LTD.
42 ESSEX STREET, STRAND, W.C.

[All Rights Reserved.]

CONTENTS

[CHAPTER I.—THE FAILURE](#)
[CHAPTER II.—JACK'S RESOLVE](#)
[CHAPTER III.—A SCHOOL CHUM](#)
[CHAPTER IV.—AN OLD TIME SKIPPER](#)
[CHAPTER V.—TOPSY TURVY](#)
[CHAPTER VI.—TAPPING](#)
[CHAPTER VII.—WEATHERING THE STORM](#)
[CHAPTER VIII.—BARRY TUXFORD](#)
[CHAPTER IX.—IN SHARK'S BAY](#)
[CHAPTER X.—THE TWO BLACK DIVERS](#)
[CHAPTER XI.—TURNING TURTLE AND AFTER](#)
[CHAPTER XII.—JACOB'S YARN](#)
[CHAPTER XIII.—THE DIVERS AT WORK](#)
[CHAPTER XIV.—THE BLACK PEARL](#)
[CHAPTER XV.—A CLEVER THIEF](#)
[CHAPTER XVI.—JACK DISCOVERS HIS LOSS](#)
[CHAPTER XVII.—THE PEARL DEALER](#)
[CHAPTER XVIII.—ON HORSEBACK AGAIN](#)
[CHAPTER XIX.—A STAB IN THE DARK](#)
[CHAPTER XX.—THE TRAINER'S SUGGESTION](#)
[CHAPTER XXI.—BRICKY FINDS A JOB](#)
[CHAPTER XXII.—BLACK BOY'S OWNER](#)
[CHAPTER XXIII.—BARRY WAXES ELOQUENT](#)
[CHAPTER XXIV.—BADLY RIDDEN](#)
[CHAPTER XXV.—SOMETHING ABOUT WINIFRED](#)
[CHAPTER XXVI.—A PUZZLE](#)
[CHAPTER XXVII.—THE SECOND STRING](#)
[CHAPTER XXVIII.—THE NEW CLAIMS](#)
[CHAPTER XXIX.—BOUND FOR HOME](#)
[CHAPTER XXX.—REALISATION](#)

[SPORTING NOVELS. By NAT GOULD.](#)

THE SECOND STRING

CHAPTER FIRST

THE FAILURE

"There goes the failure of the family, yet I like him, there's real grit in him if it was brought out."

The speaker was Sir Lester Dyke, and the remark was made to his daughter, Winifred.

"The failure" did not seem unhappy, he walked across the field with a free and easy stride, whistling softly to himself, enjoying the beauties of nature, taking in everything at a glance, drinking deep of the many good things that mother earth provided for the entertainment of mankind. To look at him seemed to give a great denial to Sir Lester's remark. Failure was not written on his face, he was apparently an active, well bred, strong, able bodied young man, and yet Jack Redland was a failure, for he had done nothing to advance himself in life, and had tried his hand at many things without success. His brothers had done well in life, his two sisters had married rich men, and were more or less happy, according to the lot of such people. His father left him exactly two thousand pounds and he spent it in a year. How he had lived since that time no one knew, but he was always well dressed and never seemed in want of money.

As all the Redlands had done well in life, "the failure" stood out more conspicuously. Had his many friends been questioned they would have endorsed Sir Lester's remarks concerning him.

His family concern this story in no wise, it is with him we have to deal. It suffices to say that his father was an old friend of Sir Lester Dyke's, who had a small estate in Sussex and a house at Brighton.

Jack Redland was a frequent visitor at The Downs, where he was always made welcome, despite his failures. Perhaps it was Winifred's championship of him had much to do with her father's partiality. She was his only child and he adored her. Sir Lester had just given Jack a few words of advice, administered in somewhat strong doses, in the hope that it would act as a tonic and brace him up to contemplate some decisive line of action that would obliterate past failures. The recipient of the tonic did not seem to be troubled by it. During the five-and-twenty years of his life he had accepted a vast amount of advice, which could not have been of the right sort, as it

failed to produce any effect. Advice is cheap, much cheaper than practical assistance, and, therefore, easier to part with. Some people consider themselves born advisers, they little know what bores they are. Jack was a difficult subject to bore, he was a patient listener, because he never showed in any way that his thoughts were elsewhere as his adviser rambled on in dreary discourse. Maiden ladies of a certain age with grievances, found him sympathetic; they thought it wonderful he possessed such a knowledge of the sex. Men with hobbies ran them hard at Jack's expense, but he did not mind it in the least. His temper was even, his outlook on life full of hope, and a blind belief in his lucky star, which advanced near to the borders of fatalism. He never doubted that he had been sent into the world to serve some useful purpose, but what it was he had been unable, up to now, to discover.

He did not consider himself a failure in the same light as others regarded him. Because he had tried several things and succeeded in none was not his fault, it was rather his misfortune, because he had not come across the right thing; when he did he felt sure of succeeding.

His education was of the ordinary kind. He went to a good private boarding school and when he left did not go to college, had he done so he would have been no better off. He played cricket well, was, in fact, much in request in the county team, he rode well, shot splendidly, played tennis, croquet, golf, or any other game that happened to be suggested, and Sir Lester said no fault could be found with anything he did in the way of sport. If he succeeded in these things why not in business? that was the question that as yet remained unanswered. He had plenty of energy, rode hard in the hunting field, was a qualified gentleman jockey, and had won many races. This was one source of income which he did not despise. All this was very well in its way, but for a young man without means it did not afford a very good prospect in life.

The Downs was within easy distance of Brighton, and Jack Redland often walked from the famous seaside resort to Sir Lester's and back. He did so because he liked walking, for he was never short of the choice of a mount, any of his Brighton friends were only too willing to oblige him when they found he improved the manners of their horses.

It was a beautiful day, towards the end of May, and the country was resplendent in living green. Myriads of primroses clustered under the trees, and peeped out from nooks and corners in the banks. The birds sang joyously, heralding the coming of June, already teaching their young how to fly, in haste to be rid of them and rear more.

As he reached the bend round by the plantation, he turned and waved his hat to Sir Lester and Winifred, the former shook his stick at him, which caused him to smile, the latter kissed her hand to him, which made him look serious.

He was very fond of Winifred, and he admired her father, whose friendship he greatly valued. He had known Winifred since she was a little girl, now she was eighteen, and fast developing into a lovely woman. Once he did not see her for a year or more, that was when she was at school, in France, and when he met her he wondered at the change in her. It was then he learned she was no longer a child and could not be teased and have her hair pulled with impunity. She laughed at him when he spoke to her in such a different tone, and her bantering soon put him at his ease.

Out of sight of the house he sat down on a bank and idly pulled a buttonhole of primroses. His thoughts were with Sir Lester and Winifred, and he commenced to wonder whether the baronet was right when he told him it was entirely his own fault he did not get on in the world, and that it was high time he turned his mind and his hands to something useful. His numerous accomplishments had, so far, been of very little use to him. One of his sisters occasionally gave him a helping hand or he would have been in a very bad way indeed. At first he declined to accept money from her, but she overcame his reluctance by pointing out that she had no children, and had more money than she cared to spend upon herself.

"If you assure me it comes out of your private purse I will take it as a loan," he said, "but I will not accept a copper from Harry, he's a prig."

"He is my husband," she replied, quietly, "and you must not call him names. He is very good to me, very liberal, and I have nothing to grumble about. Please take the money, Jack, and when you are short again do not be afraid to ask for more; I know you will repay it some day, if ever I require it."

This was, however, a most unsatisfactory way of living, and he had no desire to trespass upon her bounty. What was he to do? The answer was difficult. He would be of no use in an office. As the manager of an estate he might find it a congenial employment, but he doubted his ability to succeed.

"Something is sure to turn up," he muttered, "but the right thing is a deuced long time in coming my way."

Hearing footsteps in the lane he looked up and saw a gypsy woman, with a basket on her arm, filled with bunches of primroses. She was young, and not ill looking. Many of her tribe wandered about the Sussex lanes, and he merely regarded her with ordinary interest. She saw him through the hedge, and stopped.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"Money, my child is ill," she said.

"Where is your husband?"

"I do not know, I do not care. He has left me, but I have the child. He is in Brighton, he will die if I cannot get money, I must have it."

"I am sorry for you," he said. "Money is scarce with me, but I can let you have a few shillings."

"God bless you, kind gentleman."

It occurred to him her story might be untrue, and he looked at her suspiciously. She saw his glance, and with the quickness of her race knew why he hesitated.

"I have told you the truth, my child is very ill, he is all I have in the world."

He pushed his way through the hedge, and stood before her. She looked into his face with sad, black eyes, in which there was no boldness.

"Here is five shillings for you, I am as badly off as yourself for money."

She curtsied as she accepted it, and said:

"You do not look like a poor man."

"I am; I am a failure," he said, smiling.

She shook her head.

"Your turn will come. May I look at your hand?"

He laughed again as he said:

"I have no faith in fortune telling."

"I do not wish to tell your fortune, I can read your hand if you will let me."

He held out his hand, and for some minutes she regarded it silently. They made a picturesque group under the budding trees, with the birds peeping down and twittering in surprise, and the primroses glistening all around.

"There are riches in store for you, there are dangers to be met with in a far off land. You will live long but there are years of strife before you. It is a good hand, the lines are true, it is not the hand of a man who will fail when the time comes."

He was interested, although he did not believe her story.

"Then there is no luck in store for me in England?" he asked.

She shook her head.

"None until you return," she replied.

"And where must I go? To what land must I journey to gain these riches?"

"That I cannot tell, you must trust to fate."

"I am not likely to leave England."

"You will, and before long."

"You speak positively."

"I am sure of what I say."

"You are going to Brighton, it is a long walk. Go to Hassocks, that will be nearer; here is another half-crown, you can take the train from there."

He did not wait for her thanks, but struck out across country, he knew his way well.

The five or six miles to Brighton were nothing to him, and he arrived there in time for dinner.

He had modest apartments in the Old Steyne overlooking the gardens, in a very quiet house where there were no other lodgers, and his modest requirements were easily met.

He preferred to live at Brighton, probably because it was within easy distance of Sir Lester Dyke's residence, and he had many opportunities of seeing Winifred. He walked to Hove in the evening, and sat down in a quiet spot overlooking the sea. His meeting with the gypsy woman impressed him more than he imagined. It was curious she should be coming down the lane as he rested there, he did not remember having met any gypsies so near The Downs before. Sir Lester had a decided objection to them, called them poachers, and worse names, and would have none of them on his land, or in the lanes if he could help it. The woman seemed superior to the majority of her class, and he believed her story about the child.

The sound of the sea, the swish of the incoming tide influenced him and he wondered if the woman's words would come true and that he might possibly find riches in a foreign land. He cared very little for money for himself, but there were possibilities attaching to the possession of it that he cared for very much indeed. Again he saw Sir Lester shaking his stick, and Winifred kissing her hand. The stick was to urge him on, the kiss to call him back.

England; what ties were there to hold him here? He had never contemplated the prospect of leaving his homeland until the gypsy woman had spoken; he saw in her words the hand of fate, in which he placed his trust.

The sea breeze fanned his face, the music of the waves fascinated him as they had never done before, they called to him and he felt inclined to place faith in their summons. The sun sank, the air grew chilly, but still he sat on watching the lights of the fishing smacks as they appeared, one by one, out at sea.

Surely it was time for him to bestir himself, do something to earn his living, instead of idling along in pleasurable ease, if not affluence.

He had read of men who had gone out to far distant countries and come back rich. They braved dangers and privations, why should not he, had he less courage? He thought not.

He walked along the parade, still wondering if the gypsy's words would come true. That depended upon himself, he could at any rate give them a chance by going abroad.

By the time he reached his lodgings he had made up his mind to try his luck elsewhere, but where?

He meant to consult Sir Lester Dyke and hear what he had to say, his advice would at any rate be worth listening to. Then there was Winifred, how would she take it, would it grieve her much to lose her old playmate?

He felt the wrench on his side would be severe. The girl was more to him than he imagined, the mere thought of leaving her had roused other sentiments; during his absence she might marry, and on his return home find her the mother of children. He had no right to expect anything else, not even to ask her to wait for him, because he had no prospects in life, no home to offer her, was not even certain of making one. Sir Lester liked him, but would resent, and properly so, any approach to his daughter on such a subject.

If he went abroad he must risk everything, even the chance of finding Winifred still at home with her father on his return. Of one thing he was certain, if he left England he would not come back a failure.

CHAPTER SECOND

JACK'S RESOLVE

"I think you were rather severe on Jack," said Winifred as "the failure" disappeared from view. "I am sure he has tried his best to find something to do, he told me so."

"And you implicitly believe all the young rascal tells you," replied her father smiling.

"He is truthful, at any rate, that is in his favour."

"I agree with you; I do not think Jack Redland would tell a lie—unless——"

She looked at him archly.

"Unless it was to shield a woman."

"Ah!" she exclaimed, "and under such circumstances it would be justifiable."

"Possibly; it depends on the circumstances. I do not think I was too severe upon him, Win; he requires a spur to drive him along. I wish to goodness he would do something."

"So do I."

"Are you very fond of him, little girl?"

She answered frankly that she was very fond of him indeed, and her father was glad to hear her speak in this strain, it showed him she had not lost her heart to him. He was anything but rich, but had his daughter's happiness been at stake he would not have hesitated in granting her desire.

The Downs was a comfortable old fashioned place, situated in one of the most picturesque parts of Sussex. The property was not large, but being so near to fashionable Brighton, the land was valuable, and more than one tempting offer had been made to Sir Lester to part with it for building purposes. The mere thought of The Downs estate being cut up by jerry builders irritated him. His affairs would be in a very bad way when he parted with the place for such a purpose. His house at Hove had turned out a profitable investment; he could obtain double what he gave for it some years ago, and if it came to parting with property that must go first.

Sir Lester Dyke had been hampered from the commencement. His father had spent every shilling he could manage to raise, and left his son a multitude of debts and his affairs in chaos.

"Make a clean sweep of the lot," the lawyer had said, but Sir Lester, who was young and

sanguine, laughed the suggestion to scorn, and clung to his property with grim determination. Luckily, he married a wife who had a moderate fortune which she willingly handed over to him to assist him in freeing the estate. Unfortunately, she died when his affairs were commencing to assume something like order. This was a great blow to him, but he bore it bravely and Winifred became the idol of his life.

He was fond of racing; his father, to his sorrow, had been before him, but in a different way. His father gambled heavily; Sir Lester loved the sport alone, and seldom put much money on his horses. His string was trained at Lewes, on the famous Downs, and Jack Redland had ridden more than one winner in the familiar black jacket with orange sleeves.

His love of country life was a sufficient inducement for him to remain at The Downs for the greater part of the year, and Winifred was his constant companion in his rides and walks. She rode well, and like her father, preferred the Sussex hills and downs to the fascinations of London life.

Sir Lester's favourite meetings were Brighton and Lewes, where he was well known, and where the victories of his horses were always received with much enthusiasm.

Winifred was popular in the neighbourhood, and young as she was, proved a charming hostess, as soon as she left school. Her figure on horseback was familiar at Brighton, and on the downs at Lewes, where she often went with her father to see the horses at work.

Caleb Kenley, the trainer, was devoted to Sir Lester, and as for Winifred, he could not do enough to please her whenever she visited him at Newhaven Lodge. Although Sir Lester could not afford to pay him a large salary, Caleb Kenley was contented, and a dozen horses were quite as many as he cared to handle.

"It's all very well to have forty or fifty horses in your stables," he said, "but no man can keep his eye on the lot, and I like to know what all mine are doing. Sir Lester's a gentleman, and it is a pleasure to train for a man of his stamp. He never grumbles when he loses, and when he wins it's a treat to see the smile on his face. I'll stick to him as long as he sticks to me, and the mere good luck he has the better I shall be pleased."

Jack Redland was also in the trainer's good books. He knew Jack was regarded as a failure, but in his opinion no man who could ride as he did came under that category. When Jack won the Southdown Open Welter Handicap on Topsy Turvy, Caleb declared no professional jockey could have done as much.

"Davis rode him at Brighton," said the trainer, "and he ran a perfect brute. With Mr. Redland up he behaved himself; he knew there was a rider on his back. Failure is he! Bosh! he's only to take to the profession to make a fortune."

Eager to impart his newly formed resolution to Sir Lester, Jack Redland went to The Downs the following day.

"Winifred says I was rather hard on you yesterday," said Sir Lester, "but as you have come again to-day I suppose you consider my remarks were quite in order and to the point."

"They generally are," said Jack laughing.

"Dad says what he means as a rule," said Winifred smiling.

"I had an adventure after I left you last night," he said. "It actually made me think."

"You don't say so!" exclaimed Sir Lester.

"Fact, I assure you. It was a mild sort of adventure, but it seems likely to have serious consequences."

Winifred was interested, and eager to hear the news. Jack explained how he met the gypsy woman, and what she said to him.

"I walked down to Hove later on and sat listening to the waves. The sound seemed to affect me curiously, and I felt there might be some truth in the woman's tale. I have done no good in England, perhaps in a new country my luck may change, and I may find an occupation suited to my tastes and abilities. I came over to-day to ask your advice, Sir Lester. Do you think I ought to try my fortune abroad?"

Sir Lester glanced at his daughter. She was silent, and there was a troubled look in her face. "She does not care to lose her old playmate," he thought.

"They say the man who fails at home will fail anywhere," he replied.

Jack looked disappointed, but replied—

"I do not think that is correct. In a new country one naturally leads a new life, and it need not necessarily be a failure. What do you think, Winifred?"

"I do not think you have been a failure here. True, you have not yet succeeded in settling down to some useful occupation, but the time will come when that will happen. Do you feel inclined to go away, to leave England?"

"Something tells me it will be for the best," he replied.

"Where do you intend going to?" asked Sir Lester.

"That is what I want your advice about."

"I am afraid I can help you very little. I know several young fellows who have gone out to different parts of Australia, and who have done remarkably well there; but it is a long way off."

"I do not mind where it is, or how far so long as I succeed. I made up my mind last night that wherever I went I would not come back a failure."

"That's right, Jack; I admire your pluck. If you go out with that determination, depend upon it, you will succeed."

"When do you think of leaving?" asked Winifred in a low voice.

"This year; the sooner the better," he replied.

Sir Lester wondered where the funds would come from, he would help him if necessary; but he could not do very much.

They discussed the matter for some time, when Sir Lester left them to attend to business matters.

"Why have you come to such a sudden decision?" Winifred asked. "You ought not to take such a step without due consideration."

"The gypsy woman put it into my head; she was very confident about my succeeding."

Winifred laughed as she replied:

"I had no idea you were so superstitious. If that is your only reason I advise you to remain at home."

"It is not the only reason; there is a far stronger inducement. I wish to succeed, to make money. I have an object in view."

"Most people have an object in life."

"Mine is all important."

"Tell it me."

"No, I cannot at present. If I succeed, I will. Shall you miss me very much, Winifred?"

"Indeed, I shall. We have been so much together, I think it unkind of you to wish to leave me."

"I do not wish to leave you. I shall think a great deal about you when I am away."

He wished he could tell her it was for her sake he desired to make money, but he knew he ought not to bind her by a promise in any way, even if she were willing to give it.

"I do not believe you will go; you are only joking."

"I was never more in earnest in my life. The only question is where shall I go?"

"Somewhere where it will not be very difficult for you to get back. You will not want to remain long away from old England."

"You think I shall soon be homesick?" he asked smiling.

"Indeed, I do; for I know how you love the old place. I believe it is your love of the country that has prevented your success."

"You may be right, and in another land I may find an occupation that will suit me, and at the same time bring me in money. I rather fancy a roaming life for a few years."

"And do you think the roamers make fortunes?"

"In some cases."

"They are the exception. Steady, hard work we are always taught is the best."

"But it is such a slow process. I want something more rapid," he replied.

"What was the gypsy woman like?" she asked.

"Young, married, with a little child very ill. She was good looking; not at all bold, and I think she believed what she told me."

"They are such deceptive people. How do you know the story about the child was true?"

"I doubted her at first. She read my mind in an instant, and assured me her story was correct. I do not think you would have doubted her had you been there."

"Father has a great aversion to them."

"And it is not unreasonable, but they are not all bad, there must be some decent people amongst

them."

Winifred shrugged her shoulders. She did not like to think a mere gypsy woman had influenced his life to such an extent by a silly trick of palmistry.

"I shall hate all gypsies if you take her advice and go away," she said.

"She gave me no advice. She merely read the lines in my hand, and told me what she saw there."

"And said you would succeed and be rewarded when you returned home?"

"That is so. I shall look forward to the reward," he said.

She glanced at his face, but he was looking across the garden, over the fields beyond, and seemed lost in thought. She knew she would miss him very much. Suppose he never returned; met with a dreadful death in some inhospitable land. The mere thought of such a thing frightened her. She put her hand on his arm, saying quickly, and with a little shudder—

"Do not go, Jack. Stay here; stay in England, where we all love you. Don't go away."

"Where we all love you."

The words caused his heart to beat with happiness. She had used the word collectively, but it included herself. Noticing her face and her startled look, he said—

"Are you afraid I shall come to grief on my travels?"

"We hear of terrible things in the papers, such horrible things; and, oh, Jack, we have been so much together, I could not bear to lose my old playmate."

There were tears in her eyes, and he felt a desperate inclination to kiss them away. He mastered his feelings and said—

"I am well able to take care of myself, and I will come back, I promise you that. I am very glad you are so anxious about my welfare. I know I have a firm friend in you, Winifred."

She was cross because she had shown too much feeling, and said irritably—

"I am very silly. Of course, you can take care of yourself."

"You are never silly," he said. "I think I understand you, and it will be my greatest regret on leaving here to leave you behind."

"You cannot very well take me with you," she answered smiling.

"I wish I could," he replied.

"Thanks, I prefer The Downs," she answered laughing.

CHAPTER THIRD

A SCHOOL CHUM

"Going abroad!" exclaimed Caleb Kenley, "what the deuce has put that into your head?"

"I have been a dire failure here; perhaps elsewhere I shall turn out a success."

"You have not been a failure; there are very few better riders in England than yourself. Do not be offended at my question. Are you short of money? Is that the reason?"

"The principal reason, and a very good one. I have always been short of money."

"Why not ride as a professional jockey? You would find plenty of employment and make a heap of money."

"I should not mind it at all for myself," he replied.

"And who else have you to consider?"

"Some one very dear to me; I cannot tell you who it is."

"I think I can guess," replied the trainer smiling. He had noticed how Jack and Winifred were attached to each other.

"Please do not try, but if you know, keep it to yourself. I must make money—do something—and there is no chance for me here."

"You will not be going for a month or two?" asked Caleb anxiously.

"No, not for two or three months."

"I am glad of that; you'll be able to ride Topsy Turvy again at Lewes, and win on him, I hope."

"Is Sir Lester going to run him again in the Southdown Welter?"

"Yes, and of course, you must ride."

"I shall be delighted," replied Jack. "It will probably be my last mount in the old country, for many a long year."

"What country are you bound for?" asked Caleb.

"I do not know at present."

"I have a brother in Sydney, in New South Wales. He has done well there; he trains horses at Randwick, and I am sure if you met him, that is, if you go to Australia, he would make you welcome. He might be able to give you a wrinkle, put you in the way of making a living. He was always a shrewd sharp fellow; I have not heard from him for some time, but I know he is still there," said Caleb.

"If I decide upon Australia, I shall be only too pleased to meet him."

"His name is Joel, and if you decide to go there, I will write to him about you."

"Thanks," replied Jack, "it is always nice to meet a friend in the midst of strangers."

Jack Redland was often at Lewes, and rode gallops on the downs for the trainer. After their conversation he had a spin on Topsy Turvy, who went remarkably well, and he wondered if he was to win another race on him before he left.

From Lewes he went up to London, and called at several shipping offices. As he came out of the Orient Line offices and walked along Fenchurch Street, he met an old schoolfellow named Harry Marton, whom he had lost sight of for some years.

Harry Marton had been his particular chum at school, and when he left he entered the stockbrokers' office of Marton and Shrew, his father being the senior partner. He tried to persuade Jack to join him there, but he declined, giving as his reason that he could not bear to be cooped up in the city. After this their ways lay far apart, and they seldom came across each other.

Jack saw his former comrade looked anything but prosperous; in fact, like himself, he was evidently down on his luck. A hearty greeting passed between them, and Harry said—

"You look as though you were doing well; I am sorry to say I have had a very rough time of it. No doubt you heard of the firm's failure. The poor old governor, it completely broke him up, and he died penniless, and I firmly believe heartbroken. His partner swindled him right and left, and to make matters worse, involved the firm in some very shady transactions. I warned my father, but he had such confidence in Shrew that he took no notice of what I said. It would have been better for him had he done so. We might have saved something from the wreck when the crash came."

"I am awfully sorry to hear it," replied Jack; "but you are mistaken as to my state of prosperity. I assure you I have not a penny to bless myself with, but I have some very good friends."

"Which I am sorry to say I have not," replied Harry. "Curious we should meet here. I wonder if you have been on the same errand as myself?"

"I have been to the Orient office to see about a passage to Sydney."

"And I have been on a similar errand, but not to the same office. I have had the offer of a passage out to Western Australia, to Fremantle. It is not a crack steamer by any means, but I don't mind that. When I arrive there I am certain of employment. You'll laugh when I tell you what it is."

"How strange we should meet here," replied Jack.

"It is, very curious; it must be five or six years since I saw you last."

"Quite that; it is a coincidence we ought not to overlook. How would it do for us to go out together?"

"It would be splendid, but Fremantle is a long way from Sydney, I believe."

"We cannot talk here; let us go into Carter's and have a chat," said Harry.

They entered the quiet, modest dining-rooms, and secured a table in a corner, away from the busy throng of city men, who were hurriedly discussing their luncheons.

"It always amuses me to watch the city man in here," said Jack. "He has not a minute to spare, and his food disappears with lightning-like rapidity. I wonder if it does him any good, or if he has the faintest idea of what he is eating."

"He cannot get much enjoyment out of it; I have tried it myself, and know what it means."

"In your clerking days?" said Jack.

"Yes, we never had much time to spare; it's different now. There is too much time and too little money."

Jack saw his friend was hungry, and ordered a substantial meal, which he was glad he had cash enough to pay for.

"I have not had such a good feed for many a long day," said Harry Marton with a sigh of regret that luncheon was at last over.

"It has been as bad as that?" said Jack.

"Yes, and occasionally I have had to starve for twelve hours. There is no man I have more pity for than the clerk out of work. He has to look respectable, or there is no chance of obtaining a situation; and when he gets work, his pay is miserably small. I assure you, Jack, I have tramped the city until I am sick of the whole thing. Nothing but refusals, even from men I knew when in my father's office. I wonder why parents are so anxious to bring up their children to respectable starvation. I have seen scores of good fellows dining off a piece of bread and a cup of tea, when a square meal would have been a Godsend to them. I think it is false pride in many cases; there's too much of the 'gentlemanly occupation' in this world."

"You speak from experience, I know very little about it," replied Jack, "but I can quite believe all you say. Tell me how you came to think of going to the colonies."

"Four or five years ago a man who hailed from Western Australia walked into our office. His name was Barry Tuxford, and he had been on the goldfields in that colony and made what he called a pile. He was a jovial, free and easy fellow, and he took a fancy to me. I showed him round town, and we had some very good times indeed. He got our firm to do some business for him, which panned out very well. When he returned he told me before he sailed, that if ever I wished to go out to Western Australia, I was to write to him to an address he gave me at Fremantle. I promised to do so, but at that time I never thought there was any chance of making use of him. I lost the address, but I remembered the man, and that the town was Fremantle, so I risked it and wrote to him there. A fortnight ago I received his reply. He wrote that it was lucky Barry Tuxford was well known, or he would never have received the letter. He was sorry to hear of my misfortunes, said he recollected our jaunts around town, and proposed I should join him out there. 'We can do with a few smart fellows like you,' he said, 'and if you have a mate you can bring him with you; so much the better.' He then went on to say if I decided to go to Fremantle, I must take his letter to the owners of the steamer 'Golden Land,' and they would give me a passage out."

"Very good of him," said Jack, "You will probably mend your fortunes in the company of such a man. What are you to do when you arrive there?"

"That is the funny part of the business. He wants me to go with his pearling schooner, and some other boats, to a place I think he calls Shark's Bay. I am to be a sort of supercargo and general hand, I suppose, but what the deuce can he expect me to know about pearls and pearl fishing?" said Harry Marton.

"A man like that will soon teach you your work, and it must be a jolly interesting occupation, although, of course, there will be plenty of roughing it," replied Jack. "I should not mind it in the least."

Harry Marton looked at his friend, noticed his spruce appearance, and smiled.

"I don't think it would suit you, Jack. It's different with me, a case of Hobson's choice. Where Shark's Bay is I have not the faintest idea."

"We'll hunt it up on the map."

"They haven't such a thing as an atlas at Carter's."

"There is no harm in asking," said Jack, and called the waiter.

"Hatlas, sir? No, sir, the gents as come here has no time to look at a hatlas. The only part of the earth they care about lies within a radius of a mile round Carter's. They may have seen a hatlas at school, sir, but, bless you, it would be so much waste paper here."

They laughed, and Harry Marton said—

"I thought as much; anyway, it matters little where Shark's Bay is. I have no doubt I shall eventually be landed, or stranded, there."

"I thought pearl fishing was about worked out in Australia," said Jack.

"It cannot be, or Barry Tuxford would not have a hand in it. He's far too cute to tackle anything that is worked out, or likely to be, while he is in it."

"He asked you to take a friend. Suppose I join you?"

"You!" exclaimed Harry, delighted. "You don't mean it, that would be too much of a good thing. The 'Golden Land' is not the sort of steamer you would care to travel in; there's none of the luxuries of a liner on her. She's a cargo boat."

"We were at the same school and that was good enough for us. Why should the same steamer not be equally suitable? I am looking forward to roughing it, and may as well commence with the 'Golden Land.' At any rate, it is worth risking in order to have your company."

"Of course, if you really mean it, I shall be very pleased, and the passage can easily be fixed up."

"When does she sail?" asked Jack.

"At the end of the month if she has a full cargo, which she is almost sure to have."

Jack thought of Lewes Races and his mount on Topsy Turvy. If the "Golden Land" did not sail until then he would not miss the chance of winning again.

"I am going to ride in a race at Lewes, one of Sir Lester Dyke's horses, and you must come down and see it. There may be a chance of winning a few pounds to help us on our way."

"I have seen your name in the paper," said Harry, "and often envied you. I wish I could ride well. It will be very useful to you in the colonies. I am afraid my funds will not allow of my travelling to Lewes."

"I'll see to that. If we go out to seek our fortunes together we will have one common purse."

Harry Marton shook his head as he replied—

"That will not be fair, for I have very little to put into it."

"Our combined capital will not be burdensome, but such as it is we ought to share it," replied Jack laughing.

"Well, I will leave it to you, only mind, I insist upon a correct account being kept so that I can repay you if I overdraw."

"Agreed," said Jack, smiling. "We will be as accurate as a bank."

"If you have really made up your mind we may as well walk round to the shipping office, and see whether we can go by the 'Golden Land.'"

The Captain of the "Golden Land" chanced to be in the office when they entered, and the manager introduced them. Captain Seagrave was a bluff hearty sailor of the old school, not given to oily words or polished language, but an able skipper, and his employers knew it would be hard to find a better man for their work.

He had made many voyages to Australia and other countries, and risked his life in ships that were anything but seaworthy. He eyed the two young men curiously, and a humorous smile spread over his face. He hardly thought them the class of passenger for a rough and tumble trip to Fremantle in the "Golden Land." At the same time, he saw a prospect, in their company, of the monotony of the voyage being broken. In reply to the manager he said—

"There's d—d little room on board for human beings; the accommodation is limited, and the bunks are not equal to the best shake-downs in a decent hotel. There's a tarnation lot of company in the ship sometimes, which we get rid of in the best way we can. The dining saloon, gents, is not on a par with an Atlantic liner's, but there's ample room for feeding, providing the sea's calm. When she's in motion, the 'Golden Land' lets you know it. If the firm's willing, I'll take you both, and I daresay we shall pass the time pleasantly enough. We shall know each other inside out before we reach Fremantle, I guess."

CHAPTER FOURTH

AN OLD TIME SKIPPER

Jack Redland decided to take a trip to Fremantle in the "Golden Land," and arranged for his passage before leaving the office; he was surprised at the low amount charged.

The manager watched them as they left with Captain Seagrave, and thought:

"You little know what you are in for. I would not make a trip to Australia in the 'Golden Land' for a hundred pounds, how the deuce Seagrave manages to get the old tub out there safely beats me. She'll go down for certain before long. I hope it will not be this trip."

Captain Seagrave was in a jovial frame of mind, and he liked his company. He admired pluck and knew his companions had plenty of it, or they would not have ventured on such a trip without asking a few more questions.

"What sort of a steamer is the 'Golden Land'?" asked Jack.

Job Seagrave smiled as he replied:

"She's not what you'd call a floating palace; every time I sail in her I fancy it will be her last voyage, but she holds well together, and I know how to handle her, although she has as many humours as a thoroughbred."

Jack laughed as he said—

"I judge from that remark you are fond of racing."

"Yes, my lad, I am, and not above winning a trifle, or losing it."

"I ride in races sometimes."

The skipper turned an admiring glance on him.

"You don't look much like a jockey," he replied.

"I am a gentleman rider. If you care to go down to Lewes the week before we sail you will see me win a race, I hope."

"Lewes!" exclaimed Seagrave, "that's funny, bless my soul, it's funny. I was born there, in that glorious town I first saw daylight, or gas-light."

"Well, this beats all," said Harry Marton, "it is a day of surprises."

"A fellow must be born somewhere," said the skipper, in an apologetic tone, at which they both laughed.

"Have you been there lately?" asked Jack.

"Not this trip. I was there about twelve months ago, at the races, and had a look round the old place, but very few people know me now. I remember I backed a horse called Topsy Turvy, because he belonged to Sir Lester Dyke. I knew his father, they are a grand old family."

"I rode the horse," said Jack, quietly.

"Belay, there," shouted Seagrave, as he came to a dead standstill and stared at him, much to the amusement of the passers by. "You rode him, well, of all the—curious things this beats cock fighting."

"And I am going to ride him again at the next meeting," said Jack.

"The shekels of Job Seagrave go on to that horse," said the skipper, "and listen to me, young man, if he wins we'll lay in a nice little stock of dainties for the voyage. The 'Golden Land' is not over well provisioned, my inside feels like a salt mine sometimes before we touch land."

"I am going to Brighton to-night," said Jack. "Will you come with me?"

"You mean it, my son?"

"I do, heartily welcome you will be, and you too, Harry."

Harry Marton declined, he had no intention of draining his friend's slender purse, and, moreover, he had a little affair of his own with a bright eyed girl he wished to attend to.

They parted at London Bridge, Jack and Captain Seagrave going by the Brighton train.

"Glorious country this," said the captain, when they had passed Gatwick and got into the open.

"I am proud of being a Sussex man. I have had some rare fun at Brighton and Shoreham in my young days. It was there I got my first taste of the sea, and I liked it so much I stuck to it, but I've done no good at it. You see I hadn't the chances some of these swell skippers had, but I made the most of what little I knew. I have been through the mill, I can tell you, right through the whole boiling lot, from cabin boy to skipper."

"All the more credit to you," replied Jack.

"That's as it may be, and as how folks think. It's not much to blow about being captain of a dodgasted old coffin like the 'Golden Land,' but it's a living and I like it. On land I feel lost, on board I am as right as a trivet. It strikes me as curious a smart young fellow like you wants to leave this country and go to such a hole as Freemantle. You'll soon be sick of it, take my advice and throw it up."

Jack Redland laughed, he liked his bluff, hearty companion, and told him the reason he was going away.

"That's it, is it?" said Captain Seagrave. "You want to make money and come back and give it your best girl. Mind you, I don't say that is not a laudable desire, but are you sure of the party in petticoats? I have never had much to do with 'em myself, except in a casual way, but what little I know about 'em makes me steer clear of such craft. They're dangerous and you never can tell when they 'bout ship and sail clear away from you. Mind you have her safely in dock before you go, and don't let her come out until you return."

Jack laughed heartily as he replied—

"If she does not wait for my return I must find someone else to share my fortune, if I make one."

The train pulled up with a jerk that threw Captain Seagrave forward.

"Bad steering," he said. "I wish I had the engine driver in my stoke hole, he'd learn better manners down there."

"Tickets, please," said the porter.

"Tell the driver of this train he——"

The porter banged the door to, and left the skipper fuming.

Arriving at Brighton they walked to Jack Redland's lodgings, and after tea sat on the balcony.

"You are well fixed up here," said Seagrave, "nice and comfortable I call it. Rum old place this, I often wonder what sort of a time those old dandies had in the Pavilion a century or more ago."

"Judging from what I have read, they must have been gay and festive," replied Jack. "They drank hard, and made love desperately then; we go about such things in a more decorous manner now."

"That's true, but is it a change for the better? Is secret debauchery an improvement on open profligacy?"

He was rather surprised to hear his companion talk in this strain, and said—

"You do not think the morals of the present generation are any better than they were in those days?"

"Not a bit, you've only to look at the papers to find that out. There is some fairly sultry reading in the Divorce Court cases."

"Granted," replied Jack, "but still I think on the whole we have become better mannered, and more circumspect, since the time of the Georges."

"Maybe, but with all the learning to be had at other people's expense, I don't think we have much to boast about. In my young days we had to learn to work almost before we learned to spell."

"It does not seem to have done you much harm."

"None at all, but I'd have been a tarnation sight more presentable if somebody had taken me in hand and licked me into shape."

"What sort of a place is Fremantle?" asked Jack, changing the subject.

"It's not much like Brighton," replied Captain Seagrave, laughing. "You'll find a vast difference, but there's worse places than Fremantle on the face of the globe. It's an old convict settlement, at the mouth of the Swan river, about a dozen miles from Perth. It's not one of the best of harbours, but I have never met with any mishap there. It has been improved a lot of late years. It will seem a very dull place to you, I am afraid. May I ask what you are going to do when you arrive there. It's not a good place to be stranded in."

"My friend, Harry Marton, is going out at the request of Barry Tuxford——" commenced Jack.

"Barry! well, I'm blest. Barry Tuxford, you'll be all right with him. There's no cleverer man than Barry in Western Australia, he can make money out of anything he touches. What do you think his latest move is?"

"Something out of the common," ventured Jack.

"Rather! He's revived the pearl fishing again, and what's more, he's had his usual luck.

"That is what he wants us for; I say us because he told Harry to take a friend out with him. We are going pearl fishing."

Captain Seagrave laughed.

"Barry will get the pearls and you will do the hard graft, but he will treat you fairly, he's a square man is Barry Tuxford. I reckon you'll go up to Shark's Bay and round that quarter, it is an outlandish place. I fancy life on a station would suit you best; anyway, I'd give it a chance if the pearling does not agree with you. They'll be glad to have a 'jackaroo' like you, who can ride, on any sheep station."

"What is a jackaroo?" said Jack.

"A new chum who wants to learn sheep farming; some of them pay a premium, but there is no occasion for that. You can work for nothing and learn a lot in a very short time. It's a rum life, but I have met many men who would not leave it for anything else. I suppose the great open country is to them like the sea to me, they feel lost without it."

"I shall make my way to Sydney if I cannot do anything in Western Australia. Caleb Kenley, who trains for Sir Lester Dyke, has a brother there, who is doing very well in the same line, and he says he will be very glad to see me."

"I'm sure he will, you are one of the right sort, Mr. Redland, and if you'll take an old salt's tip you'll quit pearl shelling and stick to horses."

Jack laughed as he replied—

"The one occupation is almost as risky as the other."

"But you are more likely to go under at pearling than at racing."

"There is no harm in trying the former. I can easily leave it if I wish."

"When we reach Fremantle I'll just put in a word for you both with Barry Tuxford. He's got a finger in a good many things, and I should not wonder if he dabbles in racing, there's a lot more of it than there used to be in Western Australia."

They went on to the parade and Captain Seagrave pointed out the many alterations that had been

made at Brighton since he was a boy. "All these fine houses at Hove have been put up since my time, and the sea had a lot more of its own way than it has now," he said. They went on to the old pier and listened to the band, and Captain Seagrave found his companion so much to his liking that he forgot all about the time. It suddenly occurred to him that he must make a move if he wished to be back in London that night.

Jack had not much difficulty in persuading him to stop, and when they returned to his room they sat up until the early hours of the morning talking over the forthcoming voyage.

When Captain Seagrave left Brighton, Jack set out for The Downs.

Sir Lester and Winifred were much amused at his description of Captain Seagrave, and his conversation.

"He knew your father," said Jack. "Strange, is it not, and also my chance meeting with Harry Marton? I am commencing to think all these happenings mean something in my favour."

"I am very glad you do not sail until after the Lewes meeting," said Sir Lester. "I want you to ride Topsy Turvy in the Welter. He's top weight, and there ought to be a fair price about him. I mean to put you a hundred on, just for luck, and if he wins it will be a small amount of capital for you to take out with you."

"I cannot accept it, indeed I cannot," said Jack.

"You must, my boy, just to please me. Remember you have ridden for me several times, and won races, and have always refused anything I offered you. Tell him, Win, he must allow me to have my own way on this occasion, he will take more notice of you."

"Of course you must, Jack, it will be very unkind of you if you do not. Besides, you have not won the race yet, although Caleb says it is a good thing for Topsy Turvy if you ride. Promise me you will do as my father wishes."

Jack had to give way before this combined attack, and acknowledged the money would be very useful, if he happened to win.

A change had come over Winifred since Jack Redland's decision to leave England. Her father noticed it and was troubled, after all she might be fonder of him than she cared to confess. What a pity it was Jack had to leave the country, but it was all for the best, and no doubt in time Winifred would grow accustomed to his absence. Had he been to blame for leaving them so much alone together? He thought not, for he liked Jack Redland, and knew he was an honourable, upright man, even if he had failed so far in life.

Jack remained at The Downs; there was always a room for him, and he was treated as one of the household. The place had been almost a home to him since his father died, and he felt he would regret leaving Sir Lester and Winifred more than anything else, the parting with them would be the most severe ordeal he would have to face.

Youth, however, is the time of hope and resolve, and he was sanguine of success. So far everything had turned out strangely in his favour, and there was no reason why it should not continue until his return.

CHAPTER FIFTH

TOPSY TURVY

Having completed the arrangements for his voyage, Jack Redland went to Lewes to ride Topsy Turvy in his final gallop. The horse went well, and he became exceedingly fond of his chance, so much so that he wrote to Harry Marton and advised him to put a little money on as he thought it was a pretty good thing.

"I am not, as a rule, over confident," he wrote, "but Topsy Turvy has done such splendid work that I really think, bar accident, there is not much risk, and I know I can ride as well as any of the other fellows."

Captain Seagrave had not many friends in London, but he imparted to his chief officer and engineer that Topsy Turvy was about the best thing he had ever heard of for the Southdown Welter.

"I don't mind telling you, Sam, we are in for a decent trip this time. We're going to have company, two smart young fellows, and one of 'em is going to ride the horse at Lewes. What do you think of that?"

"I'll back him, just for luck," replied Sam Slack, chief officer of the "Golden Land," "but if he doesn't win our passenger will hear of it during the voyage. We have none too much money to spare, as you are aware."

"Granted, Sam, but that is all the more reason why we ought to get a bit when we can."

Rufus Macdonald, chief engineer, was a canny Scot, but he had the bump of speculation strongly developed, and when the skipper gave him the tip he quietly said he'd think it over.

"The Sussex fortnight" is always pleasant, Lewes following after Brighton meeting.

At Brighton, on the breezy downs, Sir Lester won a couple of races, and as Topsy Turvy had no difficulty in beating these horses on the training track they were all sanguine of success.

Captain Seagrave came to Lewes, and Jack introduced him to Caleb Kenley.

"I have heard of you," said the trainer, "and am glad to meet you. The Lewes folk were very proud of you when you stood by the 'Northern Star' and rescued all her crew, at the risk of losing your ship and everyone in it. You see we did not forget you were born here, and I assure you we thought a lot of your bravery."

"I should have been a coward to leave them in the lurch; it was risky, but it's no more than one seaman ought to do for another," replied Seagrave.

"Men do not always act as you did, and I maintain you deserved a lot more credit than you received for that job."

"Seamen often risk their lives to save others, and no one hears anything about it. We consider it part of our ordinary work," replied the captain.

The trainer afterwards gave Jack Redland a full account of Captain Seagrave's action, and it enhanced his respect for the man, whom he already liked.

Lewes is a popular meeting, and there are several races for gentlemen riders. Jack, however, determined to accept no mounts, except on Topsy Turvy, although he had several offers. He intended to keep himself fresh for that event as so much depended upon it.

In the paddock he introduced Captain Seagrave to Sir Lester and Winifred, and the skipper at once divined this was the young lady Jack Redland had in view. He admired his choice, and Winifred's affable manner towards him increased his respect for Jack's judgment. Sir Lester was amused at the captain and thought that after all Jack was not far wrong in selecting the "Golden Land" to voyage in to Fremantle.

Topsy Turvy looked as fit as hands could make him, but he had top weight, and there were half a dozen good horses in the race. Speculation on the Welter, as a rule, was not extensive, but on this occasion the bookmakers fielded liberally, and the odds against Sir Lester's horse were five to one. At this remunerative figure he secured five hundred to a hundred on Jack's account, while Captain Seagrave plunged to the extent of a ten pound note, a reckless proceeding he had never been guilty of before.

He handled the note tenderly, and sighed as he gave it to the layer of odds, who plunged it with indifference into his capacious bag.

"He thinks no more of it than of a bit of waste-paper," thought the captain. "I wonder if the day will come when I can bundle ten pound notes into my pocket like that. If Topsy Turvy wins I shall have fifty to the good, and shall know what it is to be rich."

Bibury was favourite at even money, and as he had recently won a big race, the majority of backers fancied the race was good for him. Marco and The Duke were also well backed, as were all the others, seven runners appearing on the board.

The owner of Bibury, a clever amateur, was riding his horse, and he advised Sir Lester to back it.

"Topsy Turvy is a good horse," he said, "but I do not think he has much chance of giving the weight away to my fellow. I hear Jack Redland is going out to Australia. I'm sorry, he is a real good fellow."

"This will be his last mount in England for some years, I expect," replied Sir Lester, "but I hope to see him carry my colours again when he returns. You seem confident about Bibury; I may tell you my horse was never so well as he is at present, and he will give you a good race."

Winifred was talking to Jack as he prepared to mount. She was very anxious for him to win, as she knew the five hundred pounds would be very useful to him.

"You must win, Jack," she said. "It will be the last time I shall see you carry the old colours."

"I hope not," he replied cheerfully. "I do not mean to remain away for ever."

"But we cannot tell what may happen in the meantime," she said, rather sadly.

He got into the saddle, and bending down to her, said—

"You need have no fear of anything untoward happening. I shall always think of you wherever I am, and come back to you as soon as I can."

She watched him ride away, and said to herself—

"Poor Jack, I wish he would remain here. How I shall miss him."

Topsy Turvy dashed down the course, pulling double, and there was no mistaking the resolute

style in which he galloped.

"He's a beauty," muttered Captain Seagrave, "they are a well matched pair, how well he rides; bound to win I should say. I have another fiver, I may as well go the whole hog and risk it. Job Seagrave, you are a fool."

This time he had to be contented with four to one, and he grumbled at the price.

The bookmaker informed him the odds were good, and that if he did not like four's he could go without.

It was a pretty race, and the horses were all well together for the first mile, The Duke leading the field.

Jack knew the course well, the run in has a curious dip, not far from the winning post, and as Topsy Turvy possessed any amount of stamina it was here he would show to advantage. They had half a mile to go and the rider of the favourite went up level with The Duke, Jack keeping close behind on Sir Lester's horse.

Captain Seagrave enjoyed racing, but he was not a good judge of horses in running, and he fancied Topsy Turvy ought to be nearer the leaders. He had fifteen pounds on the race, and all he had left in his pocket was an odd sovereign and a few silver coins. He commenced to lecture himself on the follies of speculating and said he would have been much better off had he locked himself in his cabin, and did the same with his money in his locker.

"It will teach me a lesson," he said. "I'll never make another wager. I wish I had not come near the blessed course. It's not his fault, he thought the horse would win right enough, but——"

He stopped short as he caught sight of the black jacket and orange sleeves coming with a rush on the outside. His tone changed at once.

"He's going to win, by all that's wonderful he's winning. I wish I had more money on. Let me see. Fifty and twenty, that's seventy, not a bad little haul."

Bibury was still in the lead, and again the gallant skipper quaked in his shoes. He was far more excited than when he rescued the crew of the "Northern Star" in the midst of a raging sea. He was used to the howling of the winds and the roar and lashing of the waves, but the turmoil of the racecourse was new to him.

Winifred watched the finish eagerly, she wondered if Topsy Turvy would get up and beat the favourite. The dip was reached, and the stiff pinch began. Gradually Topsy Turvy drew nearer to Bibury and despite his weight held his own.

The excitement was intense. Captain Seagrave shouted, and the sound almost deafened the man standing next to him; he moved away, calling the skipper anything but polite names. This had no effect upon Job, who waved his arms frantically and cleared the space near him.

Nearer and nearer Topsy Turvy stole up to Bibury, until they were neck and neck, then came the supreme moment, when, for a second or two, the result hung in the balance.

It was all over—the black and orange went to the front, and Sir Lester's horse had won for the second time.

Jack Redland was glad it was over, he had seldom ridden a better, or harder race, for it had taken him all his time to beat Bibury. Thanks to Sir Lester he had won five hundred pounds, and in his present position it seemed like a fortune. He rode into the weighing enclosure and dismounted, Sir Lester and Winifred congratulating him on the result.

"It was a close shave," he said, as he came out of the weighing-room, with the saddle on his arm, "closer than anyone imagines. I had to ride my hardest to beat Bibury, he is a good horse. It was the dip at the finish did it, Topsy Turvy has more stamina than the other one."

"At any rate you won, and rode a capital race. Will you take that jacket out with you, it may come in useful, bring you good luck," said Sir Lester.

"It will be a delightful souvenir," said Jack.

"And I will work a forget-me-not on it if you wish," said Winifred.

"Do, please," answered Jack, "that will serve to remind me of many things in the dear old land."

Captain Seagrave was beside himself with delight. He drew his money, counting it over and over again to make sure it was right. Then he sought out Jack Redland and shook his arm with tremendous force.

"Seventy pounds. That's what I have won. Only think of it. My lad, we'll live in clover this trip, I tell you. Where's the horse, let me have a look at him."

"There he is," replied Jack, highly amused. "Mind he does not shiver your timbers with his heels, he has a nasty habit of lashing out."

Captain Seagrave patted the horse, and gazed at him admiringly, he thought Topsy Turvy the most beautiful creature he had ever seen; had he lost probably his interest in the animal would

have diminished considerably.

Harry Marton, in London, anxiously awaited the result of the race. He had put a couple of pounds on, more than he could well spare, and if he won he meant to obtain some necessary additions to his outfit.

He bought an evening paper, but it was too early, "all the winners" were not in yet. Later on he bought another, and put it in his pocket. He wanted to look at it where no one would observe him. He went down a side street off the Strand and turned into one of the gardens on the Embankment, where he sat down.

Slowly he drew the paper out of his pocket, and opened it. He read the result of the first race, then went down the list. "Ah, here it is!" he exclaimed. "Sir Lester Dyke's Topsy Turvy (Jack Redland)!" He waved the paper aloft, to the astonishment of two sedate old gentlemen near by. He had won ten pounds, and that meant much to him. He blessed the name of Topsy Turvy and wondered how Jack Redland had got on, and the skipper. Anyway, it was a downright good commencement, no doubt they would encounter many reverses in time to come, but they had started with a success and that meant a good deal.

There was nothing of the gambler about him. He had merely risked the money, on Jack's advice, and he had won. He had no inclination to try and make it into more by similar means. The "little bit on" had done him no harm, and the excitement had done him good.

Harry Marton knew what gambling meant in stocks and shares, and that this form of speculation was far more baneful than a small investment on a race. His father's downfall could be traced to the former, there was no danger of the son allowing himself to be snared in the same net. He would not have been much worse off had he lost his two pounds, he was far better off now he had won ten. It was with a light heart he went home that night and slept soundly, until the din of the traffic awoke him in the morning.

Captain Seagrave returned from Lewes, and went down to the "Golden Land," lying in the docks. He felt like a man who had conferred a benefit upon his fellows. There was a glow of satisfaction on his face as he stepped up the gangway on to the deck. It was ten o'clock, and everything seemed very quiet on board. He saw no one about and shouted in his familiar gruff tones. The cabin boy came along grinning.

"Where's the chief officer?" asked Captain Seagrave.

"Ashore, sir."

"Where's the chief engineer?"

"Ashore, sir."

"Where's the whole blessed crew, anyway?"

"Ashore, sir."

"Who the h—ll's left on the ship?"

"Me, sir."

Captain Seagrave seemed inclined to burst with wrath, he changed his mind and roared with laughter.

"So you are in charge, Billy?"

"Yes, sir."

"Any report to make?"

"Yes, sir."

"Out with it."

"Mr. Slack said he was very much obliged to you and that the whole blessed ship was topsy turvy."

"Oh, he said that did he, anything more?"

"Yes, sir."

"Full steam ahead."

"Mr. Macdonald said all his men had followed the advice he gave them, and you need not expect to see any of 'em for four and twenty hours."

"Go on, any further news," said Captain Seagrave.

"Please, sir, Mr. Macdonald said that if I kept to the craft, and looked out for you, he was sure you'd make it right with me when you came on board."

"The devil he did. I'm very much obliged to Mac, but he was quite right, here's a dollar for you."

The astonished lad gazed in awe at the skipper, the gift was so unexpected, so unusual, he could

not understand it. As he walked aft he muttered—"I'm blest if he ain't topsy turvy, too."

CHAPTER SIXTH

TAPPING

When Captain Seagrave appeared on deck next morning the first person he encountered was the chief officer.

Sam Slack looked decidedly seedy; there was an up-all-night and commenced-afresh-in-the-morning appearance about him. He lurched forward and saluted the skipper. "That was a fine tip, captain, a grand tip; I backed it, so did most of the men."

"When I came aboard last night I found the cabin boy in charge. Do you consider that the proper way in which to leave a ship?"

"The circumstances were exceptional; we made a night of it."

"Where's Mac?"

Sam Slack smiled as he replied—

"When I left him last night he was taking in sufficient Scotch to last him for a voyage; he'll turn up all right to-day, and we can do without him. I hope you had a good win."

Captain Seagrave was in a good humour. The seventy pounds he had won was safely locked up in his chest.

"I did all right, Sam. By Jove, young Redland can ride; it was a clinking race. I was in a deuce of a funk at one time, thought my money was gone, but he pulled through all right at the finish. I'll tell you what, Sam, we'll get in a few delicacies for the voyage. You'll go your share, I am sure."

"Certainly, but I only had five pounds on, and won twenty."

"A whole fiver! Where did it come from?"

"The office. I bled them; got a bit on account. It was like drawing a back tooth, but I managed it."

The skipper looked at him admiringly. He knew Sharp and Co. were not given to ostentatious displays of liberality.

"You are cleverer than I thought you were. How did you manage it?"

"Gave them your tip."

"You told Sharp I was backing Topsy Turvy?"

"I did. Moreover, I said you had persuaded Mac to follow your lead, and Sharp said if Mac thought it was worth a bit, he'd have a trifle on himself; and he did."

"Then Sharp ought to send us a couple of cases of whisky aboard. I'll ask him about it," said the skipper.

Later on in the day the chief engineer put in an appearance, and staggered into Captain Seagrave's cabin.

"Oh, it's you, is it, Mac?"

"Yes, it's me—what's left of me. You'll ruin the ship, Captain. It's not fair to the men; it's demoralising. I hope next time you get a tip you'll keep it to yourself."

"That's ungrateful. How much did you win?"

"Only a tenner. I had not sufficient faith in you to put on more than a couple of sovs."

Job Seagrave laughed. He got on very well with his officers and crew. They really liked the "old man" because he invariably stood by them, no matter what trouble they got into, or whether they were right or wrong.

A clerk from the shipping office came to the door of the cabin, and handed the captain a note. It advised him that the "Golden Land" must sail as soon as possible after the remainder of the cargo, which was to be delivered that day, was got on board.

"All serene," said Job. "But what about my passengers? They don't expect her to get away before next week."

"Then you'll have to hurry them up."

"How the deuce am I to find them?"

"That's not my business; you have your orders," said the clerk impudently. The office hands did not like the skipper; he was one too many for them.

"Are you running the ship, or am I?" roared Job.

"You have the honour to command the old tub, I believe."

"Then you clear out of it as soon as possible, or you'll travel down the gangway faster than you came. You shrivelled up young leek, how dare you cheek me!"

The clerk disappeared. He had experienced what the captain's temper was like before, and did not relish a repetition.

"The atmosphere feels cleaner now he's gone," growled Mac.

"We'll sail when we think proper, Mr. Macdonald, and I'm d——d if I am going without my passengers, Sharp or no Sharp."

Mar chuckled. He gloried in defying "the powers that be" ashore.

"Tell him we are short of coal. Inform Mr. Sharp that there is not sufficient grease on board to make a slide on the cabin floor, let alone to oil the engines. That ought to settle him."

"Mac," said the skipper, "we are going to have a decent trip. I am about to provision this ship in a lordly style. Will you stand in, it will be worth it?"

The chief engineer looked dubious.

"I had a very small win," he said. "But I'll lay in some of my special, and you're welcome to a share."

"Where's the crew?" asked Job, as he went on deck.

"Half in and half out. They keep turning up in small quantities; the bosun's just arrived in a hansom," laughed Slack.

"He's a credit to the ship. When the bosun can drive about in a hansom, there's no reason why the skipper should not have a carriage and pair."

"None at all; I'd like to see you in it, you'd fill it well," replied the chief officer with a smile.

"Stow your chaff; I'm going to board Sharp in the office. Mind you, I have forgiven you lubbers for deserting the ship last night, but don't let it occur again, or there'll be a concert on board."

"And very little harmony."

"That is so, Sam; you have a keen intelligence," replied Job.

He drove to the office of Sharp and Co. in a hansom, and entered the premises with a defiant air. The clerk who presented the letter on board, saw him, and fled to the rear of the building.

Abe Sharp was in his office, and as the skipper entered he asked him to be seated.

"Haven't time," said Job. "We're under sailing orders. Steam up, and we move out in two hours. Are the papers ready?"

Sharp knew his man. "You received my letter?" he asked.

"I did. That's the reason the funnel is already belching forth smoke. We're quick on the 'Golden Land,' a darned sight smarter than you are in this office."

"I am afraid your temper is ruffled," said Sharp.

"And so would yours be if a tadpole addressed you with the authority of a whale."

"Who is the tadpole?"

Job Seagrave named the offending clerk.

"He shall be reprimanded," said Sharp.

"Much good that will do him. Sack him."

"He's useful."

"Then I'm sorry for you. We have no use for things like that on the 'Golden Land.' Are the papers ready?"

"No, of course not."

"Then what the —— is the use of dragging me up here in a hurry."

"You are too sudden, captain. I hope you don't drive the 'Golden Land' at this rate."

Job Seagrave smiled as he replied—

"I'll tell you something in confidence, Mr. Sharp. I have made my will, and left a written confession behind me in safe hands. If the 'Golden Land' is submerged this trip you'll hear about it."

"She is perfectly seaworthy, and although an old boat, is by no means a bad one."

"Have you ever travelled in her?" asked the skipper.

"No, oh dear no!"

"Then try a voyage in her this time. There'll be room in the firm for another partner in a few weeks."

Abe Sharp laughed as he replied—

"You are in a joking humour this morning. I suppose it is the result of your good luck yesterday?"

"And what may you be pleased to call my good luck?"

"Sam Slack called here, and said you had gone to Lewes to back a horse."

"Did he now? That's kind of him, giving me away like that," said Job.

"It's no concern of mine, of course," said Sharp, "but I advise you to stick to your ship and leave horses alone."

"What are you going to put aboard out of your winnings?" asked Job.

"My winnings, what do you mean?" asked the astonished Sharp.

"You backed my tip, and it came off. I think we deserve a few odds and ends in the way of luxuries after that. As a rule, mind you, I say as a rule—this voyage may prove an exception—the 'Golden Land' is not exactly a floating Hotel Cecil. Perhaps you'll assist us in the cookery department, and I may say that the wine cellar is disgracefully under-stocked."

Abe Sharp laughed again. He, too, was in a good humour.

"I confess I had a trifle on that horse Slack named. Only a trifle, mind you. I'll see what can be done for you; but if steam is up, and you sail in two hours, I fear it will be impossible for me to accede to your request."

"Steam can be let off," said Job.

"What do you require on board?" asked Sharp.

"Most things; you can't go wrong whatever you send aboard, unless it be salt," said Job.

"You have never complained before about the provisions."

"Your memory is failing. I made one complaint five years ago, and said I'd let it stand good so that I need not be at the trouble of repeating myself."

"I understand; and let me tell you, Captain Seagrave, we are perfectly satisfied with you. Our firm never forgets the men who serve us well."

"I have been in your employ about twenty years," replied Job, "and if you have not forgotten me, I cannot say you have remembered me."

"You have had your salary raised," said Sharp.

"That has not hurt me. The rise was imperceptible."

"Really, I think you deserve some consideration. I'll mention the matter to the Board."

"We shall be half way to Australia then."

Abe Sharp was amused. He knew very well Captain Seagrave was underpaid; but he could do very little for him on his own initiative.

"You must sail as soon as possible. When can you leave?" he asked.

"When I get my two passengers on board. I have to find them first."

"That's awkward; but have you no idea where they are?"

"The young fellow who rode Topsy Turvy yesterday I can lay hands on pretty quick, and no doubt he'll find his chum."

Sharp was interested.

"Is Jack Redland going out with you?"

"Yes; I thought you knew."

"I was not in the office when he came with Marton. His father was a well known man in the city."

"Was he? Then the son does not take after him. He's a gentleman," said Job, who hated the city and the men in it.

Abe Sharp winced. He said sharply—

"I am busy now, Captain Seagrave; but I'll see about sending down to the ship."

"And when must we sail?"

"I'll have the papers ready for you to-morrow."

"Very well, I may not see you again. I always feel like that when I leave London in the 'Golden Land,'" said Job, with which parting shot he stalked out of the office.

He sent a telegram to Jack Redland to Brighton, and received a reply to the effect that he would be on board the next day.

"That's business," said Job as he read it.

He did not leave the ship again, and the following morning the chief officer put his head in at the door of his cabin and said—

"It's come, sir."

"What's come?" asked Job.

"The consignment from the office."

"Good lord, you don't say so. What is it?"

"Cases. Tinned stuff and bottled stuff."

Captain Seagrave went out to inspect.

Piled up on the deck were over a dozen cases, and his practised eye saw at a glance they were of the right sort.

"Any message with them?"

"None, except that they were sent with Mr. Sharp's compliments to Captain Seagrave. How did you work it?" asked Slack.

"I gave him a pretty lively half hour. I reckon he'll not be sorry when we are at sea. I told him I had made my will, and left a written statement behind as to the state of the 'Golden Land.'"

Sam Slack laughed heartily.

"How did he take it?" he asked.

"Solemnly, he didn't care for the medicine."

"And I got a fiver out of him. Skipper, something's going to happen. Sharp's been converted."

"Perhaps he has; but he'll be no credit to the sect he patronises. They'll have to lock up the collection boxes pretty quick."

The chief engineer walked solemnly round the cases as he saw them on deck.

"Where are these from?"

"The office."

"Is it rat poison?"

"No, it's a present from Sharp to the skipper."

Mac sat down; the blow was too much for him.

"A present from the office?" he said slowly. "You're certain it's not explosives?"

"She'll go down soon enough without any assistance of that kind," said the chief officer.

"Does he know about it?" and he pointed towards the captain's cabin.

"Oh, yes; he worked the oracle yesterday."

"He actually pumped some of the milk of human kindness into Sharp's wretched body?"

"That is so."

"Then I'll go and shake hands with him," said Mac, and went to the cabin. He stood looking at the skipper solemnly, and Job said—

"What is it, Mac?"

"I want to shake hands with you, captain. I'll consider it an honour."

The skipper held out his hand, wondering what it was all about.

"I congratulate you," said Mac. "I did not think any man breathing could have done it."

"Done what?" asked Job.

"Tapped Sharp," said Mac, as he walked quietly away, and Job Seagrave roared with laughter.

CHAPTER SEVENTH

WEATHERING THE STORM

The "Golden Land" started on her voyage to Fremantle with Jack Redland and Harry Marton installed on board in the most comfortable cabin in the ship.

"I'd have given you mine with pleasure," said Job, "but although it's pleasant and airy, it's difficult to manage. You want to know it thoroughly or you come to grief. In a rough sea you stand a good chance of being washed out if the door is left open, and you might forget to shut it."

Jack Redland said they were quite satisfied with their present quarters, and had no desire to turn the skipper or anyone else out.

He had bid a hurried farewell to Sir Lester and Winnie, and the parting was keener than he anticipated.

Left alone with the girl he was sorely tempted to ask her to be his wife, but he knew it would not be fair to bind her in any way. He saw by her face that she was deeply moved, and his heart beat high with hope. She might wait for him. She might be true to the unspoken love they both felt. If he made a fortune in a few years all might be well, but he knew he must hurry and leave no stone unturned if he meant to win her.

"Take this, Jack," she said, handing him a small miniature of herself, which her father had had painted not long before. "It will remind you of me in the distant land, and I hope, make you feel you have a friend whose thoughts are with you at all times."

"It is the greatest treasure I have," he said, and then, unable to control himself longer, he took her in his arms and kissed her. In another moment he was gone, hurrying from the house, almost afraid of what he had done; but as he turned round to wave farewell, he saw her standing there, both arms outstretched, as though she would call him back at the last moment. He knew he would never forget that picture or the kiss he had given her. Winnie was sorrowful, and yet happy. Jack had betrayed himself, and she knew he loved her.

"Poor Jack," she murmured, "I will wait for him until he returns, no matter how many years it may be."

She told her father, and he smiled. Jack was out of the way, and she might forget. He could afford to be generous; at the same time he sympathised with them, and had financial matters been other than they were, nothing would have pleased him better than to have the young man for his son-in-law.

"I gave him my miniature, I hope you do not mind," she said. "I wished him to have some remembrance of me."

"You did quite right; nothing could have pleased him more, and you can have another painted," he replied.

So the "Golden Land" steamed on her way, parting the lovers as the ocean has parted thousands for ages past.

Although an old boat, she acted fairly well, and was not quite so coffin-like as her skipper described her.

They coaled at Port Said, where Jack and his friend went ashore, to find the usual cosmopolitan crowd, as dirty and unclean as ever. They were not sorry to be on board again, and when they left the Red Sea behind and steamed out into the wide ocean, the refreshing breezes invigorated and put new life into them. The sea air seemed to tell of hope and fortune, and Harry Marton especially was not at all sorry he had left London far behind.

"We'll have a night ashore at Colombo, young men," said the skipper the day before they arrived at Ceylon. "There's plenty to see, and it will be a change for you; and it's our last port of call."

They were nothing loath, and when the ship entered the harbour she was quickly surrounded with all manner of small boats, of various shapes and sizes, manned by noisy shouting natives, clamouring for custom.

Job Seagrave was not long in putting things in order, and leaving the chief officer in charge, they were pulled ashore by a couple of villainous looking dark-skinned natives.

"A nice couple of niggers to row respectable white men," said Job.

One of the men grinned. He evidently had some idea of the nature of the remark.

"You look uglier than ever now," said Job. "Take my advice, and keep your smile for dark nights; it's far too powerful for daylight."

They walked through the bazaars and the skipper showed them most of the sights that were interesting. Everything was new to them: the bright coloured garments, the waving tropical trees, with their huge leaves, the almost naked natives and rickshaw runners. It was difficult to tell the women from the men. Outside the town swarms of dark-eyed naked children surrounded

them, clamouring for coins, no matter how small, and showering blessings upon their path, in quaint broken English, as they walked along.

They strolled about for the greater part of the night, and in the early morning returned to the ship.

"They turn night into day here," said Jack, "and no wonder, for it must be unpleasantly hot in the burning sun."

"You are right, it is," replied Job, "but you'll find it a lot hotter where you are going to, and if you tackle Barry Tuxford's pearling business you'll be as near to a certain place as it is possible to get in this world."

"A nice look-out, anyway," replied Jack, "but we shall not back down."

After leaving Colombo a couple of days there were signs of a storm, and Captain Seagrave knew what that meant in this latitude. Once he had given up all hope of saving the "Golden Land," but she pulled through, although it was a narrow squeak. He had no desire for another such experience. Anxiously he scanned the sky, and saw great black masses rolling and chasing each other like angry billows. There was a peculiar moaning sound in the air like spirits in torment; he had heard it before, and dreaded it. The heat was oppressive, and Jack thought the ship was as hot as an oven. He, too, watched the sky, but was not aware of the danger. He saw the skipper on the bridge and went towards it.

"There's something brewing up there," said Job shouting down to him.

"Rough weather, eh?"

"Yes, we're in for it."

"We have had no occasion to grumble so far," replied Jack, "and we can hardly expect to get through without some kind of a rough and tumble."

Blacker and blacker grew the clouds, and the roaring sound increased in volume.

"Better get below," roared Job, "or hold hard on to something."

Jack caught hold of the rail near him, and steadied himself. He had no intention of going below and was curiously anxious to see a storm at sea. As he looked up at Captain Seagrave, and saw his face, he felt there was a man who could be trusted, who would never lose his courage, and he commenced to understand why the "old tub" had weathered so many storms. The skipper might be a rough man, unpolished, but his heart was in the right place, his nerves true as steel, and the desire to do his duty strong within him. Such men as these, Jack thought, have made England the nation she is, and raised her merchant vessels and ocean steamers to the highest pitch. Ashore Captain Seagrave might cause smiles to cross the faces of men who were as mere pigmies compared to him now.

Suddenly the coming storm struck the ship. She staggered, quivered, groaned, swerved, then righted herself and plunged forward into the boiling, seething mass of water again.

Jack held on tight, for the wind howled and shrieked around him, and every timber seemed to creak and groan. Far ahead he saw Sam Slack gesticulating furiously at some of the crew; he wondered how he kept his legs with such a heaving, shivering mass beneath him. Sam, in his way, was quite as good a man as the skipper, although he was not born to control and lead like Job Seagrave. He obeyed any orders given him, no matter the danger involved in carrying them out, but he would have been afraid to give them on his own responsibility.

Jack watched him curiously, and then looked up at the bridge. Captain Seagrave was shouting through a trumpet to Slack, who heard him amidst all the din, and came towards him. Then there was a roar of words which were unintelligible to him, but which the chief officer understood, and hurried "foward" again. It seemed easy for him to walk the deck; Jack tried the experiment, but as he let go his hold the ship lurched; he fell heavily, and a huge wave washed him into the centre of the vessel. He was unhurt, and laughed at his experience, but had no desire to try it again. All through the night the wind howled, and the seas swirled round the "Golden Land," in huge angry masses. When Jack staggered on deck again next morning he saw Captain Seagrave at his post on the bridge, braving the still furious elements, fighting them until they were beaten.

"He's been there all night," said Sam Slack, as he shouted into Jack's ear; "you never catch our old man leaving the bridge in a gale like this. I'll be glad when we're out of it. So long as he sticks at it we stick at it for shame's sake. Mac's been down in the engine-room all night, and he's there yet. If strong language can keep his boilers going it'll be done. Mac's powerful in a storm, it kind of works him up, and he knows the engines are none too good, and want watching like babies. Where's your mate?"

"Down below. He's very bad; wishes he was ashore, I think," said Jack laughing.

Towards the afternoon the storm slackened, and Job Seagrave left the bridge. Jack followed him into his cabin.

"You have had a rough night's work," he said. "I can quite understand now why the 'Golden Land' has made so many safe passages."

Job smiled as he pulled off his oilskins.

"It was pretty rough, I acknowledge; but we have been in many worse things in our time. As for me being on the bridge, I would not leave the old tub in any other hands; they'd smash her for a certainty—don't know her as well as I do. We understand each other, and when I give my orders, she obeys. Sam's all right, a real good sort, but she'd not do for him what she will for me."

Mac came in, grimy, and mopping his face with a greasy rag.

"I told 'em to let me know when you'd come off the bridge," he said. "You'll be the death of me some day. It's hell down below, and every minute I'm afraid there'll be a burst up."

"Not with you in charge, Mac. I have been telling Mr. Redland the ship understands me better than any man on board, and it's the same with you and the engines."

"Yours is a cooler job than mine," growled Mac.

"I know you are always nice and warm," replied Job, "but think what an advantage it is in cold weather."

"We never run into cold weather," replied Mac with a grunt. "Why don't you take a trip to the Arctic regions to give us a chance of getting even with you?"

"I'll think it over," replied Job. "Meanwhile try this, it will do you good," and he poured out a stiff nip of whisky.

Mac drained it at a gulp, and his eyes glistened.

"One more will just about recompense me for a beastly night in the black hole," he said.

Job laughed and gave him another.

"Is this some of Sharp's stuff?" he asked.

"Yes, do you like it?"

"It's all right. Sharp is a much better man than I took him for; there's a probability of a rise all round when we get back."

During the remainder of the voyage the weather was glorious, and as they neared the coast of Australia, Jack and his friend were keeping a keen look-out for the promised land. The first sight of it was not prepossessing, it looked a barren uninviting coast line, but Job Seagrave told them, although it seemed inhospitable, there were plenty of grand places inland.

The "Golden Land" entered the harbour at Fremantle, and Jack and Harry felt a keen regret that the voyage was at an end. Throughout the trip everyone on board had done their best to make things pleasant, and to part with Captain Seagrave, Sam Slack and Rufus Macdonald, was like taking leave of old friends.

"You have no occasion to hurry," said Job. "Make the ship your home for a day or two longer if you like; you are quite welcome. But I expect it won't be long before we have Barry Tuxford on board. He's a quick man, is Barry, and when he hears we are in port he'll be down as soon as he can, no matter where he may be."

This was true enough, for the morning after they arrived at Fremantle he came on board. He recognised Harry Marton at once, and cast a sharp glance at Jack when he was introduced.

"They'll do, I fancy," he said to Job Seagrave, who stood by watching him with some amusement. He knew Barry's way of reckoning up people, and making up his mind on the spot.

"Yes, they'll do; mind they are not too good for you. They are clever, very clever, and far better than most of the men you get out here."

"I have had some good ones through my hands in my time," was the reply.

"Come and dine with us to-night," said Job. "We'll have a merry party on board, and it will serve to make you better acquainted. I have something important to tell you about one of these young men that will interest you very much indeed. You are fond of racing, and you'll be surprised when you hear my yarn."

"I like a bit of sport," replied Barry, "and I have a few good horses, but I don't let it interfere with my regular work, not if I know it."

"And what may be your regular work this trip?" asked Job.

Barry laughed as he replied—

"Fishing, my boy; fishing in deep waters, and what's more, finding 'em too."

"Finding what?" asked Job.

"Pearls, lovely pearls," replied Barry, "and I'll be back for dinner, skipper, and tell you all about it."

CHAPTER EIGHTH

BARRY TUXFORD

Barry Tuxford was one of those clever, shrewd colonials who can turn their hands to almost anything, and make it pay. He would tackle any business or job with no fear of failure, and in his time he had followed many occupations. A hard worker himself, he expected the men in his employ to follow his example, and he was not at all slow at reminding them of their faults, when they had any that particularly annoyed him. He had travelled in many parts of Australia and seen life on the gold fields when the miners' camps were rough and dangerous, and men sought for the precious metal with their lives in their hands. He had tried station life, and found it too slow, accordingly he changed it, and took an hotel in a mining township. Here, much to his credit be it said, he held his own, conducted his house as respectably and orderly as could be expected in a community where customers pitched nuggets into a bucket in payment for "quenchers," and where the women caused even more trouble than the miners. The police respected Barry, and he was wise enough to keep in their good books. He had a bullet wound in his arm, caused by a shot from an angry miner, at close quarters, across his counter; but he made light of it at the time, and went on with his business without interruption. His coolness and courage were unquestionable, and he might have been in more than one big thing in his time had his restless spirit not led him to seek new sources of labour.

Barry Tuxford had money; how much no one ventured to surmise, for it was difficult to reckon him up financially, he had a finger in so many pies. He could not have summed up his financial position in a few hours, it would take him months. His wealth fluctuated according as the enterprises in which he was engaged panned out, but he seldom lost much over his ventures, and was generally considered a lucky man. All his life he was of an uncertain age—he might be anything from forty to fifty, or more—he had fought for his own hand, and if the cards favoured him, so much the better. As a lad he had been turned loose in a mining camp when his mother died, and his father was shot in a brawl. At this time he was twelve years old, and knew as much almost as a man of twenty. Miners are a rough lot, but the majority of them are straight goers, and dislike bouncers and blackguards. They are also generous when their luck is in. Young Barry Tuxford was popular; his misfortunes touched the right chord in many a rough nature, and he lived a merry life in the camp for some years. He managed to secure a claim in a new rush, and it turned out fairly well. He sold it for a considerable sum and cleared out of Victoria to Western Australia. It was one of the peculiar characteristics of Barry Tuxford that at this time he should have made his way to a colony about which very little was known, and that little anything but encouraging. Advice was given him to go to New South Wales, as it was a prosperous colony, while Western Australia was a desert sparsely populated. His reply was that he preferred the desert as there would be more room for him, and not so much chance of being crowded out. He had some difficulty in reaching Perth, and when he arrived there was so disgusted at his prospects that he shipped with a pearler to Batavia, and from there eventually found his way to North-West Australia, and on to the Lacepede Islands, where there was such an abundance of green turtle that he wondered if anything else managed to live in the place. This pearl shelling expedition was not a success, so far as he was concerned; but he had never forgotten his experiences, or the probabilities held out if a rich lot of shell could be discovered. For many years after his return to Perth he was too much occupied to put to any practical use these experiences of his early days, until a chance meeting decided him to try pearl fishing again on his own account. One Jacob Rank, a man Barry had known in Victoria, informed him that good pearls were to be had in a large bay some five hundred miles to the north of Fremantle. How he came by his knowledge he imparted to him, and as it was a question of his having the money and his informant none, he made very good terms. Unfortunately, Jacob Rank was drowned on the first trip of the pearling boats, and the men who accompanied him declared on their return that the whole thing was a hoax, and that there was no pearl shell in the bay.

Barry Tuxford paid them off, but did not believe their story. He had his doubts as to how Jacob Rank came by his end, for they were a rough crew he had with him. He kept his suspicions and his opinion to himself, but he meant to have those pearls. Jacob Rank had no reason to give him false information; on the contrary, it was to the man's interests to deal fairly by him. He even had his doubts about Rank having been drowned, and thought it more than probable he had been deserted when absent from the schooner. The crew of the boats were only paid wages, and had no interest in the venture, so it was possible they determined to make the trip one of pleasure, and not toil, and accomplished this by leaving the leader of the expedition in the lurch. It was about this time Barry Tuxford received Harry Marton's letter, and it occurred to him he would be a useful, trustworthy representative to send out with a second fleet. It was not necessary he should know anything about the sailing of such vessels, all that would be required of him would be to see that everything was carried out in a satisfactory way. It was with this intention he wrote to him, and asked him to bring a chum if he wished. Two such men would be better than one.

When he saw Harry Marton and Jack on the "Golden Land," he was quite satisfied he had acted for the best. He at once took a fancy to them, and he was quick in his likes and dislikes. Captain Seagrave was an old friend, and he was ready enough to accept his invitation to dine on board, more especially as it would enable him to find out what manner of young men these were. The captain had so he said, "spread himself" in the matter of providing good entertainment for his visitor.

"It's well worth taking a little extra trouble over," he said, "and when a man has dined well he is generally in a good humour."

Barry Tuxford was a good talker. Most men of his experience are. They have much to tell, and it is generally interesting. Before dinner Captain Seagrave told his visitor how Jack had ridden Topsy Turvy at Lewes and wound up by saying—

"He's too good for pearl fishing, Barry. Take my advice, and let him manage and ride your horses, it will pay you well, and suit him better."

"He looks uncommon smart, and he shall have his choice, but if I'm a judge he'll want to try the pearling first; it will be a change for him. He's out here to make money, I suppose, and I shall give them both an interest in the affair. That will be a sufficient inducement to him to try his hand at it," said Barry. "If he cares to join me at racing when he returns I'll give him a look in, but he will not make much at that game."

After dinner Barry Tuxford placed his plans before them. He told them of his early adventures, and how Jacob Rank was supposed to have been drowned when the pearling vessels were in the bay.

"What I propose to do is to send two schooners to the place; you will be on one, Harry Marton on the other. You will be in charge, and I have found two reliable men who are willing to act under your orders. They are good seamen, and have made several voyages amongst the islands and elsewhere. You will be away about six months, perhaps more, and the schooners will be amply provisioned. There will be some roughish work, but I don't think you are the sort of men to shirk it. The divers are aborigines, and curious fellows to deal with. Most of them thieve when they have an opportunity, and this you will have to guard against. Some of them are treacherous, but I think I can pick a pretty even lot who will work well if you keep a strict watch over them. Both the skippers have had experience of this work, and know what is required. It is much cheaper to send these divers than to go in for more modern methods, and I am not at all sure it is not the better way of getting the shell. If you agree to go I will pay you so much a month, and you shall also have a share of the profits. That is fair, I think."

They agreed with his proposal, and Jack said—

"I may as well tell you I came out here with the intention of making a moderate fortune if possible. I have urgent reasons for doing so, and I feel that in meeting you the first move has been laid towards success. Captain Seagrave has told you I can ride, and I pride myself on being a good horseman. If that will be useful to me, I shall be glad of an opportunity to show what I can do."

"And you shall have it when you return. I have a few decent horses, but you can look them over and judge for yourself. If there is anything you fancy I will have him trained and got into first condition while you are away, then perhaps we can arrange for you to ride him in a race."

Jack's face showed his pleasure, and he said—

"I shall be delighted to ride for you, and I hope win. Is there much chance of making money here by speculating in mining shares?" he asked, changing the subject.

Barry Tuxford smiled as he replied—

"Mines are queer things to touch if you do not understand them, or have no means of acquiring special information. Occasionally I dabble in shares. I have done so this week in the Great Tom mine; I think it will pan out well. It's a pure speculation at present, but if they strike it rich, as I have every reason to believe they will, there's a lot of money to be made. The shares stand at a pound, and at that price they are worth buying."

Jack was silent for some minutes. It was a risk. He had five hundred pounds and a draft for two hundred his sister had given him.

"I wish I had some cash to put into it," said Sam Slack.

Barry laughed.

"I never knew a sailor to be overburdened with that commodity," he said.

"By jove, you are right," said Job, "it's the worst paid job a man can go in for. Look at me; here have I been in the line for how many years."

"Fifty!" interrupted Barry.

Job shook his fist at him.

"Half that, my boy; let us say half, and I have risen to be what?"

"Skipper of the beautiful modern steamer, the 'Golden Land,'" said Mac quietly.

"Yes, Mr. Macdonald, you have hit it; that's the truth. I am the captain of this most admirable craft, and I have every reason to believe I shall end my days on her—at the bottom of the sea," said Job.

"And yet with all its drawbacks and disadvantages I have never met a good sailor—like yourself,

skipper—who wishes to give up the sea," remarked Barry.

Jack had made up his mind.

"I have five hundred pounds, will you invest it for me in the Great Tom mine?" he said quietly, and as though it was a matter of small importance. Barry Tuxford regarded him curiously; this was a proposal he was not prepared for. The Great Tom mine was all very well in its way, but for a "new chum," with none too much cash, it was hardly the kind of investment to recommend, although he had faith in it.

"Five hundred is rather a large amount," he said. "I can get you the shares, but I think a hundred will be sufficient for you to risk. It is a mine that has not yet been fully worked, and the additional capital will no doubt enable the holders to prove its worth; yet there is such a thing as being over sanguine, also failure."

Harry Marton's experience of mining shares, as already stated, was not pleasant, and he strongly advised Jack not to risk so much.

"Take his advice, and buy a hundred," he said.

Jack Redland was, however, determined, and the sporting spirit in him roused. It was a big plunge, and he might lose the whole amount, but he made up his mind to take the risk.

"If you will purchase me five hundred shares I shall be much obliged," he said. "I am quite willing to take the risk, and I need hardly add I shall not blame you if I lose the lot. Something, however, tells me this will be a lucky deal, I am almost certain of it."

"You are a good plucked one!" exclaimed Barry admiringly, "and you will get on in our country. I'll do it for you, and I may add it is the exact number of shares I hold."

"Buy me fifty," said Captain Seagrave.

"And me ten," chimed in Sam.

"Now, Mac, how many do you want?" asked the captain.

Mac muttered something about fools and their money, and was understood to say he'd see the Great Tom mine somewhere before he'd sink coin in it.

Barry Tuxford agreed to purchase the shares desired, and said when Jack and Harry were prepared to leave Captain Seagrave's hospitable ship, he would put them up until the schooners were ready to sail.

As he went down the gangway he said to Jack—

"I believe you have done a good day's work. It would not surprise me if they struck it rich in the Great Tom mine before you come back from the fishing, and if they do, and the shares jump up, you can sell out or hold on as you think best. Good luck!"

CHAPTER NINTH

IN SHARK'S BAY

Parting with Captain Seagrave and his men was no easy matter, but in a few days farewells were exchanged and the new arrivals went to Barry Tuxford's house at Perth. Here they remained three or four weeks, while the schooners were being fitted out, and learned what their duties would be.

"You'll find pearls, I am sure," said Barry, "and I should not be at all surprised if you came across Jacob Rank. If he is alive, and you meet him, he'll be very useful, for he knows all about the place and you can tell him from me if he helps you I will not forget him."

Perth, in those days, did not strike them as a particularly desirable place to live in, but Barry Tuxford found it suited his purpose to remain there for the present.

The two schooners lay in the harbour at Fremantle, about a dozen miles from Perth, at the mouth of the Swan river, and Jack Redland frequently went on board to make himself acquainted with the vessels; he had more energy than his friend who was, however, Barry found, clever at figures, which suited him admirably. One of the vessels had been a trading schooner, and although not very clean or tempting to look at, seemed a seaworthy craft, the other was smaller but better fitted. Jack decided if his mate had no objection, to go in the larger one, and as this was easily arranged, he superintended her stores and general outfit.

The crews secured were a mixed lot, some few Dutchmen, and an odd Malay or two, but the skippers were rather decent fellows and he felt it would be easy to handle them. Most of the divers were to be secured in the neighbourhood of Shark's Bay, but half a dozen aboriginies were to go with them. These blacks had travelled in various schooners and were accustomed to the sea, moreover they were expert divers.

At last, everything was ready for the start, and Barry Tuxford came to see them sail. The name of the schooner Jack Redland took charge of was the "Heron," her skipper, Phil Danks, while Harry Marton's was called the "Wild Cat," and the skipper, Hake Moss, both men being well known to Barry.

The first trial for pearl shell was to be made in Shark's Bay, but it was farther to the north-west than the place indicated by Jacob Rank was to be found. The "Golden Land" had not yet cleared on her return voyage. As it was with some difficulty she obtained sufficient cargo, and Job Seagrave and his crew gave them a rousing send off as they passed.

"They are two smart little schooners," he said, "and I hope the boys will do well with them, we shall have a dull trip home without 'em, Sam."

Jack soon found the motion of the "Heron" was far different to that of the steamer, and for the first few days he was decidedly uncomfortable. It was arranged between the skippers that if the schooners were parted they were to make the best of their way to Shark's Bay. The weather was fine, with a cool refreshing breeze, and this was a happy augury for a successful trip. There seemed to be no difficulty with the men, and when complaints were made, Jack settled them in an amicable manner.

"It will not take us long to get to Shark's Bay if this wind holds," said Danks, as he and Jack stood on the deck watching the steady lash of the sea as the "Heron" cut swiftly through it; in the distance was the "Wild Cat," but she did not make such good way.

"The sooner we are there the better for all," was his reply, "some of these fellows may get a bit out of hand."

"Let 'em try it on," said Danks. "I've dealt with such fellows before, and got the best of it. When they do kick up a row they are devils, and a belaying pin is the best thing for them."

"I hope we shall manage without that," laughed Jack. "You have been to Shark's Bay before, have you not?"

"Yes, four times, we shall not find much there, and the pearls are not equal to those farther north. I have an idea where this bay Rank spoke of is, and if I am correct it's a likely spot."

"You knew Rank?"

"Yes, and I'm sorry if he's come to grief, but I think with Mr. Tuxford, it's more than likely we may find him there. Jacob Rank is not the sort of man to be badly left, and depend upon it if the crew he had with him got the better of him he would get out of their clutches somehow. There's not many men know more about pearling than Jacob, but he's awfully unlucky in some things, and never seems to make money. I'm not struck on pearl fishing, but Barry Tuxford is a liberal man, and I've done work for him before."

"In what line?" asked Jack.

"When he had a station up country he bred a lot of good horses and used to ship them from Fremantle to Singapore. I have run him more than one lot over; it's a rum game, but it pays well, always providing you have a good passage and not many of them die."

"You don't mean to say you have taken horses from Fremantle to Singapore on a schooner?" said Jack, surprised.

"I have, and over forty of them in one not much larger than this. I can tell you they were crowded in their stalls, and had a deuced bad time of it, but it's wonderful how soon they pick up when they get ashore."

Jack was interested, he could hardly believe it possible to cram forty horses into a schooner not much larger than the "Heron."

"You can imagine what it is like down below," said Danks; "when the heat beats down on the schooner, I tell you the atmosphere is not exactly pleasant. What we fear most is a dead calm, it kills the horses off quickly, and sometimes we run short of water. The sharks have a great feast when the poor brutes are heaved overboard."

"I should not like that job," said Jack.

"No, I don't suppose you would, and it is not to my taste, but there's a lot of money in it if you have a successful trip and that is what most of us are after."

"Quite right," said Jack. "It is what I am after at all events, and I want you to help me."

"I'll do all I can, but there's a heap of luck attached to pearl fishing," was the reply.

They were becalmed for a couple of days, and then, a fresh breeze springing up, they were soon near to Shark's Bay, and when they entered Jack Redland was surprised at its immense size, and at the wild almost uninhabited look of the land. There were very few houses to be seen, most of the fishers living in tents so as to be able to move near the fisheries.

"Well, what do you think of it?" Harry asked Jack as he came on board.

Jack looked glum as he replied, "I never saw a more uninviting spot and we seem to have the

place pretty much to ourselves."

"I hope we shall not have to stay here long," answered Harry, "it will give me the blues."

"You'll find it all right when the divers are at work, there'll be plenty of excitement for you then, but we are newcomers and some of the old hands here may turn a bit crusty. I think we had better go ashore and see how the land lies," said Danks.

It was evident the arrival of the two schooners had created some sensation amongst the dwellers in tents, for a small knot of men stood discussing them.

Jack, Harry and Phil Danks got into a boat and were pulled to the beach. A big powerful man came down to meet them, his looks were not friendly, and he seemed to be the boss of the others, who stood some distance away.

"He's Amos Hooker," said Danks, "and we must try and work our cards with him, he rules the roost here."

"It's you, Phil Danks, is it?" said Hooker, "and I see you've got company with you. There's not much for you to find here, and what little there is by rights belongs to us. We live here, and I'm damned if it's fair for you fellows to come and poach on our fishery."

"We have as much right to fish here as you have," retorted Phil Danks, "and what's more, we intend to try our luck. Be sensible, Amos, we can make it worth your while. If you care to live in this hole, I know you have very good reasons for keeping out of the way. There's one or two men down at Fremantle who would not be at all sorry to come across the man who cleared out with the 'Mary Hatchett.'"

Amos Hooker's eyes gleamed and he looked angrily at the speaker, but the blow struck home and Jack saw he was not quite so brave as he wished to appear.

"Who told you I was in the 'Mary Hatchett'; you can tell 'em from me it's a lie."

"Oh, no, it is not, so you had better be reasonable. There are several things you can do for us if you will, and you shall be well paid, if not in cash in kind, and when you hear who has fixed out these schooners you'll know he is not the man to forget you."

Amos Hooker had no relish for this situation. He was the best man at Shark's Bay amongst the fishers, and he felt if he gave way too easily his authority would be diminished. It would never do to give in without some show of bluster, so he said,

"If the Governor owned the schooners, you have no right to come here. What's become of that fool, Jacob Rank? We soon cleared him out, and a nice crew he had with him; I suppose you know he got left?"

"We heard he was drowned," said Danks.

Amos Hooker laughed as he replied,—

"Not him, the devils put him ashore in some bay in the North-West, and he's there now, if the natives have not made a meal off him."

This was good news to Jack and Danks, but they betrayed no surprise.

"Then we may find him when we go north," replied Phil.

"You are not going to stop here?" questioned Amos, eagerly.

"It all depends upon our luck, and how you and your mates behave."

"Leave the pearling alone and we shall not interfere."

"That's very likely," replied Phil, "we have not come five hundred miles for the benefit of our health."

"Then you mean to fish?"

"Yes, and you cannot stop us."

"We'll see about that when you start," replied Amos, but he spoke in such a tone that Phil Danks knew he had given in and was merely showing off before the men, who had drawn nearer.

"Come on board and talk it over," suggested Danks.

Amos turned to his mates and said,—

"I've received an invitation, boys, shall I accept it? You know Phil Danks, he wants me to board his schooner to talk about the fishing, shall I go?"

"Please yourself," answered one man, "but we don't want any interlopers here, it's hard enough to get a living as it is, without a lot of strangers coming along."

"I'll come," said Amos, and he stepped into the boat.

When they reached the "Heron," Amos Hooker looked around, and saw, from the appearance of the schooner and the crew that they meant business. He also recognised that the combined crews

would prove more than a match for the fishers of Shark's Bay. Evidently it was the best policy to secure any favours that were to be had.

"You did not tell me the name of the man who owns these schooners," he said.

"Barry Tuxford," replied Phil, who thought it better to deal with the man, as he knew more about the ways of these people than either Jack or Harry.

Amos Hooker seemed surprised as he replied,—

"He's gone in for pearling, that's rather out of his line, is it not? What is his little game?"

"His little game, as you call it, is pearls, and he means to have some, or rather we intend to find them for him. I am sure you will recognise the fact that it will be far better for you to help us than put obstacles in our way."

"He's a clever man, but he's made a mistake this time; there's precious few pearls to be found here now, and what we do get are not worth much, they are the wrong colour."

"Never mind about that, we will take our chance. What I wish to know is, will you stand by us and persuade your mates to be peaceable?"

"It's more than I can do without some recompense."

"I'll see to that, or rather these gentlemen will, and you can depend upon it you will be gainers and not losers," said Danks.

"Who told you about the 'Mary Hatchett'?" asked Amos, who had helped himself to liquor freely.

"That is of no importance, but I know the whole story, and it is lucky for you that you are at Shark's Bay and not at Fremantle; they would never think of looking for you here."

"And you will keep it dark?" asked Amos.

"Certainly, if you do as we wish, and keep your mates quiet."

"And what about the money?" said Amos, with a leer.

"You shall have ten pounds for yourself if it comes off," said Phil Danks.

"That's not much."

"It is plenty, and you are not entitled to any. You can easily concoct some yarn to please the others."

"Very well, I'll see about it, but I'm going to make a night of it here, I don't often get the chance. I suppose you have no objections?"

"None at all," said Jack, as Amos appealed to him. "You are quite welcome to anything we have on board."

CHAPTER TENTH

THE TWO BLACK DIVERS

Amos Hooker went ashore taking with him several bottles of spirits with which to propitiate the pearl fishers. The men were down on the beach to meet him, and the sight of the bottles put them in a good humour; it was not long before they emptied two or three, and then commenced to talk freely.

"Spent a jolly night on board, Amos?" asked one man.

"Yes, they are real good fellows, two new chums, and you can take my word for it they'll do us no harm with their fishing."

"We made up our minds last night there's to be no pearling here, or there'll be a row."

"Tom Case, you are a fool," replied Amos. "Let 'em try their luck, and it's long odds they find nothing. While they are messing about here we shall have a plentiful supply of liquor, food stuff, and tobacco from the schooners. They are well provisioned, and that will be a change, you'll allow."

"There's sense in that," said one of the men, "and as Amos says, it's long odds they pick up nothing. I say, leave 'em alone; what's your opinion, mates?"

"If we give them a free hand it will mean that others will come and expect the same treatment," said Case. "I vote we stop their little game as soon as they commence."

Tom Case was jealous of the position held by Amos Hooker, and this was his reason for holding out. He saw, however, that the prospect of fresh supplies was too great a temptation for them, and finally it was decided to permit the newcomers to try their luck without any interference.

This news Amos Hooker conveyed to the "Heron," and Jack handed him over ten pounds as a reward.

"We require some more divers," said Jack, "can you procure them for us?"

"How many do you want?"

"Six or seven; we have some of our own on board."

"I can get you them, but they are not very reliable. Still, if you treat them well I think they will be all right."

"We will deal liberally with them," said Jack, "providing they work well."

Amos Hooker saw a chance here. He had two black fellows who would do anything for him, and they were expert divers.

"Do you wish to take any of them with you when you go north, if they turn out well?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Jack, readily, "and they can be put in here on our return."

"Then I'll try and fix it up for you," said Amos.

The arrangements for sending out the boats with divers were soon completed, and while Amos was ashore they were at work in different parts of the bay.

Amos Hooker's two blacks were half civilised, and had been employed as divers for a long time. They were wonderfully clever, and could remain under water for a very long time. Through these men, Amos Hooker had secured many a good pearl that ought not to have fallen to his share. He had no scruples in robbing his mates by means of these divers who had been with him on the "Mary Hatchett" when he stole the schooner and made several voyages on his own account. He had treated them well, and although they were a couple of scoundrels they were afraid of him, and at the same time curiously attached to him. He seemed to exercise great influence over them, and they evidently understood one another. They were tall strong men, and capable of great endurance. When Amos Hooker seized the "Mary Hatchett" they stood by him, and had it not been for their support his plan for taking the schooner would have failed. There were ugly tales afloat about the "Mary Hatchett," and Kylis and Miah, the two blacks, could have told a terrible story had they chosen. The schooner was lost a few months after Amos Hooker secured her, and it was probably as well for him that such was the case.

He approached the men cautiously, and in a few words explained what was required of them. They spoke fairly good pigeon English, and it will be more understandable if properly translated.

"We are to go to sea in the schooners?" said Kylis, a curious name, which in some parts takes the place of boomerang.

"Yes, and you will have a good trip. There is plenty to eat and drink on board, and you will be well paid."

"We go as divers?" asked Miah.

"That is so; you are both clever at it."

"Are you going?" asked Kylis.

"No, of course not."

"I thought perhaps you might be in want of another schooner," grinned the black.

Amos cursed him, and bade him keep a guard on his tongue.

"We are to do something for you?" asked Miah, who knew very well "the boss" had some game of his own to play.

"You can help me and yourselves as well," he said. "These schooners are going north to some bay Jacob Rank discovered, and where he says there are many shells. This may be true, or it may not; in any case it matters very little to you, for you will be paid. If they find much shell there will be good pearls, and good pearls are rare, Kylis. I like good pearls."

The black showed his teeth in a broad grin; then he opened his mouth wide, showing a huge cavity. He closed it with a snap, made a show of swallowing something, and then rubbed his stomach.

"Quite so," said Amos. "You have swallowed pearls before, and can do it again, but on this trip you will have to adopt some other method of hiding them."

Miah grunted curiously, and then said—

"We can hide pearls, you can be sure of that."

"If they find you out you will have a bad time, so you had better be careful," said Amos. "Anyway, I suppose you will go?"

They both assented, and he said—

"If you find good pearls and bring them to me, I can get a price for them. You cannot do so, therefore it will be to your interests to hand them over to me."

They nodded, and understood perfectly well what he required of them. There were many ways of hiding pearls on a schooner, and expert divers had but little difficulty in concealing them.

The pearl fishing in Shark's Bay proved so unsatisfactory that Phil Danks strongly advised a move to the north-west.

"Hooker was about right," he said. "The place is worked out; we shall have no luck here, and it is a waste of time."

It was eventually decided, after a consultation, to clear out of Shark's Bay and make tracks for Jacob Rank's bay, where they hoped to find him, and many pearls as well.

This decision was communicated to Amos Hooker, who made it an excuse for not getting more than two divers to go with them.

"They are splendid fellows," he said, "you'll not find two better anywhere. Of course, they require watching, most of them do, but they work well, and are on the whole honest."

He brought Kyllis and Miah on board the "Heron," and Phil Danks liked the look of them, but was curious as to how they came to be at Shark's Bay with Hooker. He knew very well they were natives, who had seen a good deal of travelling, and was surprised at their knowledge of English.

Amos, in answer to his inquiries, gave a plausible account of how he came to find them, but did not state they were on the "Mary Hatchett" with him.

Terms were fixed, and the two men sailed on the "Heron." Amos Hooker, as he watched the schooners leave the bay, wondered what would be the result of the trip. If there was a rich haul he had no doubt he would come in for a share.

The position of Rank's Bay, as Phil Danks named it, was unknown to them, but they were determined to find it, and when such men as these skippers make up their minds to do a thing they generally succeed.

A week after leaving Shark's Bay they came across the entrance to what looked like a good sized harbour. On either side trees were growing, and it was an inviting place, providing the passage was safe. Phil Danks sent out a boat to take soundings, and on their return the man in charge reported there was plenty of water, but that the bottom was rocky and covered with coral. His opinion was that a big coral reef existed all along the coast, which at low tide would be dangerous.

Phil Danks agreed with him, and thought it would be the best plan to anchor outside the heads, and explore the bay in small boats.

Accordingly, the two skippers, with Jack and Harry, and half a dozen men, rowed towards the opening.

The sea was as clear as crystal, and at the bottom Jack Redland saw a sight that astonished him. The boat seemed to be gliding over the jagged tops of some great mountain range. They were rowing over a coral reef, and the splendour of the huge masses of grotesque shapes was dazzling. The movement of the water caused the most beautiful reflections, and almost every shade of rainbow hues was to be seen. Gorgeously coloured sea anemones clustered on the white coral, and strangely coloured fish darted in and out of their hiding places.

"What a wonderful sight!" said Jack.

"Yes, it's not a bad entrance, and there seems to be plenty of vegetation," said Phil.

"I was alluding to the coral bed," replied Jack.

Phil Danks smiled as he replied—

"It is new to you, of course. I am not partial to coral reefs. I see the danger in them—not the beauty. If you were dashed on to one in a gale you would have a different opinion of them."

"I suppose they are dangerous," replied Jack.

"Yes, and treacherous. They tear the bottom out of a boat before you know where you are."

They passed safely through the narrow opening, and there burst upon them a strange sight. They were in a small bay, and round it were large trees sweeping down almost to the edge of the water. There was no sign of life, and yet the place seemed so home-like they could hardly believe it to be desolate.

"I have been up this coast a few times," said Hake Moss, "and never struck this place before. Have you, Phil?"

"Never," answered Danks, "and it's worth exploring. I vote we land over yonder and see what sort of a country it is."

He pointed across the bay to where the white beach shimmered in the blazing sunlight, and the trees drooped in graceful folds over it.

"There may be natives here," said Moss. "We must be cautious; they are treacherous beggars, especially when they have not seen much of white men."

They had their guns with them, and Phil, pointing to them, said, "We can easily frighten them off with a few shots."

"We must all keep together, at any rate," replied Moss. "The danger arises when there is any separation. I'll never forget in one of the South Sea Islands when I strolled away into the bush by myself. I had not been half an hour alone before I was surrounded by yelling savages. I made a bolt for it, but it was more by good luck than anything else I got back to the boat with nothing worse than a couple of spear wounds."

"This is different to the South Seas," said Phil; "but as you say, it is well to be cautious, for there is no telling what may happen. This cannot be Rank's Bay; there's no pearl shell in here."

"I wonder if we shall find the place," said Jack.

"We will find it if it is to be found," answered Phil, as the boat grated on the sand, and he sprang out, gun in hand. The others followed, and leaving a man in charge with instructions to keep a sharp look out, they walked up the sloping bank under the trees.

"There's a path here," said Moss, "and that's a sure sign natives hang about the place."

Jack Redland was looking across the bay, thinking what a glorious sight it was, when the sand on the opposite side seemed to be alive with a moving mass of living creatures. He gave an exclamation of surprise, and the others turned round to ascertain the cause.

"Look!" said Jack, pointing across. "What are those black masses moving about on the beach?"

"By jove, they are turtles!" exclaimed Moss. "We must get hold of some of them before we go back to the schooner. They are splendid eating and no doubt we shall find any amount of eggs."

Jack had tried turtle soup, and seen an occasional one in a London shop, but here was a swarm that fairly astonished him.

"Shall we follow the path or try for the turtle?" asked Moss.

"Turtle, by all means," laughed Jack.

"I'm rather curious about that path," was the reply.

"Hang the path! I agree with Mr. Redland. Let us go for the turtle," said Phil, as he walked towards the boat.

They followed him, and were sauntering leisurely down when a strange whirring, hissing sound was heard, and a shower of spears fell all round them. This was followed by loud cries, and savage yells, and a crashing in the bush behind them.

"Run for it!" yelled Moss, and they raced down the beach for the boat.

CHAPTER ELEVENTH

TURNING TURTLE AND AFTER

They had barely time to scramble into the boats and pull out into the bay before the savages dashed down to the edge of the beach waving their spears frantically. Some, more venturesome than others, plunged into the water and swam swiftly after the boats. There must have been at least a hundred, and a fierce looking lot they were. The men pulled hard and the boats were soon out of range of the spears, but it was a narrow escape.

"Let them have a dose of shot," said Moss.

Phil Danks levelled his gun at one of the swimmers and was about to fire, when Jack said, "Don't hit him, aim over his head, the noise will frighten them and it is time enough to kill when we are in danger."

"As you like," replied Phil, laughing, "but an odd nigger or two makes but little difference, and it would teach them not to interfere with white men in future."

He fired the gun, and the sound had a marvellous effect upon the blacks. Some of them dropped down on their knees on the beach, others turned and fled into the bush; as for the swimmer Phil had intended hitting, he dived and did not come up until he reached shallow water, when he scrambled out and ran after the others.

"It's strange they have never heard a gun fire before, this harbour is evidently unknown; we have discovered something during our trip, at any rate; I think we'll call it Redland Bay," said Phil.

Jack laughed, he thought it would be something to boast of on his return to England if a newly discovered harbour was named after him.

The blacks were evidently thoroughly frightened for they saw no more of them.

"It seems curious, they have no boats," said Hake Moss, "they can never have been out to sea. I expect always go round the place on land."

"They have canoes hidden somewhere, depend upon it," replied Phil. "There's plenty of fish here and they are generally clever fishermen."

The boats reached the farther side of the bay, and they spent a lively hour or two turning turtle. The huge ungainly creatures seemed to be too lazy to move, and their weight was enormous. Phil Danks said it was quite unusual to see them on the beach in the day time as they generally crawled out of the water at night. It was evidently a favourite breeding place, for the females were there in abundance, and thousands of eggs were to be found.

"The male turtle has more sense," said Phil, "I have never seen one out of the water."

To Jack Redland and his friend, the turning of turtle was a novel experience. Some of them were so heavy that it took their united efforts to throw them on their backs, and once in that position they were helpless. The silvery sand was soon covered with turned turtle, about fifty of them being at the mercy of their captors.

"What are we to do with the beggars?" asked Jack. "We cannot take the lot on board, it would swamp the boats."

"We will take as many as we require, and turn the remainder over again, if they are left on their backs, they will never get on their feet again, and will rot in the sun. Hundreds of them are destroyed in this way by natives and divers who seem to do it out of pure devilment."

"What a shame," said Harry Marton. "I say, Jack, some of our city aldermen would smack their lips over this sight."

"Yes, turtle is cheap enough here, whatever it may be in London," he replied laughing.

"See this fellow," said Danks, kicking one with his boot. "It's what they call a hawk bill, they are not fit to eat, but tortoise-shell is obtained from them and that makes them valuable. The others are green turtle. They are all right."

"How much do you think this one weighs?" asked Jack, pointing to a larger one than most of the others.

"It will not be far off three hundred pounds weight," answered Phil.

Jack gasped in astonishment, he had no idea they were so heavy.

"The bulk of them average at least a couple of hundred pounds I should say," remarked Hake Moss.

It was no easy matter to get them into the boats, but they succeeded after some difficulty, and the dinghies were almost level with the water.

"We had better put all the turtle in one dinghy and tow her back," said Jack.

"A good idea, we will," replied Phil, and they set to work again until the boat was filled, they then turned the other turtles over, and were about to row back to the schooners, when a screeching attracted their attention and they saw large flocks of birds hovering about the tops of the rocks.

"Melton birds and gulls," said Phil, "we may as well have some fresh eggs now we are about it; I reckon there'll be enough to satisfy a whole fleet over there," and he pointed to a long stretch of sand in which hundreds of them were settling.

It was a curious sight to see these thousands of birds on the sands, and they did not appear to be at all frightened of the visitors to their haunt. They got out of the dinghies again and walked towards them. On their approach a few of the birds rose and whirled around, uttering hoarse cries. But the greater number remained still on their nests, or walked slowly about amongst the stones.

Jack was amused at them, and as he walked, he had frequently to push them out of the way with his foot.

There were thousands of eggs, and they filled two large sacks with them, choosing those which were apparently freshly laid. It was not difficult to tell them as they were perfectly clean, and had a peculiar sticky feel, quite unlike the eggs that had been sat upon.

"Are the birds fit to eat?" asked Jack.

"Melton birds are not bad, the others are no good, a man must be fairly on the verge of starvation to tackle them," replied Moss.

"There does not appear to be much fear of starving here," laughed Jack.

"Perhaps not, but the diet would soon become monotonous," replied Harry.

It was time to return to the schooners, as they had been absent all day, and it was not advisable to leave them for a longtime. It was tedious work running out of the bay, and rather dangerous,

as the tide was much lower and here and there sharp pieces of coral stood out of the water. Had one of the boats struck on such a projection it would have speedily ripped open the bottom, or the side.

Phil Danks, however, was a careful steerer and navigated them into the open sea, the dinghy in tow having one or two narrow escapes.

When the blacks saw the boat load of turtle, they gave vent to their joy and danced about the deck.

"You'll see how they gorge themselves to-night," said Phil, "it is enough to make a man cry off turtle for ever to watch them."

"Then I propose we leave them to it," said Jack. "I do not want to spoil my appetite."

The cargo was hauled on board, and the schooners were soon under weigh, Harry Marton remaining on the "Heron" for the night.

There was very little breeze, and the movement was scarcely perceptible. It was a glorious night, the sun shining on the water and illuminating the coast line. The air was pure and cool, and as Jack Redland sat alone at the stern of the schooner, his thoughts commenced to wander to a far different scene thousands of miles away.

He wondered what Sir Lester and Winifred were doing, and what she would have thought of such an experience as he had just gone through. What a contrast it all was to the beautiful Sussex landscape over which he had so often looked from The Downs. Here he was on a pearling schooner, nearing the northernmost point of Australia, and yet his mind was very far away, and his memory lingered over the sights and sounds of Brighton, and the hum of the racecourse. Certainly he was dozing, yet he was half awake; he knew he was smoking, and that the wreaths from his pipe were curling away in the wake of the schooner, and yet he fancied he scented the smell of new mown hay, and in a dim sort of light saw banks covered with primroses and hedgerows budding green, the trees opening out their leaves, the birds nesting, others teaching their young to fly. It mattered not that primroses and new mown hay did not harmonise, it was what he felt and saw, jumbled together in a delightful tangle from which he made no effort to extricate himself.

Now he was on Lewes racecourse and felt the wind whistle past his face, and buzz in his ears, as he made a desperate effort to land Topsy Turvy first past the post. He heard the shouts of the crowd, the roar of the excited backers, and then the next moment he knew he had won, and Sir Lester was congratulating him, and better than all, Winifred was there, all smiles. He heard Job Seagrave's sonorous voice, and smiled in his half awake land of dreams.

He was sitting down on a primrose bank and a gypsy stood looking at him. He held out his hand and she read his fate, he was to claim his own at last. He saw a fair young girl with arms outstretched pleading for him to stay and not venture forth upon his mad quest. He felt her warm form as he pressed her to him, snatched a kiss, and hurried away.

His pipe dropped, and the noise startled him from his reverie. He sat up and looked around wonderingly, hardly realising his whereabouts. A moment ago he was in Sussex, now he was in reality coasting in North-West Australia, and the little schooner was making good headway.

It had been a pleasant enchantment while it lasted; we should be very lonely, very dissatisfied with the ordinary duties of life if we had no dreams.

He looked round and smiled as he saw Harry Marton and Phil Danks fast asleep in their comfortable chairs. Let them sleep on, he was contented with his little romance, he would go through it all over again now he was wide awake.

What if this pearling venture turned out a failure? It was merely a start, the first step on the voyage to wealth and Winifred. If it was not a success he would lose nothing, except time, and that was precious; he could not ask her to wait too long, he had not asked her at all, at least not in words. He must hustle, as an American friend told him, if he meant to get ahead of his fellow men. He smiled as he thought it would be a difficult job to make Phil Danks hustle, the skipper of the "Heron" was a man who made time his slave, not his master, and he looked contented on it.

Pearls; he would at any rate secure some for Winifred even if he had none for himself. He remembered she was fond of pearls, and had a very old chain of them left her by her grandmother. If he had his will the depths of the sea should give up pearls of great price for her gratification, and he would send her them as a token he had not forgotten her. That was a good idea, the first fine pearls he had as his share of the venture should be sent direct to her. Would it look like bribery, a gift to induce her to wait for him, and not regard offers from others with favour? He thought not, she would understand her old playmate wished to prove he was loyal, and would be glad he remembered she loved pearls.

But the pearls were as yet at the bottom of the sea, and he was on the schooner, and they were dawdling along at a very slow pace, quite in keeping with their aldermanic repast on Redland Bay turtle. If he did nothing else the name of that bay would abide for ever as a memory of his trip to the land of chances and dashed hopes.

There was the Great Tom mine, he wondered how that had turned out. Sir Lester's five hundred

was sunk in it, he hoped it would bring him luck. Supposing the shares went up to two pounds, that would be a thousand, and he had heard that a great financier once said any man ought to be able to make a fortune with a capital of a thousand pounds. Then he suddenly recollected that same financier, who had made millions, came to a terrible end, the only way out of his trouble being death by his own hand. It was not an alluring prospect after all, this amassing of wealth, there must be something a good deal better in the world. He concluded a modest income with an abundance of domestic happiness would be more to his taste.

The Great Tom mine share might go up to three pounds, even four or five.

He commenced to reckon up what he would do with his money when he had sold out for five times the amount he had invested. He'd ask Barry Tuxford's advice, it was he who made the money for him, and it was only natural he should give him a wrinkle what to do with it. Then he remembered he and Harry Marton were to go halves; it was his own suggestion and he would stick to it, but if he made a fortune and Harry failed it would be rather rough on the lucky one. He laughed to himself as he pictured Harry Marton's dismay when he handed him over half his wealth, which he did not yet possess. Harry would refuse to take it, and there must be a compromise, but he was determined if he was successful his friend should also be a gainer.

The "Heron" sailed on in sight of the "Wild Cat," and Jack Redland, young and active, was full of hope and eager anticipation. The search for fortune is more enchanting, more enthralling, than the actual realisation, which, however successful it may prove is always insufficient to stave off the craving for more.

CHAPTER TWELFTH

JACOB'S YARN

"I shall be glad when we have done messing about here and set to work. We look like making a long trip; at this rate, we shall not be back at Fremantle under a twelve month," grumbled Phil.

"I'm tired of doing nothing," replied Jack, "and this is a slow way of making a fortune. We ought to be somewhere near the place by now."

"We may have slipped past it," replied Phil.

"And have to return," said Jack in dismay. "That will be shocking bad luck."

Another three days passed, and they seemed as far off their journey's end as ever, until next morning one of the men shouted out that there was a signal on a promontory jutting out into the sea.

They rushed to the fore part of the schooner, and looked eagerly at the spot. The man was right; there was a long pole with something waving at the top, evidently a signal to passing vessels.

"It may be a very old one," said Phil.

"Perhaps it is Jacob Rank's signal," replied Jack.

"Let us hope so; anyway, we will make for it. I wonder if they have seen it on board the 'Wild Cat?'"

The other schooner was some distance behind, and as Jack looked through his glasses he saw no sign of excitement on board.

"I do not think they have," he said, "but in any case they will follow in our track."

The "Heron" headed for the rock on which the signal was fixed, and as they drew near it they saw it was a projection of one side of the heads of a bay.

Their spirits rose, and Phil said—

"It's Jacob's Bay, I'll wager. It answers the description exactly. Look there; the rock jutting out bare and jagged, the other side of the channel wooded and sloping gradually down. The entrance narrow, the scene from the ocean exactly as he described it. Here we are at last, boys. Give a rousing cheer; let off a few guns, and if Rank is alive that will bring him out of his shell."

They cheered lustily, and Jack discharged the gun several times.

Harry Marton on the "Wild Cat" asked Moss the meaning of the commotion, and he replied "They must have found the place at last, and glad I am of it. We have had a long journey for nothing so far."

The "Heron" sailed steadily towards the entrance and as she passed the promontory they saw the flag at the top of the staff was made of an old shirt, or some such garment.

"It cannot have been there very long," said Phil, eyeing it through the glasses. "It has only recently been put up, so the probabilities are the man is alive."

The bay they entered was much larger than the former one, almost the size of Shark's Bay, and Phil expressed the opinion that it was a good place for pearl fishing.

Rounding the corner they saw a man who was on the look out, and he waved his arms furiously and danced about in great glee.

The schooner steered closer to the shore, and at last there came a loud shout from the solitary human being.

"By all that's wonderful, it's Jacob Rank," said Phil, and he waved back to him. "Let go the anchor, we'll row ashore," he said, excitedly.

A dinghy was soon in the water, and they scrambled in. In a very short time they were on the sand, and Phil was wringing Jacob's hand until there seemed to be a good chance of their arms coming off.

The excitement was too much for Rank, who sat down on the beach and almost wept for joy. When he became calmer he said—

"What in heaven's name brought you here, Phil?"

"The 'Heron,' and we were sent by Barry Tuxford. We have another schooner, the 'Wild Cat,' see, she is just entering the heads."

"And who is this young man?"

"Mr. Redland. He is in the venture with Harry Marton, who is on that schooner, and we are all in it with Barry."

"Then he did not believe I was dead?"

"No. The beggars said you were drowned, when they reached Fremantle, and that there was no pearl shell to be found, but Barry didn't cotton to that yarn, so he organised another expedition to find you and your boy, and here we are."

"And a precious long while you have been, it seems years since those scoundrels put me ashore here, but I'll get even with them one of these days."

The "Wild Cat" cast anchor close to the "Heron," and Harry and Hake Moss came ashore and heartily greeted Rank.

"I'll tell you what it is, before we get on to business, or anything else, I should like to go on board and have a decent meal. I have not starved here, but living on turtle, birds, and eggs, is a bit too much for me. I'd give anything for a decent bit of bread and something to wash it down," said Rank.

"Of course," quickly replied Jack. "Here we are standing talking and never thinking about you. Come along, we will row back at once."

Jacob eagerly got into the boat, and when he put his foot on board the "Heron" he gave a sigh of relief.

"To a man who has been stranded for weeks you have no idea how it feels to find yourself on a decent craft again. I have no ambition to be a second Crusoe."

Jacob enjoyed himself thoroughly, and they gave him of the best their stores could provide.

In the evening they were all anxious to hear how he came to be left in the bay, and what prospect there was of finding shells.

They sat round Jacob, who was nothing loath to satisfy their curiosity.

"It's a long story, but I'll cut it as short as possible," he said. "To begin at the beginning, when Barry Tuxford fitted me out for this job I rather fancy he had doubts as to whether I was 'kidding' him."

"You are mistaken," said Jack. "I can assure you he had, and still has, every confidence in you. I will tell you later on what he instructed us to do if we found you alive."

"I am glad to hear it," said Jacob. "It was a risky job for him to tackle, but he has plenty of pluck, and I told him the truth when I said I knew of a bay for pearl fishing that was equal to Shark's Bay in its best days. Of course he had only my bare word for it, but he's not like other men, and he generally reckons things up pretty correct."

"I got together what I thought was a decent crew, but a bigger set of scoundrels never set foot in a schooner. They were loafers, every man jack of them, and had come out with the intention of having a pleasure trip. When we reached here I saw there was trouble brewing, but I didn't think they would go as far as to leave me in the lurch. I could do nothing against the lot of them, and they put me ashore and left me to my fate, curse them. They said if the bay was full of pearl shell I might have the lot, it would be a fine fortune for me. The divers would have stuck to me, but they frightened the poor devils into submission, and the Lord knows what they did with them, put them ashore somewhere, I expect."

"I was mad with rage when I saw the schooner sail away, but I made up my mind to live through

it if possible. I had an idea Barry Tuxford would not let the matter rest. If the schooner did not return he would send out to search for her, if she returned without me, and the crew concocted some cock and bull story, I doubted if he would believe them. It seems I was correct.

"For the first week or two I felt desperate. The loneliness oppressed me, I thought I should go mad. I walked for miles, shouting at the top my voice until I was exhausted. I meant making someone hear, even if it turned out to be savages. I believe in those days I would willingly have walked into the midst of a cannibal camp and taken my chance. Not a soul did I see, black or white, nor have I seen anyone until you came here."

"We saw the signal," said Phil. "I wonder no passing schooner observed it before."

"There are very few boats come in close enough for that," said Jacob. "This is a lonely, almost unknown part of the coast, and it is dangerous in rough weather. That signal pole was blown down a dozen times, I think, and I only fixed it up again a couple of days ago. It is lucky for me you saw it, lucky for all of you, too, as I will tell you.

"I found out this place once when I had been cruising around King's Sound, Roebuck Bay, and such like places. We happened on it quite accidentally. I was keeping a sharp look out and noticed the promontory at the far side of the channel. I had never sailed so near the coast before in these parts, and it struck me there might be a large bay beyond. The crew thought I had taken leave of my senses when I steered for the rock, but they had faith in me and had sailed with me several times. They were surprised to find such a bay as this, but they little knew my object in entering it. In the old days, at Cossack, I had heard an old pearler speak of a wonderful bay where there was heaps of shell that had never been touched. He described the place to me and I asked him why he had not tried it himself. He said he was too old, that he had sufficient to live on, and did not mean to worry about anything. He told me if ever I was near the northern part of Australia to try and find it, and gave me to understand it was north-west of Western Australia. When I saw the big rock at the entrance to the bay I recollected what he had said.

"I am an expert diver myself and have remained down below almost as long as the best of the Malays. At night I cautiously went down in the bay and felt about. There were hundreds of shells, big and little, and I felt certain I had struck a fortune if properly handled. I had to be very careful, as I did not wish the crew to know what I was after. I gave them a rest, and they all went ashore to have some sport, and find turtle. When I was alone, I lost no time in going down again, and groped about the bottom until I found some shells. With these I came up to the surface, almost exhausted, but I managed to get on board. I got a large butcher's knife and opened the first shell, and eagerly examined it for pearls. There was nothing in, but the pearl shell was excellent. In the next I had better luck, for I found two good sized pearls of rich colour, they were loose in the shell, and rolled out when I opened it, which does not often happen.

"I waited until I recovered my strength, and went down again. I brought up two more, in one of them was a big blister, and in it I found a pearl I afterwards sold in Fremantle for over fifty pounds. I knew I had struck it rich, and that if I had the capital there was a heap of money to be made. Since I have been stranded here I have tried various parts of the bay, and I give it you, as my candid opinion, that there is no pearl fishery on the coast to be compared to it. The whole bay is, I think, covered with shells, and I have very little doubt many pearls of great value will be found there. I know where the best spots are, for I have been swimming about and diving all over the place. I can assure you, Barry Tuxford and all of you will be well satisfied with the result."

Jack Redland's heart beat high with hope as he listened to Jacob Rank's story, and even Phil Danks and Hake Moss, who were accustomed to hearing far fetched yarns, knew that Jacob did not speak without the book, or talk at random.

Jack was the first to speak, and thanked Jacob for his interesting story. He then told him that Barry Tuxford had empowered them to give him his fair share in whatever they might find, and that he was to tell him he need have no fear on that head.

"You must work in with us," said Jack, "and I am perfectly certain you will be satisfied."

"Barry Tuxford's word is always reliable," said Jacob. "He has faith in me, and I have faith in him. How many divers have you?"

"Twenty," replied Jack.

"We ought to have more. The best plan will be, however, to do the best we can with them, and not send one of the schooners to look for more. If we do that we shall lose time, and sufficient has been wasted already."

"I quite agree with you," said Jack, "we must get to work at once."

"Where do you hail from?" asked Jacob.

"England, have you been there?"

"No, but my father was a fisherman at Brighton, before he came out to Western Australia, many years ago."

"Brighton!" exclaimed Jack. "That is strange. I was living at Brighton when I made up my mind to try my fortunes out here. I know Sussex well, and my best friends live in that county."

"It's marvellous," said Jacob. "Here we are in an unknown spot on the coast of Australia, and we both hail from the same place. Give me your hand, sir, we'll shake on it, and on the success of this trip."

"With all my heart," said Jack, and amidst general hilarity they clasped hands.

CHAPTER THIRTEENTH

THE DIVERS AT WORK

It was arranged that Jacob Rank should have charge of the divers and superintend their work, as he knew more about it than any of the others. Accordingly the men were mustered on the "Heron" and he inspected them. When he came to Kylis and Miah, the two blacks from Shark's Bay, he looked keenly at them, but they bore the scrutiny well, although they knew Jacob, and had seen him at the Bay.

"What do you think of them?" asked Jack. "Will they do?"

"We shall have to make the best of them," said Jacob. "I prefer Malays, but I have no doubt we can get along with these fellows. Where did you pick the two big men up, they seem in a different class to the others?"

"When we put into Shark's Bay, there seemed some likelihood of trouble arising with the fishermen there, and Phil Danks tried to square matters with Amos Hooker."

"Amos Hooker!" exclaimed Rank, "he is a bad lot."

"That is probable, anyway he pacified the men and we tried the bay, but Phil said it was no good our stopping there, as it was about worked out."

"So it is, he's quite right."

"We asked Hooker if he could get us any good divers, and he said it was possible, and he would do his best. As we decided to leave earlier than was expected, he said he could only provide us with two, and they are the men you alluded to," said Jack.

"Amos Hooker supplied them," said Jacob. "I thought I had seen them before, it must have been at Shark's Bay. I wonder why he sent them on board. For some purpose of his own, no doubt, probably to spy out the land. I'll keep a strict watch on them, and if they show any signs of insubordination, they'll get left like I was."

"Manage them in your own way, I leave it entirely in your hands," replied Jack.

Early next morning four dinghies, with five divers in each, in charge of Jacob, the two skippers, and Jack Redland were rowed to a spot indicated by Rank, about half way across the bay.

Jack was eager to see how the divers accomplished their work. Rank had the two men from Shark's Bay, and three others in his dinghy, and his lot were the first to go down. The divers stood on the gunwale of the boats, dropped into the water feet foremost, then turned and swam to the bottom.

Jack's dinghy was some distance away, and the five divers in his boat waited for his orders. He pointed to the other dinghies, and by signs indicated they should go down at once. One by one they disappeared overboard, and he watched them swim down until they were out of sight. He wondered how long they would remain down, and when they would come up. He rowed the dinghy about, and waited. They seemed an incredibly long time under water, and he became uneasy, he did not know the length of time some of these divers remained below.

At last a head bobbed up close to the boat, and a hand grasped the gunwale. Four more heads appeared almost immediately, and Jack rowed the boat to them. Each man had shells which he dropped into the dinghy, and then drew himself out of the water.

After resting for a few minutes, they went down again, and this diving was repeated throughout the day until the dinghies contained a large quantity of shells.

At a given signal from Jacob Rank, they rowed back to the ship, and Jack was rather surprised the divers seemed none the worse for their exertion.

The shells were handed on board and piled up ready for opening, and then Harry Marton, who had remained on the "Heron," reported supper was ready. There was a general rush, as they were all very hungry after the day's fast, for it was useless to take any food in the dinghies, as it would have been spoilt with the constant wet from the divers bodies, and also the shells.

Jacob Rank was quite satisfied with the day's work as he looked at the pile of shells on board the "Heron." They had only twenty divers and it was evident they had seldom come up empty handed, or the heaps would not have been so large.

"We'll start at opening them first thing in the morning," said Jacob. "You must all take a hand in

it, we never allow the divers to open the shells."

"I fear I shall make a mess of it," said Jack.

"You will soon get into it," replied Jacob. "It's just like opening a large oyster."

"And how do you find the pearls?" asked Jack.

"You'll soon find a pearl if there is one in the shell," replied Jacob. "Sometimes they are loose, not often, again you may find them in big blisters, but, as a rule, you can see them embedded in the shell, where they look like pimples on the surface. You must keep an exact account of all we find, so that a proper division can be made."

"My friend, Harry Marton, will attend to that," said Jack, "it is more in his line."

"It matters very little who does it as long as it is done," replied Jacob.

They were all tired out with the day's work, and slept soundly until aroused by Jacob Rank. Each man was provided with a large knife, and Jack admired the dexterity with which Jacob severed the muscle of the mollusc when the shell opened, and with the rapidity of a London oyster opener, he sliced the fish out of the shell. This being done, the next thing was to look for pearls.

Jack Redland was clumsy at first, but quickly got into the way of opening and cleaning the shells, and he felt a strange thrill of excitement as he looked for his first pearl.

It was an old worm eaten encrusted shell he held in his hand, and in it he saw a blister about the size of a penny piece. He was about to smash it when Jacob called out—

"Don't do that; if there is a pearl inside you'll damage it, perhaps crush it to bits. Leave the shell on one side and try another. I will show you how to tap a blister later on."

Jack placed it on one side and forced open another shell, it took him some considerable time, and when his knife slipped, the gaping shell closed sharply and nearly caught his fingers. He forced it again and cut out the fish, as he did so a pearl, the size of a pea, dropped out and he picked it up, at the same time expressing his feelings in a joyful exclamation. The others looked up, and he held it out to Jacob, who examined it carefully.

"Straw coloured," he said, "there are plenty of them, but this is well shaped, it is not a bad pearl at all, I daresay it would bring a tenner."

"A little thing like that!" said Jack.

"Yes, and if it was perfect and a better colour it would be worth a lot more. Try again," said Jacob, as he handed the pearl back to him.

There were pearls of different sizes in nearly every shell, and Phil Danks knew Jacob Rank was not far out when he proclaimed this bay the richest pearl fishery in Australia. Danks had opened hundreds of shells in his time, but he had never seen such beautiful mother of pearl, or so many seeds in the same number of shells.

They continued opening until the last lot was finished, and as Jacob looked at the shell and the pearls, he said, "That's a good day's work for a start, but we shall find a few gems before we have done. Did you ever see richer shell, or a larger number of pearls out of such a take, Phil?"

"No," replied Danks. "I call it marvellous."

Jack Redland was astonished. On the deck lay a pile of glittering shell, dazzling almost to blinding in the sunlight, it recalled to mind a glimpse of a fairy grotto he had once seen in a pantomime. Jacob threw a bucket of water over the heap and the shells reflected a myriad of sparkling lights which danced and flickered in a bewildering manner. From this sight, Jack turned to the small bowl of pearls, and commenced to speculate how many they would get before they cleared out of the bay.

The shells and the pearls were carefully stored, and work commenced again for the day. Harry Marton remained in charge of the schooners, which were anchored alongside, and had with him the cooks and the cabin boys, all the others being left in the dinghies.

They returned at night with a better take than before, and many of the shells were of a considerable age, as could be seen by the encrustations upon the outer surface.

Jacob Rank had so far no cause to complain of Kylis and Miah. They were the best divers out of the lot and always came back with shells. They worked hard, and yet there was something about them he could not quite understand. He noticed they were always together, and kept apart from the other divers, as though considering themselves superior. He kept his thoughts to himself, but he fancied he saw some trouble brewing, although he could not define in what direction.

The day had been very hot, and the white men who had sat in the boats under the blazing sun, were tired out.

Kylis and Miah, however, were wide awake, and seated in earnest conversation at the stern of the schooner.

"This is the richest pearl fishing I ever saw," said Kylis, speaking in his native tongue.

"The whole bay is covered with shell," replied Miah. "It does not seem fair these white men should have it all."

"They will not have it all," said Kylis, with an ugly gleam in his eyes. "You know where they keep the pearls."

Miah shook his head and said they would not be easy to get at.

"There is nothing of great value yet," replied Kylis. "Wait until there is a big pearl, then we must have it."

"How? It will be dangerous."

"Leave it to me," said Kylis.

Miah looked at him, half afraid, he recollected something had been left to Kylis before, and when that something had been accomplished there was one white man less in the world. Miah was a thief, and no coward, but he hated the sight of blood; he was afraid of Kylis because he knew he would stick at nothing to gain his ends.

Kylis was a half civilised black, which made him doubly dangerous, and he was maturing a plan by which he hoped to get possession of any pearls of value before they put into Shark's Bay on the return voyage. He knew Jacob Rank mistrusted him, and also Miah, and hated him accordingly. He meant to be wary and bide his time, but he was determined to carry out the orders of Amos Hooker in some way or other. His keen eyes noted every movement in the schooner, and he had seen Harry Marton hide the first lot of pearls in the cabin of the "Heron." He had no business in that part of the schooner at all, and had he been seen the punishment would have been swift and sure. He crawled along the deck like a snake, and no one saw him as he watched Harry Marton secrete the pearls. He had not told Miah he knew where they were kept. More valuable pearls might be stored in another place, but as he had discovered one he could, he fancied, easily discover another. He had no intention of making any move until the schooners were on their way back, and if the pearls were on the "Heron" and he was put on the "Wild Cat," he meant to devise some means of changing into the other boat. Meanwhile he meant to work hard to divert any suspicion that might lurk in Jacob Rank's mind, and he ordered Miah to do the same.

The second lot of shells turned out even more profitable than the first, and everyone was delighted at their good fortune. Jack Redland was anxious to secure a pearl that would be worth sending to Winifred. He wished for something out of the common, and he hoped to find it himself so that he might tell her so. He was sure Barry Tuxford and the others would agree to let him have such a pearl if he gave equal value for it.

They toiled hard every day, and the shells and pearls accumulated fast. Even now they had a rich cargo to take back, but they were not satisfied. Jacob Rank had no intention of returning until he had struck the richest patch. He knew that in such a place there must be pearls of immense value, because the whole bed of the bay was covered with shells, which had never been disturbed before, and for years they had been hidden, unknown, unsought, until at last he had chanced to hit upon them.

CHAPTER FOURTEENTH

THE BLACK PEARL

Jack Redland was on the deck of the "Heron" opening shells. He was alone, the others had left him to finish the work, and gone off in the dinghies. He saw them in the distance, and watched the divers disappearing into the depths of the bay. Resting for a few minutes his eyes roamed over the beautiful scene spread out around him. In this land locked harbour everything seemed at peace, undisturbed by the dwellings of men, as it probably had been for ages upon ages. Their schooners were probably the first to enter, yet it was strange such a place had not been discovered before. The hills round the bay were well wooded, trees growing almost from base to summit, and the white silvery sand sparkled in the brilliant sunlight. It was hot, and yet there was sufficient breeze to render it pleasant. There was hardly a ripple on the clear water of the bay and the sky was dazzlingly blue. He saw very few signs of bird life, but the big black dots on the beach he knew were turtle, and he saw the males splashing about in the water. Fortunately there were no sharks in the bay, at least they had seen none, nor had Jacob Rank during his enforced stay there. The divers were, therefore, quite safe from these monsters, which sometimes cause shocking havoc amongst them.

Jack settled down to work again, opening the large shells with considerable dexterity, and noticing how carefully the pearls were hidden. Out of curiosity, he scraped the inner coating of one of the larger shells and found layer upon layer of nacre, or mother of pearl, which crumbled away from the knife. It seemed as though the mollusc had deposited these layers one after another to protect itself from attacks, and as there were no signs of even the smallest seeds beneath the outer layer, he came to the conclusion the pearls must be a kind of peculiar growth, perhaps a disease in the fish. However, he did not trouble much about this, his object was to find

pearls, and his curiosity being satisfied, he opened another shell.

The one he held in his hand had a golden edge of a far deeper colour than most of the others. It was also a peculiar shape, the centre standing out for all the world like a bruise on the forehead caused by a heavy blow. He felt it, and its perfect roundness made him wonder what had caused it.

He opened the shell, and as he withdrew the knife it shut again with a snap.

"I'll have you next time," he said to himself, and managed to cut the muscles. After cleaning out the fish he examined the shell carefully. It seemed quite dark in the centre, and this struck him as curious. He dug round it with the sharp point of the blade and in a short time a large lump came away from the shell. There was evidently an outer coating, and this he removed, when to his utter astonishment he saw a black egg shaped pearl of great size.

He had heard there were such things as black pearls and that they were very rare and valuable. Had he stumbled across a treasure at last? He handled it tenderly. The pearl was perfect in shape, nearly the size of a pigeon's egg. It was free from blemish, he saw that even with his inexperienced eyes; there was not a speck on it, and it weighed heavy. He feasted his eyes upon it, wondering if it was genuine and what it was worth.

He examined the shell again, but found nothing else; the black pearl, however, was sufficient, and he meant to give his comrades a surprise on their return.

His luck was evidently in, for in the lot of shells he opened he found some of the largest pearls they had yet obtained. Some were curious in shape, being twisted into various designs, one was half black and half white, and larger than the pure black one.

When he had finished his task, he cleared up the shells, put the pearls away, and sat down to have a smoke, lazily watching the dinghies in the distance. At last he saw them coming towards the schooner, and called the boy to ask if supper would be ready, as he knew they would not want to wait. The boats were heavily laden, and it took some time to put all the shells on deck.

"You have had another good day," said Jack.

"Splendid," replied Jacob, "and I think we had better clear out for Fremantle as soon as you like. We have several tons of good shell on board, and some hundreds of fair sized pearls besides the seeds. The trip will pan out well and Barry Tuxford will be satisfied. It will not be long before he sends here again with a better equipped lot of boats."

"What do you say, Phil?" asked Jack.

"We cannot safely put much more on the schooners," he replied, "and I think we had better knock off and clear out."

"Then if all are agreeable we will get away at once."

The others signified their assent, and it was decided to sail when all the shell had been safely stowed away in the two schooners.

They were all smoking and chatting after supper when Harry Marton said,—

"You have not told us whether you had any luck to-day; did you find many pearls?"

"Several," said Jack, carelessly, "some a good size and well shaped."

"Let us have a look at them," said Jacob, and Jack went to fetch them. He took out the big black pearl and put it in his pocket.

It happened that Kyllis heard Jacob talking about leaving the bay, and he was anxious to learn whether the pearls were valuable. He saw they were all occupied and not likely to keep a sharp look out, and snake-like, he glided behind some of the pearl shell barrels until he was within earshot. The white crew were all at rest, as there was nothing more for them to do. He left Miah on the watch, and told him to make a peculiar bird-like cry if he saw any danger of discovery.

Jack placed the pearls before Jacob, and he pronounced them to be the most valuable yet taken. "We must sort them out before we start," he said, "and stow them safely away; some of these black devils are awful thieves and you cannot be too careful. Those two fellows Amos Hooker sent you are up to no good, I can tell by the way they hang together, and watch us."

Kyllis grinned, and showed his teeth in a white gleam.

"I'll take charge of them if you like," said Jack. "Barry gave me a strong box in case we found anything of value, and also a couple of cases which I can carry always with me if it is necessary."

"That's Barry all over, he always looks ahead. I think you are the proper person to look after them, but there is some risk in it."

"How can there be?" said Jack, laughing.

"Listen, and I will tell you," said Jacob. "On one of my voyages, we found amongst the others six fine pearls of value, and my mate decided to do as you suggest, carry them on his person in a small case. They nearly proved the death of him, for one of the crew got wind of it, and attacked

him in his bunk, just before we got into port. If I had not come on the scene, he would have had a bad time, but I settled the fellow, he's never been any good since. You'll have to be careful, Mr. Redland, if you carry them about with you always."

"Perhaps you had better put them all in the big box," said Harry.

"I am agreeable, all except one," said Jack, smiling.

They looked at him curiously, he spoke mysteriously, what did it mean?

"I have a little surprise in store for you," went on Jack, and Kyllis strained his ears to listen. "I had a find to-day, at least I shall be very disappointed if it does not turn out as well as I expect."

"Discovered a big pearl?" asked Phil, with a laugh. "I hope it is not a fraud."

"It may be for all I know, it is black," said Jack.

Jacob Rank sprang to his feet and said, excitedly,

"A black pearl? you said a black pearl? I have only seen one in my life, and it was sold for a heap of money. Where is it?"

"Here," replied Jack, as he took it out of his pocket and handed it to him.

When Jacob saw the beautiful black egg-shaped pearl, he gasped for breath, and stared at it with wondering eyes. They crowded around him, as he held it in his hand, and all seemed lost in amazement.

"What do you think of it?" asked Jack.

"Mr. Redland, this is one of the rarest pearls that ever came out of a shell. It is perfect, there is not a fault in it, and look at its size. It is worth a heap of money, I dare not say how much, if we had found nothing else, this pearl would have been worth coming for," said Jacob. Phil Danks and Hake Moss were also loud in their praises, and examined it closely.

"This will not need any pearl faker to make it perfect," said Phil.

"No," replied Jacob, "it can be mounted just as it is."

"What is a pearl faker?" asked Jack.

"Pearl fakers are clever fellows, they can remove the defects of a pearl and give it a perfect appearance. Hundreds of pearls have been through their hands, and no one can tell what they have done to them."

"There are all kinds of trades," said Jack, laughing.

"And this is profitable; I know a man who has made a heap of money at it," replied Jacob.

"And so you think the black pearl needs no faking?"

"None at all, the merest attempt would spoil it."

"And do you think I had better carry it on my person?"

"Certainly, I had no idea you had secured such a gem. We must be careful how we part with it, but Barry will see to that, he knows the value of most things," said Jacob.

Jack had forgotten for the moment that the pearl was not his property, that he had only a share in it, and he felt keenly disappointed. This black pearl would have been the very one to send to Winifred, that was his first thought when he found it in the shell.

"Where is the case Barry gave you?" asked Jacob.

"Here," replied Jack, handing him a green leather case with a lock and clasp.

"This looks all right," said Jacob, "will the pearl go in? I see there are compartments, you will have to knock two or three into one for it."

"That is easily done," said Jack, "and I can wrap it up well so that it will take no harm."

Jacob fondled the pearl before he gave it back to him and said, "It is not often a man has the chance of handling such a gem as this, I could look at it for hours. There may be more where that came from."

Kyllis heard most of the talk, and knew that the black pearl must be of great value. If Jack Redland always carried it with him, his task would be difficult, but he did not despair; in any case he could try for some of the others. He crawled back to Miah unobserved, but did not tell him about the black pearl, that matter he meant to keep to himself; not even Amos Hooker should hear about it if it came into his possession. If he failed to secure any pearls before they arrived in Shark's Bay, then it would be time enough to give Amos a hint as to the valuable cargo on board, and he could please himself what steps he took to secure any portion of it.

There was much jubilation on board at the success of the trip, and the black pearl put the final touch to their hilarity. Jack Redland placed the pearl in the case, and put it in the belt he wore round his waist.

He had made up his mind to try and buy it right out, and if the amount was beyond his means, he meant to ask Barry Tuxford to buy it for him and keep it until he could pay for it. Winifred should have it some day, he vowed. He had found it, and she would value it all the more on account of the trouble he had taken to get it.

CHAPTER FIFTEENTH

A CLEVER THIEF

The "Heron" was a faster sailer than the "Wild Cat," and soon left her far behind; as they were both bound for Fremantle this did not matter. The "Heron" was to put in at Shark's Bay, to land the two divers, and this would give the other schooner time to get on terms with her.

Kylis had had no opportunity of attempting to steal any of the pearls so far, and they were nearing Shark's Bay. If he was to succeed there was no time to be lost. The black pearl was his object, but the difficulties to be overcome in endeavouring to secure it were almost unsurmountable. Jack Redland always carried it with him, and slept with his belt on; he was, moreover, a match for such a man as Kylis, being strong and active. In his cabin the whole of the pearls were kept securely locked up, and as Kylis had no excuse for being in that part of the schooner suspicion would at once be aroused if he was seen there.

Now that the chief part of their work was over there was a certain amount of laxity and freedom on board. The crew were allowed more liberty, although Phil Danks took care the schooner should be thoroughly looked after. Jacob Rank was on board, and this relieved Phil from some responsibility, as he was as good a sailor as himself. Jacob often took charge while Phil rested, and this arrangement suited both, as the former did not care to be always idle.

In consequence of this free and easy style of managing the "Heron," Kylis and Miah had very little difficulty in roaming about where they liked, although if they ventured near Jack Redland's cabin, and Jacob caught sight of them, they had to beat a speedy retreat.

Kylis knew the coast well, and saw they would be in Shark's Bay with a fair wind in another four-and-twenty hours. He became desperate, and without telling Miah of his purpose, determined to try and get the black pearl that night.

He was a swimmer of great endurance, and could remain in the water for hours, covering long distances. He knew that about midnight, or shortly after, the "Heron" would pass a spot called Swan Point, and that she would not be more than four or five miles distant from it. Swan Point was a peculiar shaped rock, standing in solitary grandeur, about two miles from the shore, with a deep channel between. Sometimes vessels passed through the channel, but only in daylight. Kylis thought out his plan cleverly. If successful in his attempt, he could slip overboard, swim to Swan Point, remain there and rest, and then swim to the shore. There were sharks about, but he had his knife, and had come off best in a tussle with one of these monsters. If he failed he could still jump overboard, and escape.

Jacob Rank was somewhat hilarious that night, having prevailed upon Phil to let him have a bottle of liquor, some of which he shared with one or two of the crew, who were as lively as himself. A hand at cards being suggested, Phil joined in "just to keep order," he said, and added, "but I do not think it fair to win your money under such circumstances."

"You are welcome to all you can get out of me," said Jacob, "and a game of euchre is what I want. If you win so much the better for you, but I mean to have my game whether you join in or not."

Jack Redland left them to it, and turned in. Euchre was a game he knew very little about, although he had taken a hand on board the "Golden Land" once or twice.

"You fellows look like making a night of it," he said. "As we shall be in Shark's Bay to-morrow I think I had better have a camp, I mean to go ashore."

"All serene," shouted Jacob. "Remember me in your dreams, and don't try and swallow that black pearl in mistake for a pill."

Kylis watched Jack go to his cabin and then, leaving Miah, strolled towards the players. Miah watched him, feeling glad he had gone alone, for he knew there was some devilry afoot.

Jacob being in a good humour—he held a fine euchre hand, looked up and saw Kylis standing near.

"Come here, you black thief, and I'll show you how to play euchre," roared Jacob.

"He probably knows how to handle the cards as well as any of us," laughed Phil. "Can you play euchre, Kylis?"

The black grinned, and said he had often played with Amos Hooker and others at Shark's Bay.

"I told you," said Phil. "Let him play your hand, Jacob."

"I'm dashed if I do, it's too good for a nigger to handle."

"Joker, right and left bower, eh?" asked Phil smiling.

"Not quite so good as that, skipper, but it's tarnation near it."

"Then go ahead, you go alone, I suppose?"

They were playing partners, Phil with one sailor, Jacob with another.

"Yes, I'm going alone," said Jacob, and his partner put down his cards.

Jacob played the joker, and trumps went round, then he played the right bower, the knave of diamonds, and the left bower, the knave of hearts fell on it from Phil. Jacob gave a whoop as he said—

"You can't beat me now, I have the lot," and he threw down the ace, king and queen of diamonds.

"Whew! What a hand," said Phil. "How did you manage it, Jacob?"

"Dry up, no chaff, you dealt," he said.

"And turned it down, worse luck. I might have got through, as yours were all reds."

"Very good hand," said Kylis.

"Oh, oh, my black bird, you think so, do you?" laughed Jacob. "I don't often treat a nigger, but after that hand you shall have a tot, here you are."

He handed the glass to the black, Phil grunting his disapproval, and remarking that it was throwing good stuff away.

Kylis saw they were fixed up for a long sitting, and this favoured his plans. He watched the game for some time and then sneaked away unobserved. In case anyone chanced to see him he went in the opposite direction to Jack's cabin; he returned, crawling along the deck silently and swiftly. In his hand he had one of the big knives used for opening pearl shells. He paused when he neared the cabin, listening, and the steady breathing denoted Jack Redland was sound asleep. The night was not dark, and Kylis had seen the dim outline of Swan Point in the distance before he left the card players. Again he crawled forward until his head reached the door, which was open. Looking in he saw Jack lying half dressed on his bunk, the belt with the case in round him. Kylis could have stabbed him as he slept, and probably would have done so had he not seen the end of the case, in which the black pearl lay, peeping out of the inner side of the belt. For once Jack had evidently been careless, and not fastened it securely in the belt. If he could obtain the case without awaking the sleeper there would be no need for violence.

Kylis crept like a cat to Jack Redland's side, then his big, black hand went slowly up and gently drew out the case. It was locked, but with a quick twist with the point of his knife the black opened it, slipped out the pearl, closed the case, pressed the broken spring in as far as he could, and noiselessly put it back in its place.

Jack Redland slept soundly and did not stir. Kylis did his work cleverly and with marvellous quickness. The black, never losing his caution, or hurrying in any way, glided out of the cabin and along the deck, the pearl in his mouth. If Jack Redland did not discover his loss he was safe, and Kylis determined to take the risk. If there was any danger of discovery he would go overboard with the pearl, no matter where they were.

Luck favoured the black. When Jack Redland got up in the morning the schooner was entering Shark's Bay. He fastened the belt, pushing the case into its place without examining it; he was not likely to suspect the pearl had been abstracted while he slept.

Jacob Rank and his fellow card players were somewhat seedy after their all night sitting, but they soon shook off the effects, and intended going ashore to stretch their legs for an hour or two on land.

Kylis was anxious to get away, but did not show it. He and Miah had been paid, and Phil said they could go ashore in the first dinghy.

However, before a boat was lowered, Amos Hooker put out from the shore, eager to learn what their luck had been, and Phil said the divers might go back with him.

This did not suit Kylis, who was well aware if Amos got on board he would remain as long as they would have him. He must speak to him, quietly, and tell him he had important news, which was better told ashore, out of earshot of anyone on board.

"Safely back," said Amos, as his boat came alongside. "By all the powers, if it's not Jacob Rank!" he exclaimed as he caught sight of him.

"Yes, I'm alive and well," replied Jacob, "but no thanks to the devils who left me in the lurch."

"It was a dirty trick to play you," said Amos.

"And they shall pay for it if ever I lay hands on them," he replied.

Amos was anxious to hear what Kylis and Miah had to report, and as they looked over the side of the schooner he caught sight of them and said—

"I suppose you wish to go ashore?"

"Yes," replied Kylis, eagerly.

"Then jump into the boat and I'll take you, and come back to hear the news."

They dropped from the schooner into the boat, and as Kylis landed, the pearl fell out of his loin cloth, where he had concealed it, into the bottom of the boat. Amos Hooker saw it, and Kylis, with a feeling of rage sweeping over him, knew he had seen it. A glance upwards showed him no one on board the schooner had observed it. He picked it up, concealing it again, and Amos pushed off hurriedly from the schooner.

Kylis knew he must make the best of the situation, Amos Hooker would think he had stolen the pearl, according to his instructions, and he must drive the best bargain he could with him. After all it might be the best way of parting with it, because he would have great difficulty in disposing of it. A black man in possession of such a pearl would be an object of suspicion, he knew that well enough. If he got a fair sum from Amos, and handed the pearl over to him there would not be much danger to himself; it would not be found in his possession if search was made for it, and at the same time the knowledge that Amos Hooker had it would give him a hold over the man.

Miah stared at it in surprise, aghast at Kylis's cleverness, for he had no idea the pearl had been stolen. He was glad no harm had been done to Jack Redland. Cunning as his mate, although not so treacherous, he commenced to think it was due to himself to have a share in the pearl. If Kylis and Amos objected, he could treat with the other side.

Half way to the shore Amos rested on the oars and said—

"Is that a black pearl you dropped in the boat?"

"Yes," answered Kylis.

"Where did you get it?"

"Stole it last night in accordance with your orders."

"I never told you to steal anything."

"What do you call it?" asked Kylis, grinning. "At any rate, I stole it at the risk of my life, and if they find out it has gone before they leave the bay there'll be a mighty row."

"How did you get it?"

Briefly Kylis told him how he abstracted the pearl from the case in Jack Redland's belt, and Amos was surprised at the black's daring and cleverness.

"And he has not missed it yet?"

"No, he thinks it is in the case."

"He may not miss it until after they have sailed."

"All the better for us."

"Let me look at it," said Amos.

"No."

"Hand it over, you dirty black thief, or I'll knock you out of the boat," and he raised an oar.

Kylis laughed as he pointed to the schooner, and said—

"They'll wonder what the row is about, it may create suspicion."

Amos saw the force of this remark, and restrained himself.

"When will you hand it over to me? It is of no use to you. I can sell it, you cannot, and it must be worth a lot of money."

"You shall have it when we come to terms, and I know what share I am to have. There must be money down before I give it up."

"Good, money down," said Miah.

Kylis looked hard at him as he said—

"You have nothing to do with it, I got hold of the pearl."

"And I know where it is, and mean to have a share."

"And what will you do if you get no share?" said Amos, savagely.

"Split," replied Miah, and they all knew the meaning of the word well.

CHAPTER SIXTEENTH

JACK DISCOVERS HIS LOSS

The "Heron" remained only a few hours at Shark's Bay, and then proceeded on her way, as they were anxious to reach Fremantle as soon as possible.

It was not until he turned in at night that Jack Redland discovered the pearl was gone. He unstrapped the belt and placed it on his bunk, taking out the case in order to look at the treasure he thought it contained. He saw at once it had been tampered with, and pulling the spring found it was broken; a glance inside showed him it was empty, the pearl was gone.

For some moments he was stupefied, overwhelmed with dismay, and unable to act. It was difficult to believe the pearl was missing, yet there was no doubt about it. Who had taken it? Where was it now? These were questions he could not answer. He rushed on deck, half dressed, and encountered Jacob Rank.

"What's up now?" asked the astounded Jacob, recognising something serious must have occurred.

"The pearl's gone," gasped Jack.

"The pearl! Which pearl?" asked Jacob.

"The black pearl. It is not in the case."

"Then it must have fallen out. Have you looked about your cabin?"

"The lock has been forced; someone has stolen it," said Jack.

"How could anyone steal it when you had the belt round you?"

"I do not know, but it has gone. What are we to do?"

"Find it," said Jacob. "It will be in your cabin somewhere. We will go and search for it."

"Where's Phil Danks?" asked Jack.

"Having a rest. We can tell him what a fright you had when we have found it."

They went to Jack's cabin and turned everything out, but no black pearl could they find.

Jacob sat on a chest and looked at his companion.

"Hand over the case," he said.

Jack gave it him, and he examined it carefully.

"It has been forced with a knife, here are the scratches on it. How did the thief get hold of it? Have you ever left it off when you turned in?"

"No," replied Jack. "I always took the precaution to sleep with it on."

"Could anyone take the case out of your belt and replace it while you were asleep?" asked Jacob.

"Impossible. I am a light sleeper, and the slightest touch would rouse me."

"We'll go and see what Phil has to say about it," said Jacob.

The skipper of the "Heron" was dozing on his bunk when they roused him.

"What do you want?" he growled. "Cannot you let a fellow have a decent night's rest?"

"You'll not rest much when you hear what has happened," said Jacob.

"Then keep the news till morning," replied Phil.

"It is not the sort of news to keep. We must act at once. Sit up and listen. The black pearl has been stolen."

Phil Danks was wide awake now, and sprang out of his bunk.

"What's that you say?"

"The black pearl has been stolen," said Jacob.

"It is quite true," said Jack, showing the empty case, and proceeded to explain how he discovered his loss.

"I can't make it out," said Phil. "If you had the belt on at night, how the case was got at. When did you see it last?"

"When I went into my cabin the night before we entered Shark's Bay."

"Then it must have been stolen during the night. I have it," he said, excitedly. "I'll bet a trifle one of those black fellows has it. They are as cunning as dingoes."

"You're right," said Jacob. "I ought to have thought of that before, and I know which of 'em it is—"

Kylis. Why did he come sneaking round to see us playing cards? He was hanging about half the night, watching his chance."

"But how could he take the case out of my belt, without waking me, open it, and replace it?" asked Jack.

"There's no telling what a black thief like him can do. They're clever all of 'em, and Kylis is about the smartest of the lot. It's my belief he's in with Amos Hooker over this job. I had my doubts when you told me you got you the men. Now I am certain Amos had a hand in it. Why did he not come back to the schooner again after taking them ashore? I thought it strange at the time, but I see his reason now. He thought if the loss of the pearl was discovered he might be asked nasty questions, difficult to answer."

"Had we better put back and try and recover it?" asked Jack.

"There's not much chance of that," said Phil. "You see, we have no proof they have it, and even if we had we should not be able to recover it without paying a big reward. The best thing we can do is to get to Fremantle as quickly as possible, lay the whole circumstances before Barry Tuxford, tell him our suspicions, and hear what he has to say."

Jack felt relieved. He had great faith in Barry, and thought he might probably devise some means to recover the pearl.

"He'll be very angry about it, I expect," said Jack.

"Oh, no, he won't. You do not know Barry as well as I do," said Jacob. "He seldom gets ruffled. We have a rich cargo on board, that will pay us all well without the black pearl, and he'll be satisfied. I'll tell you what he will do. He'll set himself to get that pearl from Amos Hooker, if he has it, and he knows the way to put the screw on."

"Then you think there is some probability of getting it back?" said Jack.

Jacob shook his head as he replied—

"I doubt it; but if any man can recover it, that man is Barry Tuxford."

Jack Redland was exceedingly mortified at the loss of the black pearl. He had set his heart upon buying all the shares in it, and sending it to Winifred. It puzzled him when he thought how it had been taken, for it must have been accomplished while he was asleep. He was determined to recover the pearl in some way. How, he had as yet formed no idea.

The "Heron" arrived at Fremantle in advance of the "Wild Cat," and the news that she was in the bay quickly reached Perth.

Barry Tuxford lost no time in going to meet her, and there was considerable excitement amongst the pearl buyers over her arrival, for they were aware she had been on a sort of secret voyage to an unknown pearling ground. This was quite sufficient to arouse curiosity as to the result of the trip, and when Barry appeared on the scene he was met by a chorus of inquiries.

"Wait until I have been on board, then I shall be able to tell you how we have got on. Up to now I know no more than yourselves."

"Give me a chance if you want to sell any good ones," said Silas Filey, a well known buyer of pearls, and a curious character in his way. He was an old convict, sent out for some political offence many years ago, and had amassed a large fortune in buying and selling pearls. He always carried a huge pocket book stuffed with pearls in his inner coat pocket, and they were reckoned to be worth many thousands of pounds. Silas had never been robbed, he was too dangerous to tackle, for he was particularly ready with his firearm, and had sent more than one desperate character to his account in his time.

Silas Filey did other things besides pearl dealing. He was credited with having assisted more convicts to escape from the settlement than any other man, and had thereby reaped a rich harvest. One man in particular he had got clear away, although there was no proof against him. This was a well-to-do Englishman named "Gentleman Jack," who having got into trouble at home, was sent out to Fremantle. It was currently reported "Gentleman Jack" promised five thousand pounds for his services if he succeeded in getting away to America. Silas carried out his portion of the contract skilfully. "Gentleman Jack" got on board a vessel bound for America, landed there safely, and discharged his debt honourably.

Barry Tuxford knew Silas well, and in divers transactions with him had found him a fair dealer.

"You shall have a chance, Silas," he said, "if there is anything worth your while to look at. This is a sort of trial trip, and I do not know how it has panned out."

Silas laughed as he replied—

"There are not many things you go into that do not pan out well. You made a big haul out of the Great Tom mine, did you not?"

"Fair," replied Barry cautiously, and inwardly thinking what a welcome surprise he had in store for Jack Redland.

"Here's Barry," said Jacob, as he saw a boat shoot out and make for the schooner. "I'll keep out of

the way a bit and give him a surprise later on. Don't let on you have me on board, boys."

"We'll keep it dark as long as we can," replied Phil, smiling. "But if Barry asks questions about you he'll soon smell a rat."

There were hearty greetings when Barry Tuxford stepped on board the "Heron."

"Your friends at home would hardly recognise you," he said to Jack, who was as brown as a berry, "but you look in splendid condition, and pearling evidently agrees with you. Where's your pal? In the 'Wild Cat?'"

"Yes," replied Jack, "and she'll be in the bay to-night, I expect, she is never far behind."

"What sort of a trip have you had?" he asked. "I think you'll be quite satisfied," said Jack. "We have some very good pearls on board, and many tons of valuable shell."

"It's the best pearl fishery I ever was on," said Phil, "and next time, with more divers, it will turn out a big thing." He then proceeded to give Barry a brief account of the trip and of the result.

"Then Jacob Rank was right, after all, and those scoundrels were wrong. Did you see any signs of him?"

"Of Jacob?" asked Phil.

"Yes; the crew said he was drowned, but I did not believe the story."

"And you were right," said a voice behind him, and turning round, he saw Jacob alive and well.

Barry Tuxford shook him heartily by the hand and said—

"I thought you would pull through somehow, and I am very glad to see you."

"Are any of my crew ashore here?" asked Jacob.

Barry laughed as he replied—

"You may find one or two, but if they get wind you are on board the 'Heron' they will clear out quick, you may be sure of that."

"Let me lay hands on them, and they'll wish they had never been born," said Jacob.

Barry Tuxford went into Jack's cabin and inspected the pearls. He was delighted with them and said—

"There will be a good division of profits out of this lot. Good pearls are scarce and dear, and Silas Filey is on the look out for some."

"Silas is always knocking around when there is a chance of a deal," said Jacob. "It takes a clever man to bargain with him, but I think you are equal to it. What do you think our pearls are worth?"

"I cannot say off hand, but some hundreds of pounds, and then there is the shell. I shall equip another lot of schooners as soon as possible, and send you out again," said Barry.

"I am willing to go," said Jacob, "and I can speak for Phil and Hake Moss. I don't know whether the 'new chums' will tackle the job again."

"I want Mr. Redland ashore if he will stay," said Barry. "I have something more in his line than pearling."

"I enjoyed the trip," said Jack, "but I shall be glad to stay with you for a time. Have you discovered a champion amongst your horses?" he asked smiling.

"I think you will find one or two worth riding," said Barry. "At any rate, you can try them, and give me the benefit of your opinion."

"With pleasure," replied Jack. "It will be a treat to be on the back of a good horse again, and have a rousing gallop."

"It will not be long before you have an opportunity," replied Barry. "We will talk the matter over when you come ashore with me. I like to keep the fellows waiting, so shall remain here until the 'Wild Cat' arrives. I should not be at all surprised if Silas comes off to see us; he's desperately eager to find out all about the trip."

"We must keep it to ourselves," said Jacob. "I have no doubt we shall be followed next time, but we can put them off the scent with a little trouble."

"Where is this bay?" asked Barry.

"In the north-west, about four hundred miles beyond Shark's Bay, and it's a rum place to find," said Phil. "I doubt if we should have struck it if we had not seen Jacob's signal."

"Then you found him in the bay?"

"Yes; and he'd hoisted a flag on the rock jutting out to sea. It was about the best use he could have made of his shirt," laughed Phil.

"There's something more to tell you," said Jack Redland. "It is the only bit of bad luck we had on the voyage."

"Then it will keep," said Barry smiling. "Tell it me when we go ashore. Whatever it is I am quite satisfied with all you have done, and we cannot expect to always have good luck."

"It was beastly bad luck," said Jacob, "but you can never trust those black beggars. Mr. Redland will tell you how it happened, and you are the man to recover the pearl."

"You've let it out now," said Phil laughing.

"A pearl? What pearl? Did you lose a valuable pearl?" asked Barry.

"We did," said Jack, "a black pearl. I may as well tell you all about it."

CHAPTER SEVENTEENTH

THE PEARL DEALER

Barry Tuxford listened attentively to Jack's story of the stolen pearl, and when it was ended said, "There is no doubt in my mind that one of those black fellows Amos Hooker engaged for you, stole it during the night. It was cleverly done, and I am surprised he was successful. Such a pearl as you have described ought to be worth four or five thousand pounds, probably more, if we found the right customer. Someone who possesses one pearl of the sort would give a stiff sum to get a pair."

"Do you think you will be able to recover it?" asked Jack, anxiously.

"It's a toss up whether we do or not. If Amos Hooker has it, I think it can be managed, but it will have to be very carefully worked. It will be better to say nothing at all about it, and make no inquiries. Amos will keep it for some time before he tries to dispose of it, and if we leave him alone he may get careless. Black pearls are very scarce, and one the shape and size of ours will be easily recognised. On the whole, I think it may be recovered, but it will cost money."

Jack was relieved to hear this, and said, when he and Barry were alone,—

"I have a particular reason for wishing to recover that pearl. Do you know what I intended doing if we had brought it here safely?"

"No."

"I intended asking you to buy it for me, and allow me to pay for it when I had the money."

Barry looked surprised as he said,—

"What do you require such a valuable pearl for? You could do a great deal better with your money."

"I wished to send it home as a present to a great friend of mine."

"A lady, of course," said Barry smiling. "I see; it would be a very valuable gift, and she ought to think a lot of it, if ever she receives it."

"She would," replied Jack, "but more on account of my finding it than for its actual value."

"I'll try and get it for you," said Barry, "and if I succeed, you shall have it at a fair price. Ah, here's Silas, I thought he would not be able to wait until my return."

Silas Filey walked anxiously about, waiting for Barry Tuxford, and as the time passed, became impatient.

"He's staying on board just to aggravate everybody, that's his little game. I want to be first in at this deal. I'll take a boat out to the schooner and risk the chance of being ordered away."

As the boat came alongside the "Heron," Barry Tuxford looked over the side and said, with a laugh, "What are you here for Silas? I am afraid we have nothing on board that will suit you."

"Will you let me have a look at the pearls?" asked Silas.

"It's against the rules, you must wait until we come ashore."

"I say, Barry, give me first chance, and I'll offer you a good price, upon my word, I will. I want a string of good pearls badly for a customer who is not particular how much he pays so long as he gets what he wants."

"That's the sort of man I like to get hold of," said Barry.

"They are difficult to find, but this is a cert, a real cert; let me come on board."

"I must ask the skipper," said Barry.

"You are the owner, that is sufficient," replied Silas.

"Phil Danks is in charge and it is only fair to ask his permission, but I will try and arrange it for you."

Barry disappeared, and Silas muttered to himself—

"He's a confounded humbug, he's keeping me here for fun. I wonder what they have on board. He'll drive a hard bargain now he sees I am so eager, but I must have the pearls, it's a big deal if I get what my man wants."

When Barry Tuxford returned, he said,—

"If I let you have first pick you must be prepared to give a stiff price, I know the value of pearls as well as you do."

"I'll deal fair with you, upon my word, I will," said Silas. "May I come up?"

"Yes," replied Barry, "and mind, there's to be no Jew business about this transaction."

Silas Filey scrambled up the ladder and climbed over the side of the schooner. Barry introduced him to Jack, who thought the dealer a curious looking man to handle valuable pearls.

Jacob Rank and Phil were both known to Silas, who congratulated the former on his return to life.

"We thought you'd gone under, Jacob," he said, "but I'm glad such is not the case. You have made a grand discovery, I hear, found pearls by the hundreds, somewhere. You are a clever chap, Jacob, very clever."

"And who gave you such valuable information?" asked Jacob.

"Never mind where I got it from, it's true."

"Much you know about it. If I owned this blessed schooner, or happened to be skipper of her, I'd take precious good care to keep her decks clear of such men as you," growled Jacob.

"I have done you no harm, my friend," said Silas.

"And I'll take jolly good care you never have the chance," was the reply. "Pearl dealers are frauds, I'd have nothing to do with you if I was Mr. Tuxford."

"But you are not Mr. Tuxford, my dear Jacob," said Silas. "If you were, you would have made a fortune long ago, with the chances you have had."

"You two are always at it," said Barry. "Come and see the pearls, Silas."

"Keep your eyes on him, and don't let him handle them," was Jacob's parting shot.

"I'm sorry for him," said Silas, "Jacob is a good fellow, but he's a fool."

They went to Jack's cabin, and he unlocked the box and took out the various drawers containing the different sized pearls. When Silas saw the collection, his eyes fastened on them eagerly and Barry Tuxford, who was watching him closely, thought he would be able to sell well. There were pearls of all shapes, egg-shaped, oval, pear shaped, curiously twisted pearls, and pearls of many sizes. In one box, Silas saw about forty or fifty perfect pearls, free from all excrescences, with perfectly smooth surfaces, and possessing a brilliant even lustre. He knew they were valuable, the more so because they were of even size, shape, and weight, and were just what he required. Jack handed him the box, and he examined each pearl carefully; there was no flaw in them, they were as perfect as any he had ever seen. He looked at the other boxes and recognised that the bay Jacob Rank had discovered must be uncommonly rich in shells, he wished he knew where it was, but there was not much chance of finding out.

Barry and Jack waited for him to speak, but Silas Filey was a man of few words when he meant business. He was calculating his chances, summing up the value of the pearls, how much he could obtain for them, what he was prepared to give, and how much profit he could make; he was also surmising the amount Barry Tuxford would be willing to accept, and on that basis was prepared to make a reasonable offer which would give him scope to increase the price.

Jack replaced the pearls in the case, and was about to lock them up when Silas said,—

"Don't put them away yet, Mr. Redland."

"I thought you were not over pleased with them," replied Jack, quietly, and Barry smiled.

"They are not a bad lot at all, for a first trip in a new ground they are excellent, and give promise of better things."

"Do you wish to make a bid for them?" asked Barry, coming to the point.

"How much do you want?"

"For the lot?"

"For the best lot."

"I shall not sell them separately, the buyer will have to clear us out, seed pearls and all."

Silas shook his head as he replied,—

"A lot of them are no good to me."

"I am quite aware of that," replied Barry, "but you can get rid of them. They are no more good to me than they are to you."

"Put a price on the lot," said Silas.

Barry Tuxford knew what these pearls were worth in the open market, but he also knew if Silas had a wealthy customer waiting their value might reasonably be increased.

"Six thousand pounds," he said, and Jack Redland gasped for breath, while Silas held up both hands in pious horror at such an attempt at extortion.

"A very good joke," said Silas, "on your side."

"You will get that for the best lot alone if you have a customer handy such as you have mentioned," replied Barry.

Silas thought this not improbable, but all the same it was an outrageous price for Barry to ask.

"I am afraid we shall not be able to do business," said Silas, rising.

"Very well, sorry you had your journey for nothing. Lock them up again, Mr. Redland."

"Stop a minute," said Silas. "You are always in such a hurry. Ask a reasonable figure. Say half, and we can commence to talk."

Jack was surprised, he had no idea of the value of pearls, and three thousand pounds seemed a large sum.

"I cannot waste my time, Silas, and you know well enough three thousand is ridiculous."

"Well, let us say another five hundred."

"No, not anything near the mark," replied Barry, knowing well enough Silas was biting.

"You are very hard."

"Not at all. You asked as a favour to be given first chance. If I take these pearls into Fremantle, and put them on the open market, they'll sell well, especially as they are scarce. It will save trouble if you take the lot, and six thousand is a fair thing."

"It's simply ruinous," said Silas. "I'll give you four, and not a pound more."

"Then it's no deal," said Barry, and Jack fancied he was unwise not to accept it.

Silas shuffled out of the cabin, and Barry whispered to Jack,—

"He'll spring another five hundred, and he can have them. It's a good price, but he'll make a clear couple of thousand out of the deal if he has a customer for the big ones."

Silas Filey went to the side of the schooner and seemed about to go down into his boat. He hesitated, and Barry said, "Make it another five hundred and you shall have them, with one condition attached," he added, as though a thought had occurred to him.

"A condition," said Silas, surprised. "What sort of a condition?"

"Will you give the price, £4500?" asked Barry.

"It's a robbery, they're not worth it."

"Bosh," said Barry, testily. "Don't be such an old fool, you know they are worth it, to you."

"Why to me more than anyone else?"

"Because you know where to place them."

Silas sighed, there was much truth in Barry's remarks. Here were all the pearls ready to his hand, it might take him months to get such a lot together.

"I'll give it you," he said, at last.

"And you've got a bargain," said Barry. Jack Redland was delighted, there was still the pearl shell to sell, it was a rare haul.

"What condition do you attach?" asked Silas.

"We have lost a valuable black pearl, it has been stolen, and we want you to help us to get it back."

"A black pearl?" said Silas, amazed. "Tell me all about it," he said, eagerly.

"Mr. Redland will tell you, but first of all will you help us?"

"Of course I will, and buy it from you."

"It is not for sale," said Jack.

Silas Filey's face fell, he would have given a good deal to secure such a prize.

"Tell me all about it," he said, and Jack gave him a brief outline of the robbery and a description of the pearl.

"Where do you think it is?" he asked.

"I know where it is, at least I am almost certain," said Barry. "An old scoundrel we both know at Shark's Bay has it. He put the black fellows up to stealing some of our pearls, and they happened to get the best. I mean Amos Hooker, he's the man."

"He has it!" exclaimed Silas. "I'd like to get it. He's a bad lot, is Amos. I hope I can do it for you, I think I can. I'll get into communication with him. He'll not be able to sell it in a hurry."

"You will have to be careful, or he'll be on his guard," said Barry.

"I have had dealings with him before, and he will not be at all suspicious of me. Are you quite sure you will not sell it? Do you know what such a pearl as you have described is worth?" he said, turning to Jack.

"I have no idea."

"Anything between three to seven thousand; it is worth the latter sum to a man who already possesses one."

CHAPTER EIGHTEENTH

ON HORSEBACK AGAIN

When the "Wild Cat" arrived in the bay the news of the sale of the pearls was at once told to Harry Marton, and he thought it a wonderful price to obtain for them. Barry Tuxford examined the shells and said they ought to bring about £150 a ton, if not more.

"There will be a good division of profits," he said, "but come ashore with me, I have something else to tell you. By jove, I forgot all about it. There's a letter for you at my place from the old country."

Jack's heart beat fast. It must be from Winifred, and he was anxious to hear the news.

"How long have you had it?" he asked.

"Some weeks; that is the reason I forgot it."

Jack was annoyed; Winifred would think he had been a long time answering it, but he could explain it was not his fault.

Harry Marton accompanied them ashore, and they went to Barry Tuxford's house at Perth.

"The letter first," said Jack eagerly, and Barry smiled as he handed it to him.

Jack recognised the handwriting; it was from Winifred. He left the room, as he wished to read it alone.

Winifred wrote in good spirits, telling him all the news about her home, and how her father had won a couple of good races with Topsy Turvy.

"We miss you very much indeed, Jack," she wrote, "and often talk about you and wonder what you are doing in that far off country. It seems a terribly long way from here, and sometimes I fancy you will not come back. Father says most young men who go out get married, and settle down. Have you met anyone you like very much indeed yet? If so, I'll try and love her for your sake."

"Will you?" thought Jack. "You will not get the chance."

"I know you will answer this letter as soon as you can, but father says I must not expect a reply too quickly, for there is no telling where you may be when it arrives. I shall look forward to hearing from you. I received your letters from Port Said and Colombo, and also the one when you arrived at Fremantle. What a dear good soul Captain Seagrave must be. We are going to ask him to come and see us and tell us all about the voyage."

She concluded a long letter by wishing him every happiness, and good luck. "Father wishes me to tell you to wear his colours the first time you ride a horse of your own, or if you own one, to let the jockey wear them. He is superstitious about it, and believes they will bring you good luck."

Jack read between the lines, and was contented. He recognised that Winifred loved him, and was constantly thinking about him. He must answer her letter by the next mail, and although he had no pearls to send her this time he would tell her to look forward to receiving a string out of the next lot.

He returned to Barry Tuxford and Harry with a face beaming with satisfaction.

"You have had good news," said Barry, "anyone can see that. I congratulate you. I expect your letter is from the fortunate young lady who is to receive the black pearl—when you recover it."

"That is so," replied Jack, laughing. "As you remark, if we get it."

"I am commencing to think you are a bit of a mascot," said Barry laughing. "Everything you touch turns out well. I have some real good news for you."

"Indeed," said Jack, "what is it?"

"The Great Tom mine has panned out all right."

"That's splendid," replied Jack. "I had forgotten all about it for the moment."

"The pound shares are up to six pounds," said Barry.

"It sounds too good to be true," said Jack, excitedly. "That means three thousand for my five hundred."

"That's it, if you sell out."

"What do you advise me to do?"

"Sell half your shares; leave the other half in. It is a dividend paying mine, and I think they will go up to ten pounds, perhaps more, in another year."

"That will give me fifteen hundred to play with, and the profit on the trip as well. Harry, you must stand in; we agreed to go halves."

"Don't be ridiculous," replied Harry. "We agreed to go halves, certainly, but that was only for the voyage. I shall not take a penny of your profits. I have my share out of the pearls, and am quite satisfied."

"That is not fair," said Jack. "Because I happen to have had a stroke of luck it is no reason why you should cry off our arrangement."

"I think Mr. Marton is quite right," said Barry. "You cannot go on sharing all through your lives; it is absurd."

"If I make a pile, Harry, you must agree to accept something from me," said Jack.

"If my luck is out I will; but if I make sufficient for my wants, no," replied Harry.

In the course of the week Barry Tuxford took Jack out to the stables, where his horses were kept, and he had a spin on Lucky Boy, a four-year-old bay, a great favourite of Barry's.

Jack was delighted to be on the back of a thoroughbred again; it was far more to his taste than tossing about on a schooner, although he had enjoyed that for a time. He had, however, no desire to make another voyage at present. Lucky Boy was accompanied by Wanneroo, a bay, three years old, ridden by a black boy called Willie, who was clever at his work. The pair were attended by Onslow and Esperance.

Joe Kirby, who trained for Barry Tuxford, watched Jack critically. He had not much faith in amateur riders, especially new chums, but he soon saw Jack Redland was a good way beyond the average. Lucky Boy, he thought, had never gone so well before, and this was the opinion of Willie, when he dismounted, and the black boy looked at Jack admiringly.

Barry Tuxford was immensely pleased. He had no idea Jack could ride so well, and he thought Captain Seagrave was right when he said he was too good for pearl fishing.

"It does a fellow good to get on the back of a decent horse again," said Jack, as he patted Lucky Boy's neck.

"What do you think of him?" asked Barry.

"A very good mover, not particularly fast, but I should think he was a good stayer."

"He is, Mr. Redland," said Joe Kirby. "He can stay any distance, and over a couple of miles he would wear a faster horse than himself down."

"I daresay you are right," replied Jack. "Has he won any races?"

"A couple of minor handicaps at the Turf Club meeting, but no race of any value. He is generally in at a nice weight," said Barry.

"He won a Welter, too," said Joe.

"So he did, I forgot that. Carried ten seven, I think," said Barry.

"I don't know what I weigh now," said Jack, "but I could easily go to scale at ten stone at home, and less if required."

"Then you have ridden in England?" said the trainer, somewhat surprised.

"Oh, yes, scores of times. I was almost at the top of the tree one year. I won a race at Lewes a few days before I sailed for Fremantle."

"I thought you knew how to handle a horse when you threw your legs across Lucky Boy," replied Joe.

"That's Dongara," said Barry, as a grey came along alone. "He's got a bit of a temper. Gives Joe a lot of trouble, I'm afraid; but we keep pegging away at him because we think there's something in him, and a clever man chose him for me in Sydney. He cost more than he's worth, I fancy, and he's had adventures; the beggar was ship-wrecked, and had to swim ashore."

Jack glanced at the grey, and liked his appearance.

"May I ride him?" he asked.

Barry looked at the trainer, who smiled as he replied—

"If Mr. Redland will risk being thrown off there can be no objection; but it is only fair he should be warned what sort of a horse he is."

"As bad as that, is it?" laughed Jack. "Let me try my hand. I have ridden some nasty horses in my time; if he throws me he's welcome to any satisfaction he may get out of it."

Dongara was brought up, and when the lads saw the new chum was going to ride him they grinned at his expense in anticipation of some exciting fun.

It was exciting enough while it lasted, but could hardly be called fun; it was a battle in grim earnest, and the youngsters looked on in amazement.

Dongara first tried to bolt, and Jack let him have his head for a couple of miles, but did not allow him to forget who was master. This did not exactly suit the horse, who generally had his own way with the lads.

"He's holding him," said Joe. "That's more than I expected he would do."

At the end of a stiff gallop Dongara gave in, but he was not at the end of his experiment. He lashed out suddenly, then stood up and pawed the air; but a blow between the ears brought him down to a less exalted attitude. Then he tried to savage his rider, and got his nose kicked for his trouble.

At the end of half-an-hour Dongara consented to gallop like a well-mannered thoroughbred, and it was evident Jack had him under control.

"You handled him splendidly," said Barry approvingly.

"He's a good horse," said Jack, "but, as you say, he has a very bad temper. It will take more than I have given him to cure him; but I could tame him in time. Where did you say he came from?"

"Sydney. Joel Kenley bought him for me."

"Joel Kenley!" exclaimed Jack. "That's very strange; his brother trained Topsy Turvy, the last horse I rode before I left England. I am going to look him up if ever I get as far as Sydney."

"You'll find Joel a decent sort, and well up in his business," said Barry.

Jack enjoyed the change thoroughly, and went back with Barry, eager to hear what he had to propose about racing.

Barry Tuxford was not long in coming to the point.

"There is not much to be won here," he said, "and after our meeting next month I thought of taking a trip to Sydney. Will you go with me?"

"With pleasure," replied Jack. "It is just what I should like."

"Harry Marton can go back with the pearling fleet, and you can have a share of the plunder. By the time we have finished our jaunt, Silas may have captured the black pearl for you."

"I hope so," said Jack. "I have set my heart on getting it."

"It's not much use taking any horses, they are too good for us there, although I should like to take them down on their own ground with a nag from West Australia."

"Why not take Lucky Boy? He ought to be good enough to win a long distance race, and he would get a light weight."

"We might do that, but I am afraid he would not pay his expenses. He'd come in all right as a second string if I bought something good; do to bring 'em along, and make the pace sound for the other fellow."

"I should say you would have some difficulty in finding a better horse to lead another at exercise, or as you suggest, to ensure a good pace throughout a long race. I have often seen the second string beat the first when he has been run merely as an assistant," said Jack.

"Will you sell half your shares in the Great Tom mine?" asked Barry.

"Yes, if you advise me to do so, and the money will come in handy for racing."

"If you are going to bet with it, keep it locked up where it is, it will be safer there."

"Then you are no believer in backing horses?"

"Not to win much money. Of course, I like to have a flutter for the fun of the thing, most sportsmen do," said Barry.

"When do you intend leaving here?"

"As soon as we have got the fleet away again. I must see Rank, and the two skippers, and come to terms with them."

When Barry went to Fremantle, to arrange for the return of the schooners to the bay, Jack wrote a reply to Winifred's letter. It was a long epistle, and in it he gave her an account of his adventures with the pearling schooners.

"It was a rough life, but I did not dislike it, and the finding of pearls is very exciting. I did not intend to tell you of this incident, but I cannot keep it to myself, and I know you have too much good sense to be disappointed if it does not turn out as I wish. One day I found a beautiful black egg shaped pearl in a large shell. It was perfect—not a flaw in it, and I was bewildered at its beauty, for they are very rare. I thought how nice it would be to send it to you as a token you were not forgotten. Forgotten! Why Winnie, I am always thinking of you and of the last time I saw you on the terrace, with your arms outstretched, pleading to me to come back, or I fancied so. 'Like his conceit,' I hear you say.

"There is an old pearl dealer here; a regular character, looks like a cross between a Jew pawn-broker and a Christian cabdriver. He's very rich, so my friend, Barry Tuxford, says. (Barry's a splendid fellow—a regular colonial. I am sure you would like him.) His name is Silas Filey—how do you fancy it—and he bought up all our pearls before he left the schooner. He says he'll try and get the black pearl back, because he knows the man we think persuaded the black fellow to steal it. If it is recovered Barry has promised I shall have it at a fair price, and I mean to send it you. Its story and adventures will interest you, and when you look at it, if ever you have the luck, it will remind you of 'the failure' far away in Australia.

"I am commencing to think, Win, that I am not such a dire failure after all, for I have just made a big haul by an investment in the Great Tom mine, again thanks to Barry, and my share of the pearls and shell will be considerable. Tell Sir Lester, Barry and myself are off to Sydney on a racing expedition, taking a horse called Lucky Boy with us, and that I shall also take the black jacket with orange sleeves I rode Topsy Turvy in with me, and if I get a chance either wear them myself, or put them up on a good one. We are sanguine of doing some good before we return.

"I am sure Captain Seagrave would enjoy himself and amuse you both if he paid a visit to The Downs. He's a rare good sort, and as large-hearted and brave as only a British seaman can be. Write to the G.P.O., Sydney, next time, that is, if you still have a corner in your heart for me. I should like to say something, Win, but wait until I come home, and then I will tell you my secret. Guess it if you can."

CHAPTER NINETEENTH

A STAB IN THE DARK

The friends separated, Harry Marton going to the bay with the augmented pearling fleet, Jack and Barry Tuxford journeying to Sydney by one of the mail steamers, taking Lucky Boy with them. Before following their fortunes in New South Wales it will be interesting to learn how Amos Hooker managed to secure the black pearl.

When they reached the shore from the schooner "Heron," Amos kept good control over his temper and said no more about the pearl to Kylis. He was anxious to see the "Heron" leave the bay without the loss being discovered. He thought it better to remain on shore and not return to the boat.

The following morning he looked across the bay from his tent, and saw the "Heron" had put out to sea. This suited his purpose, and he set out to hunt up the blacks, putting a revolver in his pocket in case it was wanted. Amos Hooker had risked his own life too often to have much regard for the lives of others, and shooting an odd black or two would not trouble his conscience. Kylis and Miah were useful to him, and he had no wish to harm them, but he meant having the black pearl, and at his own price. The divers had a good trip and were paid well, he got them the job, and it was only fair he should have the pearl.

Kylis saw him coming, and prepared for a row, he knew Amos feared him more than any other man, but possession of the black pearl was much in his favour; he said to himself he would smash it sooner than let Amos have it for a mere trifle.

"The schooner has gone," said Amos. "They have not discovered the loss of the pearl."

"They may put back when they do," replied Kylis.

"No fear of that, they are not certain we have it."

"They can form a good idea," said Miah.

"Look here," replied Amos, "you had better dry up, you are out of this deal."

"Am I, ask him?" he said, pointing to Kylis, "we talked it over during the night, and I am to have my share."

"It won't be a large cut in," replied Amos.

"If you are fair and square, you shall have it," said Kylis. "I want some money down, and more when it is sold."

"How much do you want?"

"Twenty pounds each," said Kylis.

Amos swore they should have no such sum. "Forty pounds!" he exclaimed, "I may not get that for the pearl."

"You'll get a big lump for it," said Kylis.

"Hand it over and let me look at it."

The black laughed, and shook his head.

"Where is it?" asked Amos.

"Safe, you cannot find it."

"I have not come here to kick up a row, but I mean to handle that pearl; if you do not give it me I'll drive you out of the settlement; I can easily do it, most of them would rather have your room than your company."

"Much good it would do you," replied Kylis, "because the pearl would go with us."

"Will you hand it over?"

"For twenty pounds each, and twenty more when you sell it."

"I'll not give it. Hand it over," said Amos, savagely, drawing his revolver.

"If you shoot you will never find it," said Kylis.

Amos levelled the weapon at him, and Miah slunk back to the other side of the tent.

Kylis did not quail, he was certain Amos would not shoot.

"If you don't put the revolver down I'll smash the pearl," said the black.

Amos lowered it and said, with an evil scowl—

"I have not so much money, I cannot give it you now. Listen to me. You cannot sell the pearl, I can, what is the good of keeping it?"

Kylis knew this was correct. Amos had a far better chance of disposing of it than they had.

"What will you give us?" asked Kylis.

"Ten pounds each, and twenty pounds each if I sell it for a good price."

Kylis called to Miah, who told him to take it.

They agreed to this, and Amos Hooker went to get the money, well satisfied with his bargain, for he had no intention of giving them any more money when he sold it.

When Amos left the tent Kylis said—

"We'll let him have it, I can get it back again."

"How?"

"Never mind. I'll have it or——"

"What?"

"I'll have his life. He's a brute."

Miah shivered, he knew Kylis would be as good as his word.

Amos came back with the money in gold, and placed it on a box.

"Now give me the pearl," he said. Kylis handed it to him, and snatched up the money.

Amos Hooker looked at the pearl for some time; he was surprised at its size and purity, he had never seen one like it before, it would be difficult to dispose of.

There was one man he might get a fair price from, Silas Filey, but he hardly knew how to approach him. Silas was acquainted with some of his past life and could make things very unpleasant for him if he chose.

He left the tent with the pearl, satisfied that he had in his possession a gem worth a thousand pounds at least. If he only ventured to Fremantle with it and offered it for open sale he would get much more; this, however, he dare not do.

How to communicate with Silas, that was the difficulty. He puzzled his brains to think how it could be done. Should he send a man from Shark's Bay to see him? There was no one he dare trust on such an errand, for although he was recognised as "the boss," he was more hated than feared, and there were none who would neglect an opportunity of benefiting themselves at his expense.

Some weeks went by, and he still had the pearl safely hidden away, and even Kyllis had not been able to discover where it was concealed. Schooners from Fremantle often put into Shark's Bay, and one evening the "Swan" sailed in and anchored.

A boat came ashore from her, and a man inquired for Amos Hooker, and handed him a letter.

It was from Silas Filey, and he read it with difficulty. When he had fully understood its contents he flew into a furious passion. Silas had taken the bull by the horns with a vengeance, he knew his man and wrote accordingly. Had Barry Tuxford been at his elbow he might have gone about it in a different way, but it would not have proved so effective.

The letter stated clearly that he, Silas Filey, had definite information that Amos Hooker had in his possession a valuable black pearl, which had been stolen from Jack Redland, on board the schooner "Heron," by a black diver named Kyllis. This diver had been sent out with the schooner to the pearl fisheries, in company with another black, named Miah, for the express purpose of committing a robbery, the proceeds of which were to be handed over to Amos Hooker.

Having given him a shock that he knew would stagger him, Silas went on to write—

"The black pearl must be handed over to the man who gives you this letter, or the consequences will be serious. The case of the 'Mary Hatchett' has not been forgotten in Fremantle, and there is such a thing as being placed on trial for murder on the high seas. I know you and your little games, Amos Hooker, and there is one of your intended victims here now, who would be only too glad to give evidence against you. The black steward of the 'Mary Hatchett' escaped, and he, too, is here, ready to swear your life away. There is an open warrant for your arrest out, and an officer on board the 'Swan' has it in his possession. He does not know you are at Shark's Bay, but if you do not give up the pearl my man has another letter which he will deliver to him; you can, no doubt, guess what its contents are. Hand over the pearl without any fuss and you shall receive one hundred pounds down and not a penny more. If you are wise you will do as I ask."

Amos Hooker glanced at the man who handed him the letter, he would have been glad to strangle him. He was in a tumult of rage and walked away to think over the letter and try and control himself.

"How long shall you be?" shouted the man. "We cannot wait here."

"I'll be back in half an hour," said Amos.

"Mind you bring it with you," was the reply.

"He knows all about it," thought Amos, and then, with a sudden fear, he muttered—

"He may be the man with the warrant. No, that's not likely, he'd remain on board. A hundred pounds for a pearl worth thousands, it's shameful."

He gave no thought to the manner in which it came into his possession, he grudged parting with it for such a paltry sum. It was, however, the best thing to do, in fact the only way. He would clear eighty pounds, which was better than nothing, and at the same time secure a powerful friend in Silas Filey, who might be very useful at another time if he chose. There was no help for it, no way out of the trap Silas had laid for him. That old affair of the "Mary Hatchett," if stirred up, would prove very bad for him, it might mean a halter round his neck, and there was a man on the "Swan" empowered to take him into custody.

He took the black pearl from its hiding place, and handled it fondly. What cursed luck it was to have to part with it in this way. No doubt Silas had been set on by Barry Tuxford to get the pearl back, it was a smart move on his part. He walked slowly back, and when he reached the boat, called the man on one side.

"You are to hand over a hundred pounds to me."

"In exchange for a black pearl, which has been described to me, and which I must see."

"Here it is."

The man examined it carefully, and was apparently satisfied with his scrutiny.

"Here is the money," he said, giving Amos a small, heavy bag. "You can count it if you like, but it is quite correct."

"It's a barefaced robbery, I have been forced into it," said Amos, in a rage.

The man laughed, as he replied—

"The robbery is on the wrong side this time, you are the victim."

Amos Hooker showered curses upon him as the boat put off for the schooner, with the precious pearl in the man's keeping.

Kylis came down to him, and Amos said—

"I have sold the pearl, here is the money," and he jangled the bag.

"How much?"

"One hundred pounds."

"You are a fool," said the black, savagely. "It is worth many hundreds."

"Which I could not get."

"We must have our share."

"Not a fraction," said Amos.

Contrary to his expectation the black walked away, and the evil look in his eyes caused Amos some uneasiness.

He shook off the feeling, and went to his tent, which was at the furthest end of the camp, away from that of the blacks.

He counted the gold, it was correct, one hundred pounds, neither more nor less. Hiding it under his bed he lay down to rest, intending to be up early in the morning and secure a safe place for it.

Kylis returned to his tent in a sullen mood, and Miah knew he was best left alone.

In the middle of the night the black stole out of the tent, leaving Miah asleep. He knew his way almost as well in the dark as by daylight. Keeping well to the rear of the camp he approached the tent of Amos Hooker noiselessly, carrying in his hand a big pearling knife. Lying on the ground he listened intently, but heard no sound. Crawling snake-like round the canvas he came to the opening, where he again stopped, listening. He peered into the darkness, but saw nothing. Crawling inside he felt his way cautiously, the slightest noise might rouse his intended victim.

His hand felt the rough mattress on which Amos Hooker lay. Kylis stood up, motionless, then bending down he found out how he lay by his breathing. His eyes were becoming accustomed to the darkness, and he saw a faint outline of Hooker's form.

Suddenly, quickly, with a panther-like spring, Kylis was on top of the sleeping man. His strong left hand felt for the throat, and caught it in a grip of iron; the black raised his right hand and struck home at his victim's heart. A faint gurgling sound was heard, a convulsive shudder, and then Amos Hooker lay still for ever.

Kylis crawled about the tent hunting for the bag of gold. He dragged the body off the bed, pulled it over, and in another minute had the bag in his hand. He made his way out of the tent and disappeared in the darkness.

Next morning Amos Hooker was found stabbed to the heart, and Kylis had vanished.

Miah was questioned, but it was evident the terrified black knew nothing about the deed. Search was made for the murderer, but there was not much heart put into the work.

Some of the pearlers showed plainly they were not at all sorry Amos Hooker was gone from their midst. He had bullied everyone in the settlement and was generally disliked.

"I wonder what Kylis did it for," said one man.

"He had good reason for it, no doubt; Amos was a devil where blacks were concerned," answered another.

CHAPTER TWENTIETH

THE TRAINER'S SUGGESTION

When Jack Redland and Barry Tuxford arrived in Sydney, it was arranged that the former should go to Randwick and ascertain if Joel Kenley would take charge of Lucky Boy.

"He will probably have received a letter from his brother about you," said Barry, "and that will serve as an introduction."

Nothing loath, Jack went by train and found his way to Joel Kenley's house.

The trainer's stables were at lower Randwick, where he had a comfortable house and about a score horse boxes. Jack was favourably impressed with his first glimpse of the "Newmarket" of New South Wales. He saw the racecourse as the train went past and wound at a steady pace up the hill. He had no difficulty in finding Joel Kenley's, for the first man he asked said, in reply to his question,—

"Know where Joel lives, I should say so, there's not many people hereabouts do not know him."

"A celebrated trainer, is he?" asked Jack.

"You may well say that. He's won nearly all our big races at one time and another, and he's about as clever as any man can be with horses."

Jack thought his informant looked like an old jockey, and was about to ask him if his surmise was correct, when the man saved him the trouble by saying with a smile,—

"I see you have sized me up. I was a well known rider fifteen years ago, but I got too old fashioned, it's the young 'uns get all the luck in these days."

"I was going to ask you if you were a jockey," said Jack. "It does seem rather hard lines that a man who has given the best part of his life to his work should be discarded when he is old. I suppose you made sufficient to live on?"

The man shook his head as he replied,—

"There was not much chance, I got a fair amount of riding, but the fees did not amount to much, it is different here to the old country, where a jockey can earn thousands a year."

"I suppose so," said Jack.

"You are a new arrival here?"

"I am, I came out to Fremantle some months back."

"Fremantle? Then perhaps you know Mr. Tuxford—Barry Tuxford?"

Jack laughed as he replied—

"I ought to, he came here with me, we arrived the day before yesterday."

"That's strange now, very strange. He'll know me if you mention my name—Bricky Smiles. I once rode a horse for him here, at Sydney, before he was sent to Western Australia; it won, and I believe he backed it to win a good deal more than he gave for it, at any rate I had a nice present, he was more liberal than some owners I could name."

"I shall certainly tell him I met you," said Jack, "but I must hurry on, I am anxious to see Mr. Kenley."

"I'll walk down the hill with you if you like," said Bricky.

"Do," replied Jack, "I shall be glad of your company."

There was a cool breeze blowing from Coogee Bay which made it pleasant and refreshing, and Jack contrasted his present surroundings with those of his pearl fishing experiences. He liked the look of the place, and thought, as many have done before him, that Randwick is especially favoured by Nature, and that a more suitable spot it would have been hard to find for training quarters.

His companion watched him keenly, thinking to himself, "He's a good bred one, I'll bet; a bit different to some of 'em we get out from the old country."

Bricky Smiles had met many men in his time, and experience taught him to pick and choose with discernment.

"That is Joel Kenley's house," he said, as they turned the corner at the foot of the hill, and faced the wide clean road with neatly trimmed hedges and pretty picturesque houses.

Joel Kenley's training stables were almost perfect in their appointment, and since he had taken over command, he had been careful to keep everything in order. Jack had seen many training establishments in the old country, far more extensive than this, but he thought he had never come across one that looked more business-like, or compact.

"I'll not go in with you," said Bricky, smiling. "Joel's a cut above me now, although there was a time when he would have been very glad for me to do him a turn."

"And has he forgotten that time?" asked Jack, in some surprise.

"No, I can't say he has; but as you are a visitor, he'll no doubt prefer to see you alone. I daresay we shall meet again."

"Sure to," replied Jack, "and if I can be of any service to you, I shall be only too pleased. I will not forget to tell Mr. Tuxford I met you."

They parted, and Jack walked up the path to the trainer's house. The front door was open and a couple of fox terriers barked a welcome, as well as a warning, for they quickly decided the visitor

was a friend and not an enemy.

Jack thought it all looked very home-like, and the barking of the terriers recalled to mind his visits to The Downs, and the joyous capers of Winifred's dogs as they sprang up at him and then careered wildly round the lawn.

The trainer was sitting in the front room and came to the door before he had time to knock.

Jack recognised him by his resemblance to his brother, and said with a smile—

"You are Mr. Kenley, I think, I have not much hesitation in saying."

Joel Kenley held out his hand, and said—

"And if I am not mistaken you are Mr. Redland. I had a long letter from my brother, Caleb, about you some months ago; where have you been all this time? I have been expecting to see you, and wondered what had become of you; however, come inside and make yourself quite at home—that is, if you are Mr. Redland," he added, laughing.

"I am Jack Redland, and it is quite evident we meet as friends."

It was a pleasure to Jack to talk about the old places at home, and Joel asked many questions about his brother. "We have been parted a good many years," he said, "and our letters have been few and far between; a trainer's life does not leave him much leisure for correspondence. I recollect Lewes well, and also The Downs. Sir Lester Dyke was a fine English gentleman."

"He is one of my best friends," replied Jack, "probably the best, and your brother has been very successful in training his horses. He does not keep many, but what he has are usually of a good class, and pay their way."

"Which is more than can be said for the majority of racehorses," laughed Joel. "Caleb was always a cute fellow, even as a youngster, and got the better of me on many occasions."

"I rode a winner for Sir Lester just before I sailed for Fremantle," said Jack; "Topsy Turvy in the Southdown Welter; it was a lucky race for me in every way."

"My brother mentions it in his letter, in fact told me all about it, and also that you were one of the best amateur riders in England. We must try and get you a mount or two here, I suppose you have no objections?"

"On the contrary, I shall be only too pleased to be in the saddle again. I have been pearl fishing in Western Australia; it was all right for a time, very interesting as an experiment, but I should not care to stick at it long," said Jack.

Joel Kenley laughed as he replied—

"There's a vast difference between pearl fishing and horse riding, I am afraid you will require some practice. Come out into Randwick track in the early morning, and I will give you a mount on something that will take you along at a fair pace."

This suited Jack immensely, and he broached the subject of Lucky Boy, and of Barry Tuxford's desire for Joel Kenley to take him into his stable if he had room and no objections.

For a moment the trainer hesitated, then he said—

"I have several patrons, but I do not think any of them will mind my taking the horse. Owners have become ticklish of late, and do not care for strangers bringing an odd horse or two into their camp; however, I can make it all right with them, and Mr. Tuxford may send Lucky Boy here as soon as he likes. What sort of a horse is he?"

"I have ridden him in two or three gallops, and consider him a very fair horse indeed. He's a stayer and has plenty of pace, a good bay, four years old, full of bone and muscle; he's a trifle on the big side now, anyway I think you will like him. He may not be equal to taking the measure of your cracks, although Barry is sanguine he will."

Joel Kenley smiled as he said,—

"I have never seen a horse for that part of the Colonies that was capable of holding his own with our lot. If there is anything to work on in Lucky Boy, I'll get it out of him, you may rest assured of that. If I may venture on a word of advice, I think you ought to buy another horse to lead him in his work and act as a sort of second string in case Lucky Boy cannot run at any time."

"A very good idea," replied Jack. "I should like to buy a second string, as you aptly call it, if you will take charge of him—but that would be bringing another stranger into the stable," he added, laughing.

"Never mind that," replied the trainer. "When I have found out the sort of horse Lucky Boy is, I shall be better able to advise you what kind of a second string you require. I can arrange for trials with some of the other horses later on, but, in the first place, it will be better to have a companion for him in his work. I should not advise you to fly at too high game at first, take a feeler and see what we can safely do."

Jack recognised this advice as sound and agreed with it; he thought how Joel Kenley resembled

his brother in his ways and mode of going to work—cautious, yet having plenty of pluck at the right time. After a round of the stables, where he saw some of the cracks of the Colony, he left again for Sydney, promising to be on the track next morning with Barry Tuxford.

Joel Kenley was very pleased with his visitor, and glad to make his acquaintance.

"There's grit in him," he thought. "He looks as though he could ride a determined finish, and when I see how he shapes at exercise, I'll take good care he has a mount on one that will do him credit. Barry Tuxford's a rum customer, and I have heard some funny tales about him; but he must be a straight goer, or young Redland would not take him on."

"Well, what luck?" asked Barry as Jack entered their room in the hotel.

"Good luck; could not be better. Joel Kenley is one of the right sort, he says he will take Lucky Boy into his stable and you can send him along as soon as you like."

"That's good," said Barry, well satisfied, "we shall know the horse is in safe hands."

Jack then explained what the trainer had suggested about a second string to lead Lucky Boy in his work, and also to run in races if necessary.

"A second string!" exclaimed Barry. "It sounds a bit like pearls, a string of 'em. I wonder if you will get hold of the black pearl for that charming young lady you think so much about. I have had a good many strings of pearls through my hands."

"I hope I shall get it," said Jack. "I have set my heart on having that black pearl, it will bring us luck, I feel sure."

"If anyone can recover it, it will be Silas. He's an old thief, but he'll be straight with me, and he knows how to handle such men as Amos Hooker; he will deal with him in a way of his own that will probably surprise us."

It would have surprised them had they known what had taken place at Shark's Bay, and the fate of Amos Hooker, also that the black pearl was safe in the hands of Silas Filey.

Almost at the moment they were conversing about it, Silas Filey had the black pearl in his hands, and his eyes were fixed upon it with a greedy fascination that was unmistakable. The pearl had been delivered into his keeping and it was not for sale. He had promised to get it for Jack Redland and Barry Tuxford, and had done so.

The spirit of the pearl buyer, the dealer, the judge of such precious treasures, was roused on him as he looked at it. He knew it to be a pearl of almost fabulous value, he had never seen one so perfectly flawless, and he desired to possess it with an intensity of feeling known only to the men who deal in such things.

He would not let it go without a struggle; he would offer a big sum for it, not as much as it was worth, but sufficient to tempt a man in Jack Redland's position. Barry Tuxford would probably ask him to place a value upon it for Jack Redland to pay; if so, it should be reasonable, allowing for him a substantial margin so that he could give a considerable advance upon it in case Jack was induced to sell it.

Silas Filey misjudged his man, he little knew Jack Redland's determined character, or his sterling honesty, which would forbid him, in any case, to profit at the expense of others.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIRST

BRICKY FINDS A JOB

Lucky Boy went into Joel Kenley's stables at Randwick, and no one raised any objection.

Strange to say, it was Brickly Smiles who took the horse to Randwick. Jack Redland found him hanging about the yards in Pitt Street, where the horse was boxed, and in the course of conversation mentioned that Lucky Boy was going into Kenley's stable.

"Is he sending for him?" asked Brickly with an eye to a job.

"No; we are to deliver him there," replied Jack.

"Will you let me take him? I will be very careful," said Brickly, "and I know how to handle horses better than the lads about here."

"Certainly," replied Jack, without any hesitation. He had taken a fancy to Brickly, and was glad to do him a turn, no matter how small. "You must be on your guard, for he's a bit skittish, and a trifle fresh and above himself just now."

"Leave it to me; I'll see he comes to no harm."

"We ought to have someone to look after him at Kenley's. I never thought of it at the time, and it will be hardly fair to ask him to lend us one of his lads. How would you like to do it? I don't

suppose Mr. Kenley would have any objection."

Bricky's eyes sparkled. Here was a chance he had not expected, and he jumped at it. He thought he could induce Joel Kenley to let him remain if it was the desire of Lucky Boy's owner he should do so.

"I shall be very glad of the job," said Bricky. "It is a long time since I had such an offer, but I am used to the work, and will do my best for you."

"I am sure you will," replied Jack, "and I will write a letter to Kenley and name the matter to him."

This he did, and handed it to Bricky when he took charge of Lucky Boy.

The old jockey led the horse very carefully, and admired him when he saw how well he walked. As they passed through Randwick numerous stable boys looked at him, and recognising a strange horse, called out to Bricky and asked his name.

Bricky was not a favourite with the younger generation, and they were apt to tease him and make fun at his expense, forgetting that he knew a good deal more than they were ever likely to learn. He answered them sharply, telling them to mind their own business and find out.

This nettled them, and one lad more venturesome than the others shouted—

"So you've found somebody to trust you at last, Brick; I hope they'll not be sorry for it."

"Shut up, you young scoundrel," shouted Bricky. "If I could leave the horse I'd give you a hiding."

There was a general laugh of derision at this, which did not improve Bricky's temper, and another boy called out—

"I'll hold the horse while you give it him."

Bricky was moving on, out of the way of his tormentors, when someone threw a stone and frightened Lucky Boy. The horse plunged, and almost dragged the reins out of his hand. He tried to pacify him, but had some difficulty in doing so. It so happened that Joel Kenley was riding along at the time, and seeing what occurred he dismounted, handed his horse to a bystander, and before the lad who had thrown the stone was aware of it, he was in the trainer's grip.

The boy wriggled and endeavoured to get away, but it was not until he had received a sound thrashing that he was allowed to go. The trainer coolly remounted and rode after Bricky, leaving the small group of boys cowed and sullen, and vowing vengeance upon both of them.

"Whose horse is that?" he asked as he came up with him.

"Mr. Tuxford's, and I am taking him to your stables."

"That's curious; it was lucky I came up when I did, or he might have got away from you. So that's Lucky Boy, is it? He does not look a bad sort; a better quality than I expected."

The trainer watched the horse carefully as they went down the hill, and the more he saw of his movements the better he liked him.

When they arrived at the stables Bricky handed Jack's note to the trainer, and scrutinised his face as he read it.

"He wants you to stay and look after the horse," said Joel. "We have no room, but I daresay you can sleep out."

"I'll manage that if you'll allow me to attend to him," said Bricky eagerly.

"It is some time since you undertook work of this kind?"

"But you know I can look after a horse as well if not better than some of the younger ones."

"Yes, I think you can, and I would far sooner have you in my stable than a stranger. Bring him round to this box."

Lucky Boy was installed in comfortable quarters, and the head lad was informed that Bricky Smiles would look after him.

"And see that the lads do not chaff him," said the trainer. "If they do, report to me, and I will soon settle with them."

"Very good, sir," replied the head lad, who respected his master, and kept a firm hold over the boys.

Bricky at once set to work and strapped Lucky Boy well, and when he had finished his task, stood looking at him with much satisfaction.

Fred Manns, the head lad, smiled as he saw him, and said—

"You have not forgotten how to work, Bricky, and I daresay you have not forgotten how to ride. I know when I was a youngster you were considered the equal of any of our jockeys. You've had bad luck, old fellow; this may bring about a change if the horse turns out a good one. Where does

he come from, and who owns him?"

It was evident Joel Kenley was not communicative, or there would have been no occasion to put these questions. As it was Fred Manns who asked them, Bricky was quite willing to supply the information, which he did.

"Comes from Western Australia!" said Fred in surprise. "That's a deuce of a way to bring a horse. I should have thought it would have paid better to race him there, much easier to win than it will be here."

"I do not think it is a matter of money with either Barry Tuxford or Mr. Redland. They brought the horse over because they are true sportsmen and want to see what he can do against some of our lot. I hope they will be rewarded for their pluck with a good win."

"So do I," replied Fred. "They are the sort of men we want about us; there's too much of the money-making about most of them, and when they get a haul it's precious little of it comes our way."

"Then you find your jobs not all pleasure and profit?" said Bricky smiling.

"It's anything but that. The boss is all right, a real good sort, but some of the owners are desperate skinflints."

"You'll find a difference with the owner of Lucky Boy if he wins a race," said Bricky. "I'm open to bet he gives tips all round if he has a win, and liberal ones too."

"Do you know him?"

"Yes, I rode a race or two for him years ago, but I have not seen him since he went away. Mr. Redland I only met quite accidentally as he was coming to see the boss, but I am sure he is a genuine good fellow. It was he gave me the chance to look after Lucky Boy."

The new arrival at Kenley's stables went out with the team to exercise at Randwick next morning, and Jack Redland and Barry Tuxford were on the course. After mutual greetings, the trainer suggested Jack should mount Lucky Boy and give him a canter, and then a fast mile spin with a couple of others.

Nothing loath, Jack was soon ready, and Joel Kenley's practised eyes quickly saw he had a good seat. The appearance of a strange rider, more especially an amateur, caused some comment amongst the lookers on, and there were many inquiries to learn who he was.

Lucky Boy moved somewhat stiffly, as this was his first exercise canter after the voyage, but it quickly wore off, and by the time the trainer gave instructions for the gallop the horse was eager to be off. The going was good, and Jack admired all the surroundings—the hills, the houses at Randwick, and the distant view of famous Botany Bay.

The horses sent out to accompany Lucky Boy were not of a very high class, but both had won handicaps at Moorefield, Canterbury, and elsewhere. Jack soon found he would not have much difficulty in beating them, and this he did comfortably and with judgment.

As they pulled up, Joel Kenley said to Barry Tuxford—

"I think you have a very fair horse, and I am sure your friend is a good rider. I shall have no hesitation in putting him up when I have an opportunity."

This pleased Barry, who said—

"I hope to win a good race with Lucky Boy, and I know Jack will be delighted to have a winning mount."

The boys who had ridden with Jack were not long in telling their stable companions that the new chum was "no slouch," and that he could ride "above a bit." As to Lucky Boy, they were not much impressed with his merits, as the horses they had ridden against him were not first class.

"The next thing we have to do is to purchase the second string," said Jack smiling.

"And I think I have hit upon the very horse for you if he can be bought," replied the trainer. "You see that dark brown over there cantering alongside Bowery?"

They looked in the direction pointed out, and saw the horses he alluded to.

"That's Black Boy. He's very useful; five years old, thoroughly reliable, no vice, and an excellent schoolmaster. If they'll sell him he is just the horse for you. He can win a welter race and you can ride him yourself."

They watched the horse as he went past, and Jack was favourably impressed. There was a "cut and come again" look about him that argued well for his courage.

"What is he worth?" he asked.

"They are sure to ask a stiff price if they know we want him. He's not in very good hands, and I have had my doubts about his running on more than one occasion lately. I am under the impression they have been bottling him up, and if I am correct, you might get a better race out of him than many people would anticipate. No blame would attach to us; the change of stables

would account for the reversal of form; but, of course, if it is as I surmise, it will put his price up. Black Boy is honestly worth about three hundred; they will probably ask five, and you may get him for something over four hundred."

"Will you try and buy him?" asked Jack.

"I had better keep out of it. If they think I want the horse they will not sell. I am not in their good books, and have no desire to be; they are not my class, but that has nothing whatever to do with the merits of the horse."

"No, of course not," answered Jack, "but can you get anyone to approach them for us?"

"Why not let me try?" said Barry, laughing. "I generally succeed in my undertakings, and I fancy I can manage it. They'll probably take me for a greenhorn."

The trainer laughed as he replied—

"They will not do that."

"There's very little of the greenhorn look about you," said Jack, "but try if you wish, although I do not know how you will work it."

"Leave that to me," replied Barry. "I can always find out ways and means of becoming acquainted with anyone I wish to know."

It was decided that negotiations for the purchase of Black Boy should be left in Barry's hands, and he was not long in making a move in the desired direction.

The next day he told Jack he knew Abe Moss, the owner of the horse, that he was introduced to him in Tattersall's, and that in the course of a day or two he would broach the question as to whether Black Boy was for sale.

"I have given a hint that I wish to buy one or two horses, and I saw Moss took it; he's a keen hand, and thinks he'll make a bit out of me. We shall see," added Barry, with a wink.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SECOND

BLACK BOY'S OWNER

Whatever Abe Moss's opinion of Barry Tuxford might be, that astute gentleman had his own way, and purchased Black Boy for four hundred and fifty pounds. Jack Redland was satisfied, so was Joel Kenley, who remarked that it was quite evident Barry Tuxford was fully equal to half a dozen men like Abe Moss.

"I'm not so sure of that," said Barry. "He's sharp enough, and I fancy he thinks he has got a good price for the horse. He asked me if I had any objections to letting him know when the horse was going out to win, and I said none at all, for the first time he started he would do his best."

"And what did Moss say?" asked the trainer.

"He smiled and looked cunning, as much as to say—

"You need not tell that fairy tale to me, you are not the man to run a horse out when the money is not on."

"I think that is probably correct," laughed Joel; then seeing Barry's countenance change, he added quickly—

"I mean what Moss thought, not that his opinion was correct."

Black Boy was handed over to Barry Tuxford, and consigned to the care of Brickly Smiles, at Kenley's stables. Brickly commenced to feel important again, he had two horses to look after, and this was a move in the right direction.

Joel Kenley was amused at him, and satisfied with his work in every way, in fact he acknowledged to Jack that a better man could not have been found for the job.

"It has given him a new lease of life," said the trainer, "and he'll be quite a different man in a few weeks."

Joel Kenley was not long in ascertaining whether his surmise as to Black Boy having been "bottled up" was correct. He tried him well, and was surprised at the result. He kept his knowledge to himself until he had given the horse a "dust up" with Lucky Boy. Again the result was a surprise, for the Western horse won rather easily at level weights.

Joel was a trifle puzzled. He had discovered that Black Boy would probably be weighted at a stone below his proper form in the next big handicap, and he was quite sure Lucky Boy would be leniently treated, as handicappers usually, and sometimes foolishly, regarded these "outsiders" with a contempt that was not deserved.

The trainer chuckled quietly to himself as he contemplated the bringing off of one or two good coups. He dearly loved the excitement attending such proceedings, and although he would have scorned to order a horse to be "pulled," he had no objections to benefit by the hoodwinking of a handicapper.

Somehow Joel regarded handicappers as his natural enemies, and had frequently fallen foul of them, and asked for an explanation of the weights placed upon his horses. On several instances it was acknowledged that he had good grounds for his grievance, and this did not improve the temper of the handicappers.

Although his horses ran in and out, as most horses will, there was no suspicion against him, and his reputation for honesty stood high. It was different with Abe Moss, who was regarded as a very smart customer indeed, and when it became known that a new patron of Joel's stable had purchased Black Boy there was a general winking of eyes, and nodding of heads, amongst the "knowing ones."

The opinion of these would-be clever men was that Abe Moss would not have parted with Black Boy had the horse been any good. They were a little disappointed, because they had been carefully watching Black Boy's running, and had come to the conclusion some of his performances were "very hot" indeed, and they meant to reap the benefit of their observations when "the money was on." Their time had been wasted, their opinions must have been utterly wrong, for had Abe Moss been "keeping" Black Boy for a particular race he would not have sold him.

In this they were wrong. Abe Moss was by no means inclined to play shady games for the benefit of others. He had of late received several hints that if Black Boy suddenly showed greatly improved form he might be called upon to have an unpleasant interview with the stewards of the Jockey Club. Abe had a pious horror of stewards, he considered them superfluities, and said they were appointed to prevent honest men earning a decent living. As racing meant income to Abe Moss, he had no desire to be "warned off," and this was probably what would happen if Black Boy suddenly developed into a good handicap horse.

When Barry Tuxford came along with the avowed intention of purchasing a couple of horses, Abe Moss fancied he saw a way out of the difficulty. He argued that if he sold Black Boy to a new comer, and the horse won a big race he, knowing the true form, could back him, and yet not be called upon to explain. This was the reason he parted with Black Boy, and asked to be given the information as to when the horse "was going."

It was a surprise to Abe when he knew Black Boy had gone into Joel Kenley's stable. He had a great respect for Joel as a trainer, none for him as a man. He knew it would not take him long to find out that Black Boy was a great deal better horse than his form made out. Judging others by himself, he came to the conclusion that when Joel made this discovery he would keep it dark and profit by it, in which case he, Abe Moss, stood a very good chance of being left "out in the cold" when Black Boy won. He was half inclined to give a hint to Barry Tuxford as to the true state of affairs, but he did not know him sufficiently well, and it was not safe to run risks.

Joel Kenley had some inkling as to the truth of all this when he tried Black Boy. He surmised that Abe Moss had sold the horse, with a full knowledge of what he was capable of, in order to avoid serious consequences when he won. He told Barry Tuxford and Jack everything, and also what he suspected was Abe's object in selling.

"Then we have two much better horses than we expected," said Barry, "that is satisfactory, at any rate. I hope Lucky Boy will turn out the best."

Jack laughed as he replied—

"My purchase will beat yours, Barry; the second string will win."

"We shall see," he replied, good humouredly. "How would it be to run them both in a big race and let them take their chance?"

"There is not much to be gained by that," said Joel, "unless one is put in to make the running for the other. In any case, I would like to let Abe Moss down, he deserves it."

"No favourite of yours, eh?" asked Barry.

"No, he's about as big a rogue as we have on the turf. He bribes our young lads and ruins half of them, he's not fit to mix in honest men's society."

"In that case I have no objection to falling in with any plan you may suggest for keeping him in the dark, but we must play no games with the public."

Joel Kenley laughed as he replied—

"The public are apt to jump too quickly to conclusions, which are very often wrong and unjust, and when you commence to look after their affairs you take on a thankless task."

"Nevertheless, there must be no suspicion about any of our transactions," said Barry.

After a long conversation it was decided to enter both Lucky Boy and Black Boy for the Sydney Cup, and to run them both in two or three races before that date.

"The Cup takes a tremendous lot of winning," said the trainer, "and I tell you candidly I do not think either of your horses good enough for it at present. They will improve, no doubt, at least I hope so, and probably Lucky Boy will be the better of the pair."

"What do you think of that?" said Barry, laughing.

"Time will tell," replied Jack. "I have a presentiment Black Boy will win the Cup outright."

"You are sanguine," said the trainer, smiling.

"I am, and if he wins I believe I shall also secure the black pearl," said Jack.

"You are more likely to secure the pearl than the Cup," said Barry.

It was not long after this that Barry Tuxford received a letter from Silas Filey telling him that the black pearl was safe in his keeping, that it was a beauty, one of the best he had ever seen, and he wished he owned it. He requested him to put a price upon it, or allow him to make an offer for it. He made no mention of Amos Hooker's death, as he was not aware of it. There were sundry private matters touched upon, but the gist of the whole letter was an endeavour to obtain the black pearl at a fair price.

Barry handed the letter to Jack, who was overwhelmed with delight at its recovery, and was for sending at once to Silas to forward it to Sydney, so that he could send it to Winifred without delay.

Barry laughed at his impetuosity, and replied that the pearl was far too valuable to pass through the post, and that he must possess his soul in patience until they returned to Fremantle.

"The best plan will be to let Silas value it, and then you can pay over the balance after deducting your share. He will put a fair marketable price upon it, that I will impress upon him."

"But will it be safe in his hands, he seems to covet it?" said Jack. "You say he is an old thief. I dare not trust him."

"He will not play me false for many reasons," replied Barry, "and you may rest satisfied the pearl is quite safe."

"I shall not be content until I handle it again," said Jack.

He wrote a long letter to Winifred, in which he gave her a full account of the adventures of the black pearl, which he one day hoped to place in her possession. He then went on to describe their doings in Sydney and told her about Black Boy and Lucky Boy, and what they intended doing with them. He asked her to tell Sir Lester that if Black Boy turned out well the horse would carry the black jacket and orange sleeves in the Cup. He made many inquiries about the old places at home, and at the end hinted at what lay nearest his heart. He wrote hopefully of the future, and said he felt certain of securing a considerable amount of money in the course of a year or two. "So far all my ventures have turned out well, thanks to my good friend and adviser, Barry Tuxford, and there is no reason why my good fortune should not continue. I long for the time when I shall see you again, and wonder if I shall find you changed in looks and sentiments towards myself. I lay the flattering unction to my soul that you do like me just a little bit more than other people," and so on.

If he could have seen Winifred's face when she was reading his letter he would have had no hesitation in taking her in his arms, as he did once before, and kissing her. Her eyes glowed with the growing love she had for him, and her joy was unbounded.

When her father returned home he laughed and said—

"There is no need to tell me you have had some good news, Win. Is it a letter from Jack. What does he say? How is he? Is he prospering? When is he coming home? Bless the lad, how I miss him."

Winifred laughed heartily as Sir Lester poured forth his string of questions.

"Give me time, father," she said, "and I will read you his letter."

They went out on to the terrace, and there she read him what Jack had written.

Sir Lester listened, and as she read his face softened.

She did not falter as she read the words of love which seemed to breathe between the lines. She was so very happy, she fancied it was his voice she heard, the paper was alive with a warm glow, she would not have been at all surprised had he suddenly appeared before her.

"I wish he would come back, Win," said her father, when she concluded, "we ought never to have let him go."

"It is for the best," she said, "and he will come back. Then, father—oh, then——" and she hid her face on his shoulder.

"What then, Win?" he asked, gently, as he stroked her hair.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THIRD

BARRY WAXES ELOQUENT

Barry Tuxford did not confine his attention to racing while in Sydney. He knew there were far more profitable games for making money, and being an old hand at most of them he speculated in various concerns, inducing Jack to follow his lead. They had no news of the pearling fleet, but this was not to be expected, as there were very few means of communication. There was, however, no cause for uneasiness with two such men as Danks and Hake in command, and Harry Marton to superintend.

Jack often thought of Harry and wondered what he was doing. He fancied it was rather like desertion to leave him, but Barry quickly dispelled this idea and said Harry was far more fitted for the task he was engaged upon than knocking about Sydney.

"It would not suit him here," he said, "and as you know, he has a horror of stocks and shares, which I do not wonder at, after the experiences his father had. I have more good news, Jack," he added, as he tossed him a letter to read.

Jack read it eagerly, and could hardly believe in his good luck. The Great Tom Mine had again struck it rich, and the shares had gone up by leaps and bounds; there was every prospect of his being a comparatively rich man in a very short time.

"And that's not all," said Barry, "I cabled to my agent in Perth, to buy every share he could secure at a certain price. That was before the new find, and he secured a nice parcel. You stand in of course."

"I could not think of it," said Jack, "it would not be fair, you have done too much for me already."

"Not at all; it is a pleasure to help a man like you; there are some fellows I would not lend a hand to at any price, but you are different. I am old enough to be your father, and damn me, if I don't feel something like that towards you," he added in an outburst of genuine feeling such as he seldom displayed.

Jack felt strangely drawn towards the bluff good-hearted Colonial. He had found out his true worth and knew him for what he was. There were men who almost hated Barry, but it was because he fought fair and square, and managed to beat them despite their underhand methods.

"I'm a lonely sort of man," went on Barry, "always have been, and I expect always shall be. I never 'cottoned' to a fellow as I have done to you, and I don't mind telling you, if you stick to me I'll see you all right, no matter what happens."

This was too much for Jack Redland. He grasped his friend's hand, and wrung it hard, but he did not speak. He could not. He knew every word Barry spoke he meant and there was a strange knocking at his heart as he looked at him.

"I'm an old fool, I know I am to rave like this," said Barry, "but I can't help it, and that's a fact. I've roamed about the world a lot, roughed it, and it's taken the gilt edges off, if there were ever any on; but you've knocked me all of a heap, Jack. Don't talk about my luck, it's yours that has stuck to me. I have had nothing but good fortune since I met you. My first pearling venture turned out a frost. You come along, and what do we get? We not only rummage out old Jacob Rank on his desert island, or whatever it may be, and rescue him, but we find a heap of pearls, a mighty lot of good shells, the best black pearl ever hauled out on the northern coast, and to cap all, we have a deal with that old shark, Silas Filey, that licks creation. Don't talk to me about luck, you're a regular living mascot, that's what you are."

The tension was relieved at this outburst, and Jack laughed heartily.

"Keep it up, skipper," he said, merrily. "Now you are under full sail let her go; I like to hear you, it does me good; it's as refreshing as a blow on the Sussex Downs. Don't let the wind drop yet, Barry, please don't."

"Stow your chaff and listen to me," said Barry, now thoroughly wound up. He was on the tide of a big success, and felt the force of it. "You came out here to make a fortune, and by Captain Cook, you shall get it. When you landed at Fremantle there was no hanky panky about you. Then you were a born gentleman, a swell. Oh, you needn't remonstrate! I'm not a wall-eyed kangaroo, or a burst-up emu. Oh, dear no! nothing of the sort! I'm Barry Tuxford, knockabout, good for nothing, up to everything, and I know a swell when I see one, although it has not been my fortune to meet many.

"I'm a Colonial, have always been fond of a rough life, but I know what it means for a man of your stamp to tackle a God-forsaken pearl fishing job. I liked you when you buckled to and never grumbled, and I admired your pluck when you planked down the money for those shares. I have seen men who call themselves swells do dirty mean tricks no straight man would be guilty of. They are not my sort. I couldn't sit down to eat my meals with a lot of swollen-headed nobodies. That's not my way. Let a man say what he thinks and speak out straight, then you know where you are. Judging from what I've seen, there must be some fine schools for liars in the old country; they seem educated up to it somehow."

He paused for a few moments, and Jack said—

"There are good and bad in every country. You must not judge us all by the worst samples."

"I forgive 'em since I met you," went on Barry. "In the old days on the gold fields we had a lively time, and no mistake. I was a lonely man there, although I had one good pal at first. He had a failing—he liked the drink and the girls, and any painted gazelle that came along could take all he had. But he was a thundering good pal to me."

Again he stopped, and a far-away look came into his eyes. He was recalling memories of the past, and they stirred him as they will always do men who have seen things and not gained their knowledge from talk.

Jack waited, and presently he went on—

"A real pal was Jake Morley, but as I said before, weak; and a perfect fool when the 'hell fire' they served out in the grog shanties was in him. What poison it was, brewed in the Devil's own vat, I should say, and it sent men wild and burned up both body and brains, when they had any. When Jake went I was lonely. He was as tender as a woman to me. I got sick, down with the fever, and there was precious little for us in camp, and what there was did more harm than good. Men fought and robbed, aye, and killed, too, for food in those days, and a man's life was not worth as much as a horse's. Jake stood by me all that time, some weeks, so I heard, and he got food somehow and somewhere. When I came round he made light of the whole thing, and went on a 'burst.' I didn't see him for days, when I found him he was at the bottom of a shaft with his neck broken. Drink, of course; that was what they put it down to, but I didn't. I had my own notions. A shove in the dark was easy, and he had enemies. I got even with one of them."

"Did you——" commenced Jack.

"No; I never killed a man, although I might easily have done so in self-defence, and no blame to me. There was gold then, heaps of it. The Great Tom Mine is a trifle to it; but it was harder to get, and there was no machinery.

"I did fairly well, but I soon sold out after Jake was gone; I couldn't somehow cotton to the others, thinking as I did one of them had done for him.

"But I was going to tell you we are in for a big thing—bigger than the Great Tom. I got off the track, my memory runs away with me at times; I hope you do not mind it?"

"I wish it would run away more frequently," said Jack smiling.

"I don't mind telling you things," said Barry, "but there are some men I would not open my mind to. Read that."

Jack took the paper; it was torn and dirty, and there was a lot of scrawling writing on it. With difficulty he made out the words, but failed to grasp the full extent of the meaning.

Barry watched him, smiling all the time, and said quietly—

"Hand it back, I'll translate it for you. It is from a man I employ to go out prospecting, and he's struck new ground about a hundred miles from the Great Tom Mine. It is rich, precious rich, and we are going to have the pitch, my friend. You can put all the 'ready' you have on to it, and I'll do the rest. Keep enough for your stay here, of course, but this is a big affair, and we must not miss it. I know my man, and can trust him; he never goes wrong, and he doesn't tell lies. He says the country is richer than the Great Tom. Do you know what that means?"

Jack gasped, "Richer than the Great Tom. Impossible!" he exclaimed.

"All things are possible in gold hunting," said Barry. "I shouldn't wonder if there was a nugget as big as a horse's head, only no one has had the luck to find it yet. It means hundreds of thousands of pounds, my young friend, it means that we are going to scoop the pool, and that we are not going to lose our heads, or go frantic, or howl out to the multitude how clever we are, and that other men are mere fools to us. Dear me, no, we are going to sit tight. I'm not even going to wire. I don't like wires, they leak," said Barry, with a laugh.

"Then what are you going to do? How are you going to communicate with him?" asked Jack.

"I am going myself," was the quiet reply.

"What!" exclaimed Jack.

"Fact; quite true, I assure you. There's a steamer leaves in the morning, and I'm off. We must not lose a chance, and I am the only man to attend to this affair. You can remain here and see after the horses, win the Sydney Cup; do what you like; but I must go. There's no help for it, and if you'll think for a moment you will see I am right."

Jack knew he was acting for the best, but he was sorry almost that the find had been discovered. He also knew what a keen disappointment it would be to Barry to miss seeing the horses run.

"It is a jolly shame," said Jack.

"Never mind that; I consider we are in luck's way. We shall be pulling the string at both ends and may land a big double. I would not miss this chance for anything. You want a fortune. You came

out here for one, and by the powers you shall have it."

"Listen to me, Jack; you shall go home and marry the girl of your heart. I don't care whether her father is a Duke or a Marquis, or what he is. You shall have her, if we have to buy him over with thousands. There's more than that if this thing pans out all right, as it must. I'll go with you to beard the lion in his den; how will that fit in?"

"You mean it?" said Jack. "You will return to England with me?"

"Honour bright."

"Then I am glad this has happened. I would sooner have you as my companion on my return than any man, and Sir Lester will give you a hearty English welcome."

"He'll not take to a fellow like me."

"That he will. He's not a man to stand on his dignity where Barry Tuxford is concerned. You shall be my best man at the wedding, is that a bargain?"

"You're hurrying up," laughed Barry. Jack joined in his merriment and said—

"It is your fault, you are always hurrying; and I have got into your way."

"Don't forget while I am away to keep all this dark. You are sure to be asked hundreds of questions when they know I have gone. You'll have to rack your brains to concoct some cock and bull story for them, but I have no doubt you will succeed."

Barry was not long in making his preparations, and next morning he had left Sydney without anyone being aware of it.

Jack felt in the same condition as Barry had done when he lost his pal Jake—he was lonely.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

BADLY RIDDEN

Such a man as Barry Tuxford was quickly missed in the circles he frequented in Sydney, and twenty-four hours had not elapsed since his departure, when Jack Redland was bombarded with questions as to his whereabouts. He found some difficulty in answering them, but parried thrusts in such a clever manner as would have aroused Barry's enthusiasm. It was with Joel Kenley he had most difficulty. Barry's instructions were clear: "Tell no one where I have gone." This, of course, included the trainer, although Barry had probably not meant such to be the case. At first Jack was inclined to tell him everything, but on second thoughts abandoned the idea.

He explained, as well as he could, that Barry had been suddenly called away on business of importance and might not be back for some weeks, also that he had left him in sole charge of the horses.

"It seems strange," said Joel. "He might have told me he was leaving Sydney."

"He had no time," replied Jack, "or I am sure he would have done so. I quite understand your thinking it a strange proceeding, but I hope you have confidence enough in me to act as we may think best."

"Certainly I have," replied Joel. "I know more of you than Mr. Tuxford, but naturally my curiosity is roused, and I should like to know where he is; however, if you are not at liberty to tell me it makes little difference."

"Do me a favour," said Jack. "Ask no more questions about him, and whatever you think keep it to yourself."

This the trainer promised to do, and Jack said that in due time he should be placed in possession of all the facts concerning Barry's sudden disappearance. They then discussed the coming racing season, and finally decided Jack should ride Lucky Boy in the Welter race at Rosehill.

This was to be run on the following Saturday, and some very fair horses were entered. The race was for amateur riders, approved by the Stewards, and professionals were allowed to be put up with seven pounds extra.

Lucky Boy had done well during the short time he had been at Randwick, and Joel Kenley commenced to think he was a much better horse than he anticipated. The Rosehill Welter would give him a good line to go upon. He did not expect the horse would win, and candidly said so to Jack, but he expected him to make a creditable display.

"It will be a good mount for you at any rate," he said, "and you can keep your eyes open and see what the others are doing."

There was a big crowd at the popular suburban course, and when the Rosehill Handicap had been decided, the Welter was the next race on the card.

Considerable curiosity was aroused as to how the new arrival from Western Australia would shape, and also as to how Jack Redland would handle him. He had decided to ride in Barry Tuxford's colours, cherry jacket, white sleeves, because he was anxious Sir Lester's jacket should be on a winner the first time they were out, and Lucky Boy did not hold a first class chance.

Where was Barry Tuxford, the owner of Lucky Boy? This was a question freely asked, but no answer was forthcoming. During his visit to Sydney, Barry had somewhat astonished the mining speculators by the cleverness of his transactions, and on more than one occasion it had been a question of the biter being bitten.

The popular opinion, amongst these men, was not very wide of the mark. They thought he had gone away to prospect, or to examine some new land up country, but they did not know he had sailed for Fremantle.

Had there been the slightest inkling as to Barry's destination, and the reason for his journey, there would have been a ferment of excitement, and probably a rush by the next boat to follow on his trail.

Abe Moss put the question straight to Jack.

"Where's Barry Tuxford?" he asked. "You may as well tell me, I am sure to find out in time."

"Then you can wait for that time," said Jack, "for you will gain no information from me."

"Precious clever you think yourselves, no doubt," growled Abe. "Did he tell you before he left that I was to be 'in the know' when your horses were having a try?"

"Our horses always try, no matter what yours may do," replied Jack.

Abe Moss laughed as he said—

"Oh, yes, we all know that. You are perfect saints in Western Australia, too good for this earth. Has Lucky Boy a chance to-day?" he asked, as though he had a perfect right to put the question.

Jack was irritated at the tone, and the man's impudence, or he would probably have given him a different reply. As it was he said—

"He has a very good chance."

"Worth backing?" asked Abe.

"Please yourself," said Jack, as he walked away, inwardly hoping Abe Moss would lose his money, or fail to back Lucky Boy if he won.

There were eight runners, and of this lot Random was a very hot favourite at evens, and as Smith had put up seven pounds extra to ride him the race was booked a good thing for him.

Random was a very useful horse, and more than once, when he had beaten Black Boy, Joel Kenley thought the latter could have won.

He took Jack aside before the saddling bell rang, and said—

"Watch Random closely, stick to him all the way. I do not think you can beat him, but I want to find out what Lucky Boy can do with him."

"Is there any other horse in the race to fear?" asked Jack.

"Only The Spot, and perhaps Tell Tale."

It was Jack's first appearance on an Australian course, and he was naturally anxious to create a favourable impression. Joel had told him that colonial riders had a very poor opinion of "new chums" in the saddle, and added—

"But I think you will cause them to change their opinion before the day is over."

Although Joel thought Lucky Boy had but a poor chance of beating a horse like Random, with a clever jockey in the saddle, he was not without hope that Smith would hold Jack Redland and his mount too cheap, and perhaps throw the race away. Dick Smith had one bad fault, he loved to "snatch races out of the fire," make a close finish of it, when perhaps his mount could have won by four or five lengths. It was for this reason Joel never put him up if he could help it, and when one of his patrons insisted upon it he told him he did it at his own risk.

Random dashed down the course, moving with such freedom that backers were content to lay slight odds on him, and before the flag fell he was a six to four on chance.

Smith thought the race was all over bar shouting, and at the post he smiled sarcastically, as Jack rode up on Lucky Boy, and said to the rider of The Spot—

"Old Joel's going a bit balmy if he fancies that thing has a chance."

"They say the chap on him can ride."

Smith laughed as he replied—

"I think they are well matched, neither of 'em are much to look at."

This was, no doubt, professional jealousy, as Jack cut a far better figure than Smith in the saddle. The race was run over a mile, and at the start Tell Tale went off with a clear lead. Round the back of the course The Spot went up to him, followed by Sandpiper. Jack watched Random, and knew the horse could race up to the leaders at any time.

Smith wondered why Jack stuck so close to his mount, was he a better rider than he imagined? At the half distance Random drew up closer with the leaders, Jack following on Lucky Boy. Two furlongs from the winning post Tell Tale shot his bolt, then The Spot fell back, and Random dashed to the front. Now was Jack's time. If Lucky Boy was to win an effort must be made.

To the surprise of the riders of The Spot and Tell Tale, the outsider, for such Lucky Boy was, shot past them easily and followed close on the track of Random.

When he reached the Leger stand, Smith felt certain the race was won, and eased his mount in order to "canter" home at his leisure. It was a foolish thing to do. To everyone who watched the race, and knew anything about the spot, it looked any odds on Random winning a furlong from home. Had Smith kept him going he could probably have won by half-a-dozen lengths, but this was just where the jockey failed. Jack Redland knew every move on the board in riding a race, and when he saw Smith drop his hands on Random he was sanguine about Lucky Boy's chance. His mount was going well, although he would never have caught Random had he been kept at his top.

Before Smith realised the danger he was in Lucky Boy was alongside him, and the astonished jockey lost further ground through sheer surprise. Instead of Random holding his own the backers of the favourite saw with dismay that Lucky Boy was a very likely winner.

Joel Kenley also saw what occurred, and smiled quietly at Smith's folly. Random, win or lose, ought to have easily beaten Lucky Boy, but a win was a win, no matter whether it came about through the misfortune of others.

Jack rode Lucky Boy hard, and although the horse was not thoroughly wound up he responded to the call and struggled on.

Smith savagely spurred Random, venting his spite on the horse for a fault that was entirely his own. The severity of the punishment caused Random to almost leap forward, and for a second or two he seemed likely to pass Lucky Boy. It was a vain hope on the part of his backers, for when the winning post was passed Lucky Boy had a couple of lengths to the good.

It was a miserable fiasco, this was the universal opinion. An odds on favourite that ought to have won by half-a-dozen lengths was beaten by a miserable outsider.

Smith's failure was so glaring that he came in for a volley of groans and hisses, which did not improve his already bad temper. He was accustomed to cheers, and the ominous sound jarred upon him.

Jack acknowledged he had a very lucky race and did not expect to receive a warm welcome from the crowd. Racing men, all over the world, however, are good natured, and they cheered the new comer heartily.

The owner of Random roundly abused Smith in the paddock, and threatened to call the attention of the Stewards to the spur marks, this, however, at the jockey's request, he did not do.

Jack was delighted at his success, and Joel said—

"You won, but Random ought to have beaten Lucky Boy easily. How did Random gallop?"

"Very well indeed, I think he is a good horse; he had the foot of Lucky Boy most of the way."

"In that case," thought Joel, "Black Boy must be pretty good. I think we are likely to have a bit of fun in the Sydney Cup, a surprise for some of the clever division."

Abe Moss did not take Jack's advice, but backed Random, and when the lucky winner said to him—

"I hope you took my advice, Moss," he replied, angrily—

"Much it was worth, Random ought to have romped home."

"From which I presume you backed him," said Jack. "If such is the case I am glad of it. I always like to see such men as you lose their money."

"What have you against me?" asked Moss angrily.

"Nothing at present," coolly replied Jack, as he walked away.

"He's one too many for you, Abe," said the man standing next to him.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIFTH

SOMETHING ABOUT WINIFRED

Meanwhile Winifred was in sore trouble at The Downs, for Sir Lester was very ill, and the doctors took a grave view of his case. He caught a chill at Gatwick, and the cold which followed, being neglected, as such ailments often are, congestion of the lungs followed, and he was now fighting for his life.

At times he was unconscious, and Winifred, almost worn out with watching, sometimes thought he had gone, so still and quiet he lay.

The crisis came at last, and he pulled through, but she felt she would never forget that time of anxiety, almost of despair.

Sir Lester knew what she had done for him, all she had gone through, and her drawn white face showed how she had suffered.

"If it had not been for your daughter, I believe we should have lost you, Sir Lester," said his favourite doctor. "She worked day and night, and orders given were attended to with even more promptitude than in a hospital. She is a wonderful girl, and you are right in being proud of her."

During his days of convalescence Sir Lester found in Winifred a constant companion who never failed to interest and amuse him.

He thought she deserved every happiness this life could give, and knowing what was dearest to her heart, he longed for Jack Redland to come home. He cared not now whether he returned rich or poor; in any case he would offer no opposition, and as Winifred was his only child, there would be sufficient for them when he was gone, and he could look after them during his lifetime.

He had great faith in Jack, and something told him he was prospering, and that when he came home it would not be with empty hands. Winifred guessed his thoughts, and was happy. The colour returned to her cheeks, and she was soon her light-hearted merry self again, although his illness had made a deep impression upon her that would never be effaced. It is in times of sickness and sore distress that the best feelings in our natures are roused. There is the need to act, the necessity for self-denial, duties to be done that cannot be evaded, annoyances that will not be thrust aside. There must be no putting off for to-morrow what can be done to-day, for delay means death maybe, and that ends all in this life.

Sir Lester's illness put the finishing touch to Winifred's womanhood; it brought her to maturity; it roused in her the feelings of maternity, which reliance upon herself always brings to a woman. Her father had been as helpless as a child, and she had nursed him, attended to his every want, anticipated his unspoken wishes, ministered to his pain, and did all that a brave woman knows so well how to do in battling with death, in peace or in war.

She felt the change in herself, but did not quite understand it. Something had been given to her that she lacked before, and it was very wonderful, strangely beautiful and satisfying. She was as gay and light-hearted as ever, but there was more depth in her, a firmness she had hitherto lacked possessed her, and she felt better able to grapple with the world.

Sir Lester was amused. He noticed all these traits and knew the little girl he so fondly loved had developed into a very beautiful woman. He had watched her grow year by year, and hungrily begrudged the advancing age which must make her less reliant upon him. Man-like, he wanted her to be solely dependent upon him, and yet now the time was come, when she was a woman, he loved her better than ever. What a prize she would prove to Jack Redland; he thought of no other man in connection with her: the mere idea seemed desecration. Had he been glad when Jack went away? He doubted it. Relief was the feeling he experienced. And he would again feel it on his return.

Roaming about the country lanes one day, Winifred chanced to linger on the spot where she had last seen Jack turn and wave his farewell. Was it a chance she came there? She tried to convince herself such was the case, but it proved a failure, for she knew she had deliberately walked in that direction.

Was it by chance that the self-same gypsy woman came along at the time and saw her? Probably it was, for she seldom wandered that way. The woman hesitated, and then approached. She knew it was Winifred Dyke, and was aware that Sir Lester disliked her and all her tribe. She had not forgotten the handsome young man she had met not far away some year or two before, and something told her there was a connecting link between them. They are wonderfully shrewd, the women of her class, and have a marvellous way of putting things together and weaving elegant and generally acceptable little romances therefrom.

Winifred started when she saw her, and at once it flashed across her mind that this might be the same woman Jack had told her about. The thought interested her strangely. If this were the woman then she had much to do with Jack's going away, ridiculous though it appeared.

"May I look at your hand?" said the gypsy, as though it was the most natural request in the world.

Winifred smiled as she held it out and said—

"If it will give you any satisfaction."

"It is not for my satisfaction, but for your own."

She examined her hand closely, it was beautiful, well shaped, and daintily pink.

"You have had trouble."

Winifred started; then she thought, "She knows who I am, and that my father has been ill; how absurd of me."

"You are happy again. There will be no more clouds. There is someone coming from across the seas. He is a good man and generous. Strange, very strange!"

"What is strange?" asked Winifred.

"There is much money coming to you. See, look at that mark."

There was a tiny line on her hand, and as Winifred looked at it the mark seemed to grow larger.

"There is great wealth, it increases. Look, the line is quite clear now," said the gypsy excitedly.

"It has become clearer because I extended my hand," said Winifred, interested in spite of herself.

"That is not the cause. Only once before have I seen this sign in a woman's hand, and she became a great lady."

Winifred laughed merrily as she replied—

"I am afraid I shall never be a very great lady."

The gypsy curtsied as she answered—

"You are a very beautiful lady, and beauty is greatness."

Then taking Winifred's hand in her own brown one she said—

"You will have good news when you return home—a letter from across the seas."

"When?" asked Winifred.

"To-night, or to-morrow; it is very near."

"I hope so."

"And there will be pleasure for you in it—a surprise; something I do not quite understand."

"Then you cannot tell me the contents of my supposed letter," said Winifred banteringly.

"No; that is hidden from me; but the writer loves you, as many will love you and fail, all but one."

"And what of him?" asked Winifred softly.

She knew it was all nonsense, but it was very sweet foolery and she loved to hear it.

"He is a man who will prove worthy of you, and your life will be full of happiness. I wonder if he is the brave gentleman who helped me a year or two ago, when I saw him not very far from here. I had a sick child, and he gave me all the money he had with him and walked back to Brighton. He was a noble man, worthy of a great love."

Winifred coloured as she said—

"I heard about it; he told me before he went to Australia."

"Then it is the same?" said the woman. "May God bless you both."

Winifred offered her money, and the gypsy eyed it greedily, but shook her head and said—

"No, kind lady, I do not want money for what I have told you."

"But you have a little boy; take it for him."

"Yes, I will take it for him."

Winifred changed her mind, and gave her half a sovereign. The woman's gratitude was unbounded and she showered many blessings on Winifred's head as she went on her way.

Winifred remained standing on the spot looking after her. She wondered if Jack would really come back with the fortune he said he went out to make. It mattered little to her whether he was rich or poor, but she wished him to succeed, and knew how he felt about it.

As she walked slowly home she revolved in her mind all that had taken place since he left. How lonely she had been at first, her old playmate gone, and no prospect of seeing him for some years. She knew she loved him when he had acted under that sudden impulse and taken her in his arms and kissed her. The memory of that embrace was very dear to her. Gradually as she became accustomed to his absence she grew to love him more and more. He was constantly in her thoughts; she wondered where he was, what he was doing. She listened eagerly to Captain Seagrave's account of the voyage, and could have hugged the rough old seaman when he praised Jack up to the skies. The arrival of his first letter was a great event. She read it again and again; it opened up to her a new field of thought, and she wrote him glowing epistles of their doings at The Downs. She knew even trivial things would interest him because she wrote of them, and they

told of the dear old country where they had spent so many happy hours together. There were no words of love in her letters; she would not write them, but he would understand, and she meant to leave him perfectly free. The mere thought of Jack falling in love with some other girl sent her into a cold shiver, but she quickly smiled and reassured herself when she thought of that kiss. Then came more letters, and she gloated over his wonderful adventures and pictured him fighting hordes of terrible savages, and diving to the bottom of the sea for pearls. Her father laughed at her, and said that on the whole he fancied Jack was having a very good time, and was far more likely to be dancing with native beauties in scanty costumes than battling with blacks, at which assertion she was highly indignant.

When she entered the house Sir Lester said—

"A letter for you, Win, from——"

"Jack!" she exclaimed.

"Yes, I expect so; we have not many friends in Australia."

She thought of the gypsy woman, and how quickly her words had come true.

She opened the letter and read it eagerly, devouring every word before she proclaimed the contents to her father; but he was contented to wait. He knew how much these letters meant to her.

"Well, what news, my girl?" he asked.

"Oh, it's splendid; it sounds too good to be true—too much like a fairy tale."

"Read and I shall understand," he replied smiling.

She read Jack's long letter, telling her of the adventure of the great black pearl, and how he was determined to secure it for her, and bring it home in triumph. It was one of the finest of pearls, and no one was half so worthy of it as she. He had meant it for her the moment he had found it in the shell. Now an "old thief of a pearl dealer had it," but Barry Tuxford said it was safe, and what Barry affirmed was gospel. Then she read about gold discoveries, mining shares, racehorses, and many other things, and finally wound up by saying on her own account that she always knew Jack would be a success, and that he would make a fortune.

"What do you think of him, father?"

"He is a brave fellow, and worthy of my daughter's love."

"How do you know he has it, or that he wants it?" she asked slyly.

"There are certain symptoms, Win, I cannot fail to understand, and if Jack does not want my little girl he's about as big a fool as the earth holds," replied Sir Lester laughing.

"A black pearl. Fancy me wearing such a precious thing. I shall be frightened to touch it, after all the adventures it has passed through."

"You have not got it yet."

"But Jack says he will get it for me, and that is quite sufficient."

"His friend, Barry Tuxford, must be an extraordinary man. I should like to meet him," said Sir Lester.

"And so should I, to thank him for all he has done for Jack."

"Send him a special message in your next letter. He deserves a page to himself," said her father.

"And he shall have it; a whole page," said Winifred.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIXTH

A PUZZLE

The trial had taken place, and Lucky Boy beat Black Boy and two others easily, much to the surprise of Joel Kenley, who could not understand it. On this form Lucky Boy's victory at Rosehill could not have been such a fluke after all.

Jack saw the trial and was puzzled. He had ridden both horses in their work and had a decided preference for Black Boy. On more than one occasion he had galloped with Lucky Boy and beaten him, and yet there was no mistaking the way in which Barry's horse won the trial.

He thought the matter over and came to the conclusion that there must be some mistake, and hinted as much to Joel, who laughed and said there could be no error, because both horses were ridden out, and they carried level weights.

"We ought to have another trial," said Jack.

"I do not advise it. The Cup race takes place next week and both horses are fit. If you take my advice you will back them both and the odds against Black Boy are very tempting. A hundred to three means a big win for a small outlay, and as you can also obtain a hundred to eight about Lucky Boy there is no cause to complain about the tightness of the market."

"They are liberal prices," said Jack, "but not excessive on the form."

Abe Moss was determined to be on the right one of Joel Kenley's pair for the Sydney Cup, and as he knew exactly what Black Boy was capable of he thought after the trial that Lucky Boy held a splendid winning chance. Abe, however, seldom gave anyone credit for acting straightforwardly, and when Lucky Boy won the trial he had doubts about the genuineness of the gallop.

One evening he met Bricky Smiles in Adams' Bar, in Pitt Street. Bricky knew him, and saw no reason to avoid him. Moss seized the opportunity and commenced operations by standing drinks. He knew Bricky's failing, the old jockey took considerably more than was good for him at times, many people in more exalted positions do the same, but they hide it more effectually.

A couple of glasses of whisky and soda loosened Bricky's tongue, and he talked volubly. Gradually Abe Moss led him on to the subject he desired, but the moment he hinted at anything connected with Kenley's stable Bricky became reserved.

"He's not primed sufficiently," thought Moss, and called for more liquor.

They sat down and Moss said—

"If you'll do me a favour, Bricky, I'll make it worth your while."

"Depends upon what it is," he replied.

"There's no harm in it. I merely wish to know your opinion about a couple of horses."

"Is that all?"

"Yes."

"Which horses?"

"Lucky Boy and Black Boy."

Bricky laughed as he replied—

"I fancy you know as much as I do about them, perhaps more, especially about Black Boy."

"Was that a straight go the other morning, when Lucky Boy won?" asked Abe.

"You know Joel Kenley, and that ought to be sufficient. The trial was straight enough."

"Then you think Lucky Boy is the better of the pair?"

"He must be on that form, and the market tells the same tale," replied Bricky.

"I don't care a hang for the market, figures can be faked anyhow. You have not told me your opinion. Come, I'll give you a couple of sovs. for it, that's a professional fee."

Bricky thought there was no harm in expressing his private opinion, it would not be betraying any stable secrets, for it was well known that Joel Kenley preferred Lucky Boy. A couple of sovs. under such circumstances were not to be despised.

"I can only go by the trial," he said. "That is the safest guide, but if you want to know which of the pair is my favourite I may tell you it's Black Boy. Don't run away with the idea that he'll beat the other fellow in the Cup, although I would like to see him do it, Joel knows more about it than I do."

"You have not told me much," said Abe, "but here's a couple of sovs. You really prefer Black Boy to Lucky Boy?"

"As a horse, yes, but whether he will beat him in the Sydney Cup remains to be seen."

"Which shall you back?"

"I have no money to back horses with," said Bricky.

"You had plenty at one time."

"I had and did it on like a fool. I daresay you had some of it."

Abe Moss laughed, he thought this probable, as he had an interest in one or two books and had often played cards and billiards with Bricky.

Jack Redland went into Tattersalls' Club frequently, and was very popular with the members. They recognised him as a good sportsman and readily acknowledged he was a cut above the general run of racing men. Considerable interest was manifested as to which horse out of Kenley's stable he would back, and when he accepted several big wagers about Black Boy at a thousand to thirty there was a disposition to follow his lead. As a natural consequence, Lucky Boy dropped in the quotations, but when Jack snapped up a tempting offer at the extended odds he speedily recovered. There was nothing sensational about these transactions, and when one or

two questions were asked he merely replied that he was backing Lucky Boy for Barry Tuxford, and Black Boy for himself.

"We may divide the spoil if either horse wins," he added, laughing.

This was feasible enough, the horses were in different ownerships, and would therefore run independently, but for all this there was an air of uncertainty about it.

If Lucky Boy was the better horse, why had Barry Tuxford cleared out instead of remaining to see his colours carried to victory. It must be very important business to take him away at such a time.

Joel Kenley secured two reliable middle-weights to ride the horses. Andy Wilson was to have the mount on Lucky Boy, Will Sleath was to ride Jack's horse. There was not much to choose between the pair; if anything, Wilson had a larger number of followers. They had ridden the horses at exercise and each jockey fancied his mount, so that a rivalry, quite friendly, existed between them, as to which would prove the better of the two in the Cup.

They were talking it over the night before the race, and eventually decided to make a wager of five pounds aside, each jockey backing his own mount. They were not sanguine of success, as there were many good horses in the race, including three or four cracks from Melbourne.

Jack Redland was exceedingly anxious. Sleath was to wear Sir Lester's jacket, which he had brought out from home, and in which he had ridden Topsy Turvy to victory at Lewes. He impressed upon the jockey that there was a halo of romance hanging about the jacket and that he must strain every nerve to win.

As he looked at the brilliant orange sleeves, and the dark body, he thought of the last time he had worn it and wondered how everything was going with Winifred and Sir Lester. Somehow he felt sanguine of victory, and if Black Boy won he determined to cable to Sir Lester, who would be delighted to receive the news. He wished Barry Tuxford could be present to see the race and judge for himself as to Lucky Boy's running if he was beaten. Not that Barry would doubt anyone, he was too honest for that, but Jack felt it would be a disappointment to him if his horse lost.

It was also an anxious time for Joel Kenley, who had several horses running at the meeting. The trainer was still puzzled as to the merits of "the two boys", as he called the horses. Common sense told him Lucky Boy ought to beat Black Boy, and yet he could not drive away the idea that Jack's horse would beat him, if not actually win.

As he went round the boxes the night before the race, he found Brickly looking earnestly at Black Boy.

"Anything the matter?" asked Joel.

"No, sir. He never was better. He's as hard as nails and fit to run any distance."

"You seemed a trifle anxious about something."

"I was wondering how much he'd win the Cup by," said Brickly, without a smile.

Joel Kenley laughed as he replied—

"Then you are sure he will win, and it is only a question as to how far the others will be beaten. What makes you think he will beat Lucky Boy?"

"I don't know, a kind of presentiment, one of those things a fellow can't understand. I'm sure he is a better horse than the other fellow."

Joel Kenley seldom talked with his lads, but he knew Brickly had a wide experience and had ridden and looked after all sorts of horses, so he spoke to him with more freedom than usual.

"What about the trial? Lucky Boy won that easily."

"That's true, too easily I thought, he'd never do it again. It reminded me of a trial I once rode for Mr. Mason, at Eagle Farm, Brisbane."

"What was there curious about it?" asked Joel.

"There were two horses in his stable, same as it is here, and one of them won a trial with any amount to spare. They backed him for a heap of money, put the other horse in to make the running, which he did, for he was never caught, and won the race almost as easily as his stable mate did the trial. I rode the favourite, and I also rode him in the trial. In the race he would not try a yard and there was a regular row about it. Most people blamed me, but Mr. Mason stood by me and said he'd have another trial. We had, and dash me if my fellow didn't win again easily, and I rode him. Well, about a month after we took him to Gympie, backed him heavily, and he ran nearly last. The other horse, that he beat in the trial, we took to Rockhampton, and beggar me if he didn't win easily, fairly smothering the Gympie winner. What do you make of that?"

"One horse must have been a rogue in a race, but would do his best at home," said Joel.

"Quite so, and I have an idea that will be the case here."

"You may be right, but we have no occasion to think Lucky Boy lacks courage, he ran a good race at Rosehill."

Bricky shook his head and smiled as he said—

"I can't give any reasons, sir, but to-morrow my bit for the Cup goes on this fellow."

"It will be a surprise for a lot of people if he wins."

"It's good for 'em to be surprised sometimes," said Bricky.

Jack Redland called at the trainer's the same night, and Joel told him what Bricky had said.

"It's curious," said Jack, "but I cannot get it out of my head about Black Boy, I feel sure he will run well and beat Barry's horse."

"Have you heard from Mr. Tuxford?" asked the trainer.

"No, he has hardly had time to write."

"He must be a long way from here?"

"He is," replied Jack, smiling, and the trainer said—

"It is no use trying to trap you."

"Not a bit," said Jack.

"He has left everything in our hands," said the trainer, "but it would be far more satisfactory if he were here, or even if we could communicate with him."

"I am afraid that also is impossible. A telegram would not reach him, besides what is there to wire about?"

"Nothing, when you come to think of it," answered Joel.

"We must give orders for both horses to be ridden out, and then we shall discover which is really the better of the pair. I confess the solution of that question interests me as much as the result of the race itself."

"And so it does me, and I am not at all sure, Mr. Redland, that the second string will not win," replied the trainer.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVENTH

THE SECOND STRING

It was a brilliant scene on the beautiful Randwick course on Cup Day, and Jack Redland, as he looked round, thought it compared more than favourably with anything of the kind he had seen in the old country. He knew it was to be a day of excitement, and he heartily wished he had some friend to share it with him. Sometimes our desires are gratified in a strangely sudden manner, and so it chanced to be with him.

As he looked at the moving mass of people in the ring at the rear of the Stewards' Stand, he saw a burly figure that seemed strangely familiar. At first he did not recognise it, but as the man moved nearer, he gave an exclamation of delighted surprise, for it was his old friend Captain Seagrave, who in some extraordinary way had turned up at this opportune moment.

Jack darted down the steps of the stand and hustled his way through the crowd, not stopping to answer numerous heated inquiries as to where he was "pushing people."

He caught Captain Seagrave by the arm, and the astonished sailor gasped as he looked at him.

"Of all the blessed experiences I ever had, this beats all," said Job, as he gave his hand a hearty shake. "Where on earth have you sprung from?"

"I ought to ask that question," replied Jack, laughing. "What brings you here?"

"Come under the trees and sit down, and I'll tell you."

They went towards a shady seat, and then Job Seagrave said—

"It does me good to see you. I've a heap of things to tell you. I saw Sir Lester and his daughter last trip and they have sent no end of messages, especially the young lady. Lucky dog, that's what you are."

Jack forgot all about the races for the time being, so absorbed was he in listening to the Captain.

"I'll leave all the good things they said until later on," went on Job. "I only arrived here late last night. I've got a new craft, a real tip top steamer. I've chucked over the old firm, they treated me badly. I'm skipper of the "Falcon," and a right down good steamer she is. I never expected to see you here. Knowing the Sydney Cup was run for to-day, I thought I'd come and see it. Lucky we arrived just in time. I don't know a blessed horse that is running in the race."

These remarks brought Jack's thoughts back to the business in hand. They had been talking for some time, and Joel Kenley was hunting all over the paddock for Jack. At last he spotted him and went hurriedly across.

Jack saw him coming and went to meet him.

"I have been looking for you this half hour," said the trainer. "It is almost time for saddling up, will you come and see the horses put to rights?"

Jack beckoned Captain Seagrave, and introduced him to the trainer, remarking that he was the brother of Caleb Kenley, of Lewes.

"Proud to meet you," said Job, "I know your brother, saw him when I was in England last voyage."

"We have no time to talk now," said Jack, smiling. "There is a lot to be done. Come and see the horses saddled, Captain."

"Whose horses?"

"Our's—mine and Barry's."

"Is he here?"

"No, worse luck."

"What races are they in?"

"The Sydney Cup," replied Jack.

"Both of them?"

"Yes."

"Well, this is a go, and which of 'em is going to win? Do you ride?"

Jack and the trainer laughed heartily, and the former explained the situation to Joel, who was thanking his lucky star that the "Falcon" had arrived in time for him to be present.

Lucky Boy was saddled first, then Black Boy, and quite a crowd gathered round the pair, for Joel Kenley's horses always attracted attention, his stable was generally dangerous.

Black Boy was quiet, but his stable mate was restless, and lashed out freely.

"Which do you like best?" asked Jack.

"I'm not much of a judge, but I prefer this one," replied the Captain, pointing to Jack's horse.

"The other one is the better favourite, but I rather fancy mine will beat him."

"What does the trainer think?"

"He's in a bit of a fix. Lucky Boy won the trial, and yet we all seem to fancy the other one."

"Then he carries my money," said Job. "What odds can I get?"

"About twenty to one," replied Jack.

"That beats Topsy Turvy," said Job. "I'll have a fiver on."

Jack laughed, and advised him to do his speculating at once, and he would wait for him.

The jockeys came up and mounted, and by this time the interest in the race had risen to fever heat.

Mentone, a Melbourne trained horse, is favourite, and the opinion was that he had been leniently treated, in fact, was the pick of the handicap. A strong contingent of visitors from the Victorian capital had come over to back him, and were confident of success.

Escort, Tramp, Hiram, and the Dancer, were all more or less fancied.

Captain Seagrave had no difficulty in obtaining a hundred to five about Black Boy, a wager he was more than satisfied with.

"If it pans out as well as that race you rode in at Lewes it will be grand," he said. "I wish Sam Slack had come with me."

"Is Sam in the 'Falcon' with you?" asked Jack.

"Yes, and so is Mac and most of the other boys. They'll be glad to see you again."

The horses were now moving out on to the track, and Job caught sight of the colours on Black Boy.

"He's running in Sir Lester's colours," said Job, in some surprise.

"And it is the same jacket I wore when I won on Topsy Turvy," said Jack. "Sir Lester gave it me."

"Then I'm hanged if I don't have another bit on," said Job, and this time he only secured a

hundred to seven.

Jack laughed at his enthusiasm, and said—

"You had better have a pound or two on Lucky Boy as a saver, they will both do their best to win."

"No more," said Job, "I'll stand or fall by the old colours."

The stands were packed, and the people stood on the lawn, and leaned over the railings in dense masses.

Mentone was cheered as he galloped to the starting post, and the horse looked a perfect picture. Black Boy moved sluggishly, but Lucky Boy went past at a great pace, pulling his jockey out of the saddle, eager for the race.

"Too flash," said Job; "Give me the other fellow, he's steady and sure."

"I daresay you are right," replied Jack.

There was no more time for conversation, as the horses were quickly despatched on their journey, and the bright green jacket of Escort was easily distinguishable in front. The horse had a light weight, and a clever lad rode him. With a clean lead of several lengths, he brought the field along, his nearest attendants being Hiram, Tramp, and Maximus. Bunched together in the centre were the favourite, and Kenley's pair with the remainder of the field, well up.

As they passed the stand, Escort led at a great pace, almost overstriding himself, and his tiny jockey had no easy task to hold him.

There was some bumping as they swept round the bend and past Oxenham's, but nothing was seriously interfered with.

Along the track, Escort still led, but the others were gradually drawing up, and it was easy to see that by the time the sheds were reached, he would be caught.

Jack watched the black jacket and orange sleeves closely and also the cherry and white on Lucky Boy, who seemed to be going in splendid form, and fully bearing out his trial. So far Barry's horse clearly outpaced Black Boy, and Jack commenced to think he would win. He would have been almost as pleased to see Barry's colours successful as his own.

Job made no remark. He stood watching the race with a stolid face, and no one would have thought he was in a fever of excitement. A good race agitated him far more than a storm at sea.

They were nearing the turn for home, and Mentone was rapidly working his way round on the outside. The favourite seemed to have no difficulty in passing the leaders, and as they entered the straight, he was close up to Tramp, who held the lead.

Lucky Boy shot his bolt soon after they headed for home, and his collapse was a surprise to Joel Kenley, who fancied he would be sure to stay it out.

Bricky Smiles was watching the race from the trainer's stand, and when he saw Lucky Boy was beaten, he was glad his modest investment was on his favourite.

As they neared the first stand, Mentone looked to have the race well in hand. He was going easily and his jockey had made no call upon him; he had no intention of doing so if it could be avoided, for the horse had a decided objection to being pressed. His instructions were to get to the front as soon as they entered the straight and make the best of his way home, no matter whether it was a long run in or otherwise.

"Don't hit him if you can help it," said the trainer, "but, of course, if it comes to a pinch you must."

Will Sleath saw the favourite forging ahead, and also noticed Lucky Boy fall back.

"It all depends on me," he thought; "Andy has no chance."

Black Boy was a horse that could gallop at a steady pace almost any distance, but he lacked that sharp burst of speed which comes in so handy at the finish. Will Sleath knew his mount well, and had no hesitation in making the most of him in any part of the race. The rider of Mentone had been deceived as to the pace they were going, because Black Boy had been galloping alongside him, and he knew the horse was a "plodder." When he made his run round the home turn with Mentone, it took a good deal out of the favourite, more than he knew of. Sleath sent Black Boy along at his top, and together with Hiram and the Dancer, drew level with Tramp, who was soon beaten.

Mentone was sailing along comfortably in front, his backers being on excellent terms with themselves, and already the cheering which heralds the anticipated victory of a favourite were heard.

"It's all over," said Jack. "We're beaten, Job."

The Captain made no remark, he was too intent upon watching the black and orange jacket as it came creeping along.

Slowly but surely Black Boy made up his ground, and Hiram stuck close to him, yet it seemed

almost impossible they would get on terms with the leader.

Will Sleath looked ahead and saw the judge's box very near: if only Black Boy could put on a spurt he had no doubt what would be the result. This was unfortunately what Black Boy could not do, for he was already at his top, and his jockey did not ask him to go faster.

Mentone was tiring, and his rider was aware of it, but he thought the commanding lead he held would carry him safely through.

It was a case of the favourite stopping and Black Boy plodding on. The exciting question was would Mentone fall back sufficiently to allow of Jack's horse getting up.

The crowd commenced to realise what was taking place, and there was a dead silence.

Jack felt his pulses tingle, and his blood seemed on fire. Being an accomplished rider, he knew exactly how matters stood, and he hoped almost against hope that Black Boy would just get up in time.

The black and orange was very near now, not more than a length away, and Mentone's jockey realising the danger raised his whip. In response the horse made a feeble effort which was not sustained, and a terrific shout burst from the crowd as Black Boy got on level terms.

For a second the pair struggled together, then Black Boy outstayed the favourite, and the black and orange jacket of Sir Lester Dyke was carried first past the post in a memorable Sydney Cup.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHTH

THE NEW CLAIMS

The victory of Black Boy was not very well received, although no blame was attached to either owner or trainer. The horse's previous running showed he had very little chance of carrying off such a race as the Sydney Cup.

Jack Redland won a large sum, and half of this was to go to Barry Tuxford. Job Seagrave landed a couple of hundred pounds, and was jubilant.

The stewards could not let the previous running of Black Boy pass unchallenged, and called Abe Moss before them to give an explanation of the horse's performances during the time he owned him. Abe made some blundering excuses, which only half satisfied the stewards, and wound up by saying he had backed Lucky Boy in the Cup, as he did not consider the winner good enough. This was perfectly correct, and probably thinking he had been sufficiently punished by losing his money, the stewards gave him a severe caution, and warned him to be careful how he acted in the future.

Jack was naturally anxious to hear from Barry Tuxford, but there was nothing for it but to wait patiently until he communicated with him.

He lost no time in paying a visit to the "Falcon" and renewing his acquaintance with his old friends of the "Golden Land." Sam Slack and Rufus Macdonald gave him a hearty welcome, and the latter said the skipper was a "canny mon" to land the "Falcon" in port in time to back Black Boy in the Cup. "It's a pity we were not there," he said.

Jack dined with them on board, and they spent several merry evenings together, until the time came for the "Falcon" to commence her homeward voyage.

Captain Seagrave willingly took charge of several parcels Jack wished to send to Winifred and Sir Lester, he also entrusted to Job a splendid photograph of Black Boy, with Sleath in the saddle, and the black and orange colours up.

When the "Falcon" left the harbour Jack felt more lonely than he had ever done since he landed in Australia, and it was with a feeling of intense relief he received a letter from Barry Tuxford some weeks after Black Boy had won the Cup.

Barry wrote in high spirits, he had nothing but good news to tell. His man had not exaggerated in the least, and he reckoned their claims would be about the richest in Western Australia.

"The country, as you may expect, is infernal," wrote Barry, "not fit for a civilised white man to live in, but where gold is to be found there do the people flock together, and it was not long before they were on my track after the first gold went on to the Great Tom township, and the Warden had granted our claims. You have never been in a gold rush and I hope you never will. It is hell let loose, every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost. All the worst features of the human race come to the surface; if a man has any of the leaven of unrighteousness in him it's bound to ooze out in a big lump. I have seen some very choice collections of blackguards in my time but I never set eyes on such a crew as we have had up here at Bundoola Creek. They are the scum of the earth, and although there are some good fellows amongst them, the majority ought to be in gaol. You know me fairly well, and that I am not easily staggered, but I tell you candidly when I looked round on the crew that rushed the Creek I felt a trifle uncomfortable. We had

secured the best claims, and the fellows knew it, and this raised their ire. They saw there was gold on our pitches to be had almost for the asking, and they wanted some of it. I was equally determined they should not have it. I took with me, from the township, a dozen men I could depend upon, and to make doubly sure of them I gave them a hint where to peg out their ground. This gave them an interest in the concern and as they were all well armed the rogues and vagabonds would have had a rough time of it had they ventured to interfere with us. Things have settled down a bit now, and as there is plenty for all I see no reason why the peace should not be kept.

"As for the claims, I have called one the 'Redland,' and the other the 'Barry Tuxford,' so we stand a good chance of becoming famous all the world over, for sure as fate these will be big concerns. I have just heard Black Boy won the Sydney Cup, and you cannot think how delighted I am. For a middle aged man I acted in a most absurd way. I danced around the camp like a wild man, and my pals thought the heat had affected my brain. When I explained what had occurred they understood, they are all good sports. What a triumph, Jack, and what an awful scoundrel Abe Moss must be. I don't know how my horse ran, and don't much care, now you won. If Joel Kenley thinks Lucky Boy will win a race let him keep him in training, if not, sell him for what he will bring. Thank him for all he has done for us, and give him a bonus of a hundred pounds as a slight token of my regard. There is no secrecy now about my movements, and you may tell anyone you like where I am, and what has happened, providing they do not already know.

"Come back to Fremantle as soon as you feel inclined, as I have a lot to say to you about our future prospects. I advise you to leave Black Boy with Kenley, or sell him if you think it best. I shall be glad to see you again; you cannot understand how I miss you. Have had no news of the pearling fleet, but expect they will be back soon. By the way, the only bit of inferior news I have is that old Silas Filey has gone on a trip to Shark's Bay. What the deuce takes the old fellow to that outlandish place I do not know, but he has taken the black pearl with him or else hidden it somewhere. Wait until he comes back and if he does not give it up, I'll throttle the life out of him. Another item of news. I saw that black thief, Kyllis, in Fremantle, and he is in funds. Where he got the money from the Lord knows; but he had the cheek to ask me to assist him in fitting out a schooner. He said he had over a hundred pounds, and would I advance him the rest. As we were not near the harbour, or the river, I had no opportunity of pitching him into the water, but he evidently understood the meaning of my language and cleared off with a rapidity seldom seen in the black race. You need not trouble about the pearl, Silas is sure to have it safe, and I will get it when he returns."

Jack Redland went to Joel Kenley's, taking the letter with him, and read it to the trainer.

"Now you will understand why I could not tell you where he had gone," said Jack, as he finished Barry's epistle.

"You were perfectly right to keep everything to yourself," replied Joel. "It is very good of him to send me a hundred pounds."

"You deserve that and more, and I hope you will not refuse if I offer you another hundred to match it."

"I shall not refuse," replied Joel, "for I know the spirit in which it is offered."

"Will you take charge of the horses while I am away?" asked Jack. "I leave for Fremantle by the next boat."

"Willingly; they are both worth keeping in training, and will pay their way."

"You must run them when you like," said Jack. "Please use them as though they were your own, and I will leave a couple of hundred pounds to your credit to back them with."

"I will do my best," said Joel, who appreciated the confidence placed in him.

Bricky came in for his share of the plums, and found himself in possession of a far larger sum than he had been accustomed to handle of late years. Fred Manns, the head lad, had no cause to grumble, nor had either of the jockeys who rode "the two boys."

"I told you he was a good sort," said Bricky.

"He is," replied Fred Manns, "one of the very best."

It was now public property in Sydney that Barry Tuxford had left suddenly to claim the best part of the Bundoola Creek Mines, and Jack Redland was congratulated on all sides at being the partner of such a successful man.

"I am not his partner," said Jack, "at least I have put no money into these claims."

"He's called one claim after you, and another after himself, so there can be no doubt about it," was the reply.

The voyage to Fremantle was tedious to Jack, owing to his impatience to meet Barry, and hear the news from his own lips. At last the steamer entered the harbour and he at once went ashore and straight on to Perth.

Barry was not there, but was expected down in the course of the week, so Jack had to pass the time as best he could. He went back to Fremantle in the hope that he might come across Silas

Filey, and had not been long there when he met the black, Kylis. The fellow grinned when he saw him, and Jack felt inclined to knock him down. He smothered his anger and beckoned to him. Kylis sauntered across the road and asked what he wanted.

"Tell me how you stole the black pearl out of my waist-belt," said Jack, quickly, and holding him by the arm.

The black cowed under his angry gaze, and said in a low voice that he would do as he wished, providing no harm came to him.

"No one shall touch you, tell me everything," said Jack.

Kylis told the story of the robbery and of the sale of the pearl to Amos Hooker, also how Hooker parted with it for a hundred pounds to one of Silas Filey's men. He did not say anything about Hooker's death.

All this was interesting to Jack, who wondered at the black's cunning.

"You are a dangerous fellow, Kylis," he said. "Mind and keep out of trouble in future, here's a sovereign for you."

The black took it with many expressions of gratitude, and then walked rapidly away.

At last Barry Tuxford returned to Perth, and after a hearty greeting between them Jack saw he was much altered and that he had suffered a good deal in health. He was not the same lively Barry Tuxford who had left him in Sydney, and Jack was troubled.

"You are ill, Barry," he said, anxiously. "You have overworked yourself, you must rest and have a doctor to see you at once."

"I'm all right, Jack," he said, faintly, "a bit knocked up, that's all; I shall soon get over it, but I've had a hard job, a precious hard job."

Barry Tuxford was seriously ill, and when the doctor saw him he said that complete rest and change was what he required.

"He has a constitution of iron," said the doctor, "or he would have knocked up weeks ago. I warned him of the risk he was running the last time he was here, but when a man has the gold fever on him the fear of death will not stop him. He is your friend, Mr. Redland. From what he has told me I know you have more influence with him than anyone, you must make him give all this up for a time. Take him to England for a trip, the voyage will do him more good than all the medicine I can give him. Once you get him safely out to sea he cannot give you the slip, but he'll do it here if you do not watch him closely. I never met such a man before, he's all activity, and his courage is marvellous."

"Is he in any danger?" asked Jack.

"No, not at present, but if this sort of work goes on I will not be answerable for his health, or life. Do as I advise you, get him away from it all. Make him go, he has plenty of money and it will be of no use to him if he loses his health."

"I will do my best," said Jack. "He has promised to go to England with me when I return, and although I did not mean to go back for a year or two, I will tell him I have decided to take the trip as soon as possible."

"That's splendid," said the doctor. "If Barry has given you his promise he will keep it; I never knew him break his word."

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINTH

BOUND FOR HOME

"Barry, I must have a serious talk with you," said Jack.

"All serene, fire away. That blessed doctor has been at you, I can see it in your face," he replied with a smile.

"You are ill, it is no use trying to hide it. Because you have never been laid up before you fancy it will go on all right till the end of time, but it won't. You must rest. All your life you have been a hard worker, and now you are run down."

"How the deuce can I rest with these mines on our hands? It is too good a thing to leave go of now we have got the grip. Wait until I have settled this business and then I am your man."

"How long will it take?" asked Jack.

"Perhaps one year, perhaps two, it may be longer."

"And before then it will not matter to you whether you are rich or poor, money will be of no use to

you."

"What do you mean?"

"What I say, money is of no use to a dead man."

Barry started and his face went a shade paler.

"Doctors are fools," he said.

"Patients who disobey their orders can be placed in that category," said Jack.

"But I cannot give this thing up yet, Jack, it's not fair either to you or me."

"Then it will give you up, and as for myself I would sooner have to start fresh than see any harm befall you."

Barry's face softened. Seldom in his tumultuous life had he heard a friend speak in this strain.

"I have a suggestion to make," said Jack. "Float the claims into a company. We can get as much as we want out of the concern in cash and hold the bulk of the shares. A responsible manager can look after things and take all the responsibility off your shoulders."

Barry laughed as he replied—

"That means allowing others to reap what we have sown."

"To get in some portion of the crop, I acknowledge," replied Jack, "but the bulk of the harvest will be ours."

"And supposing I agree, what shall we do?"

"Go to England. You promised to take a trip with me when I returned, and I know you will keep your promise. Moreover, in the event of a certain interesting ceremony taking place you promised to be best man. You cannot back down, and I am going home as soon as I can fix things up here."

Jack suddenly thought of the letter he had recently received with Winifred's message to Barry. He had it in his pocket-book, and taking it out handed it to Barry, saying—

"I am sure you will not refuse when you have read it."

Winifred's message was couched in terms she knew well how to use in conveying thanks to such a man and it also gave a cordial invitation from Sir Lester to visit The Downs, if ever he came to England.

"She's a real downright stunner," said Barry. "A splendid girl, there are not many like her."

"They are few and far between," answered Jack, proudly. "You cannot refuse now."

"It's a plot," said Barry, "to carry me off. Jack, you are a brigand chief."

"And your ransom will be a large one, once I get you in my clutches," he replied, laughing.

Eventually Barry agreed to accompany Jack Redland home, but he stipulated that they must not start until everything was in working order.

"We must leave nothing to chance," he said, "there is too much at stake."

About a month later the pearling schooners arrived at Fremantle, and Harry Marton reported a prosperous trip. He was pleased beyond measure to meet Jack again and to hear of his good fortune. There was much to tell on both sides, and Harry thoroughly approved of his friend's action in inducing Barry Tuxford to take a holiday.

"Anyone can see he is wearing himself out," said Harry, "and a rest will do him good; I am sure he deserves it."

"And what about yourself?" asked Jack.

"I shall remain here," replied Harry. "I have no ties to draw me home, and I have a bit of news to tell you, Jack."

"What is it?"

"I have asked my little girl to come out and risk matrimony, and she has consented. She's on her way, I believe, with our old friend Captain Seagrave, of the "Falcon."

"Bravo Harry," said Jack. "So you mean to make your home here?"

"Such is my intention, and thanks to our good friend Barry, the future seems assured. He wishes me to act as his general manager, whatever that may mean, and has promised me a share in all his ventures."

"I feel I owe my good fortune to you," said Jack. "I should never have known Barry Tuxford had it not been for you. When does the "Falcon" arrive? Does she come to Fremantle?"

"Yes, and ought to be here, I believe, in a few weeks."

"It would not be a bad idea to go home in her," said Jack.

"I am sure Barry would prefer her to one of the mail boats," replied Harry.

When the result of the pearling expedition was reckoned up, it was found that a profit of several thousand pounds had been made, and Captain Danks, Captain Hake, and Jacob Rank, were satisfied with their work.

Silas Filey turned up in due course from Shark's Bay, bringing the news of the murder of Amos Hooker.

"I'll bet a hundred that black devil, Kyllis, did it," said Barry.

"He disappeared from the settlement," said Silas, "and has never returned."

"He's here, in Perth," said Barry.

"Then let him alone, Amos Hooker was a shocking bad lot," said Silas. He then told them by what means he secured the black pearl and expressed a keen desire to buy it.

"It is not for sale," said Barry. "What do you value it at for purposes of division?"

"About two thousand pounds," said Silas.

"Too much," Barry whispered to Jack.

"Not at all," he replied. "I shall be glad to get it at that price, less my share."

Silas handed it over with sundry groans and protestations.

"It'll be wasted, fairly wasted," he moaned. "You don't know where to plant it. I have a customer for it. He's got one black pearl and would give a small fortune for this. Let me have it, and I'll deal fairly with you."

Barry handed it to Jack, saying—

"It is your property, will you let him have it?"

"No," thundered Jack, "and as for it's being wasted, let me tell you, you old humbug, that it will adorn the fairest and best woman in England. My only regret is that you ever polluted it with your touch."

Silas Filey glared at him angrily as he said—

"Hard words, master, I am only a pearl buyer, and it is my business to secure the best I can for my clients. I have done the pearl no harm, and my hands are as clean as most folks."

Jack knew he had spoken hastily and soothed the old man's feelings by saying—

"If ever I want to part with it, Silas, you shall have first refusal."

Silas nodded, but he knew it was a very remote probability.

It took Barry some time to arrange affairs to his satisfaction, and eventually it was decided to float the Redland-Barry Mine in London, as he had had some experience in this line before.

Harry Marton was to be left in sole charge at Perth, with a power of attorney to act, and the pearling was to continue as usual.

The "Falcon" duly arrived at Fremantle, with Agnes Dixon on board, and her wedding with Harry Marton was celebrated, Jack acting as best man, Barry giving a great feast in honour of the occasion. It was generally acknowledged that Mrs. Harry Marton would be a decided acquisition to Perth society.

Captain Seagrave was jubilant when he learned Jack Redland and Barry Tuxford were to be passengers on the homeward voyage.

Jack had not informed Winifred of their intended departure for the old country, as he wished to give her a surprise.

"The shock will be too much for her," said Barry, "you ought to warn her, it's not fair."

The night before they were to sail, Jack sat on the verandah of Barry Tuxford's house thinking over all that had happened during the past few years. Fortune had indeed favoured him, and the words of the gypsy woman had come true. Very few men he knew had done so much, or met with such success in so short a time. His meeting with Harry Marton in London, appeared to him like a direct intervention of Providence in his favour, and then came Barry Tuxford, a crowning blessing upon his career. Jack Redland was grateful for all his good luck, and felt that he ought to be thankful all his life.

It seemed almost impossible that he should be a rich man, and yet such was the case, for when the new mine was floated, many thousands would be at his disposal. He did not pretend to misunderstand Barry Tuxford when he said he regarded him as a son. He knew Barry's wealth was great, and that in all probability he would leave him the bulk of it. He hoped Barry would live for many long years, but in the natural order of things the older man would go first. The voyage

would do him good, add many years to his life, the doctor said, and Jack looked forward with pleasure to presenting his generous friend to Sir Lester and Winifred.

His pearl fishing experiences seemed like a dream; it was a rough time, but he did not dislike it, nay, he had enjoyed it while it lasted, but he would not care to go through it again.

The black pearl would always recall those days, when he saw Winifred wearing it.

And Winifred, she was waiting for him, he was sure of that, and yet no words of love had passed between them, no bond bound them to each other. Yes, there was a bond, although not a tie, the bond of unspoken love, and Jack looked forward to the time when he could put his real feelings into words, and pour them into Winifred's willing ears.

How would she look, what would she do when she first saw him? The picture he conjured up was wonderfully pleasant, and he kept it to himself.

The "Falcon" steamed out of Fremantle harbour, and commenced her voyage to England with Jack Redland and Barry Tuxford on board. As Jack looked at the fast receding headlands, he wondered if he would ever see them again. It was hard to say, but the chances were he was leaving Australia for ever. It seemed ungrateful to cast off the country that had done so much for him, and yet his lines were cast in other places, and he could not avoid his fate, a pleasant one, if he would.

Every year, men who have succeeded in life, leave the land in which they have toiled, to come home to that small spot so blessed amongst the nations of the earth. They give of their best to other lands, but take toll in return, and then when the time comes, and Fortune's smiles are at their best they turn to home, to England, which every son of her soil regards with a veneration too deep for words.

Jack Redland felt something of this as the "Falcon" steamed on her way.

He had come to love the land he was leaving behind, but he looked forward with a greater joy to the land that lay beyond the seas. He would never forget the country that gave him fortune, and helped him to gain the dearest wish of his heart—the girl he loved.

CHAPTER THIRTIETH

REALISATION

"The 'Falcon' has arrived at Tilbury," said Winifred, as she looked at the shipping news, which had interested her since Jack's departure. "I wonder if we shall see Captain Seagrave this time."

"And whether he will bring any nice presents from Jack, eh, Win?" said her father, laughing.

She little knew who had arrived on board the "Falcon," or her joy would have been unbounded.

"You will come with me to The Downs?" said Jack, as he sat in the smoking lounge of the Savoy Hotel, with his friend, Barry Tuxford.

"You must go alone, she will not like a stranger to be present at your meeting."

"You are not a stranger."

"To her I am."

"Not at all, I am sure she already regards you as a friend; so does Sir Lester," said Jack. He knew, however, that it would be better to do as Barry wished. Jack's feelings, as he once again found himself in the Brighton train, can better be imagined than described. Everything was familiar, and there seemed to be no change in the surroundings. He knew the time the train left London Bridge without looking at the guide, and he found there had been no alteration during the years he had been away.

His whole being responded to the sights and sounds that had been so familiar. He eagerly noted every spot of interest as the train sped on its way and brought him nearer to his destination and Winifred. He was coming home as a successful man, and the thought was pleasant. Had he returned a failure he knew his reception would have been none the less hearty, but he would have felt very different. Success begets confidence, and Jack was brimful of it.

At last, Brighton, the dear old place, the scene of so many memories of the past.

He inhaled the breeze with satisfaction, and walked on to the Marine Parade to look at the busy scene. He did not linger long, but went round to his former rooms in the Old Steyne, and found there had been no change there. His welcome assured him of the hearty reception he would get at Sir Lester's.

He took a victoria, and drove to within a couple of miles of The Downs, where he alighted and proceeded on foot.

How beautiful the country looked, so fresh and green, enchanting after the barren lands he had

seen for so long. He walked slowly, as though loath to reach happiness too soon. Rounding a turn in the road he came in sight of Sir Lester's house, and his heart beat fast. He halted and feasted his eyes on the much loved spot, that had never been absent from his memory, no matter where his lot might be cast.

As he approached the entrance to the drive he saw the flutter of a white dress on the terrace—it was Winifred. He felt inclined to rush forward and shout wildly, his exultation was so great that it must break bounds.

As he walked up the drive Winifred saw him, and turning to her father said—

"There is someone coming, I wonder who it can be."

Then the familiar figure, the well known walk made her heart beat furiously with a great joy.

"Father, father, it's Jack!" she exclaimed.

"Nonsense, Win, how can it be Jack?"

"It is. I am sure it is. Look, look."

Sir Lester put on his glasses, and said—

"By jove, I believe you are right. Wait and see, we must not make a ridiculous mistake."

Jack Redland saw they recognised him, and ran forward, sprang up the terrace steps, and had Winifred in his arms, almost before she had recovered from her astonishment. She put her arms round his neck and kissed him, it seemed natural for her to do so, had she not waited a long time for him?

"It is you, Jack, dear Jack. You have come back to us. Is it really true?"

"Yes, it is true, Winnie, and I have looked forward to this day during all the time I have been away."

Sir Lester stood looking on, his face betraying his happiness.

"When you have quite finished with Jack you might allow him to shake hands with me," he said, smiling.

Winifred blushed, and Jack said, hastily—

"Forgive me, Sir Lester, there is no occasion to tell you now how much we love each other."

Sir Lester took him by the hand, and said—

"This is the happiest day of my life, Jack. God bless you, my lad, the shock is almost too much for me, I have not been very strong of late."

He staggered a little, and Jack supported him to a chair.

"Has he been ill?" he asked, turning to Winifred.

"Yes, very ill indeed."

"And if it had not been for Win I should not have pulled through," said Sir Lester.

During the next two or three days Jack Redland gave them an account of his varied experiences, and found attentive listeners. He handed the famous black pearl to Winifred, who was delighted with its dark beauty.

"It must be very valuable," she said.

"Worth a few thousands," said Jack, carelessly.

"He talks about thousands much in the same way as we ordinary mortals do about pounds," said Sir Lester, laughing. "How delightful it must be to be a millionaire."

"I am not that," laughed Jack, "far from it; but as we say in the Colonies, I have made a fair pile, thanks to Barry Tuxford."

"Barry, we have forgotten him; it is ungrateful," said Winifred.

"How did you leave him? He must have been sorry to part with you."

"We did not part, he came with me, he is in London," said Jack.

"And you did not bring him with you," said Sir Lester; "that is ungrateful."

"He would not come," said Jack.

"Not come, why?" exclaimed Winifred.

"Because he said he did not wish to disturb the joy of our meeting," replied Jack, smiling.

"Well done, Barry," said Sir Lester, laughing. "But I hope he will join us soon."

"Yes, he is waiting for his orders to march," said Jack.

"Then write them at once," answered Sir Lester, "We must welcome the man who has done so much for you, Jack."

In response to the summons, Barry Tuxford arrived at The Downs, and was delighted beyond measure with Sir Lester, and Winifred, and everything he saw.

Sir Lester became much interested in him, and they sat together for hours on the terrace, Barry relating his adventures, while Jack and Winifred wandered about the woods and dells, and the birds chanted a welcome to the lovers.

"So you are to float the Redland-Barry Mine," said Sir Lester. "I should like to take some shares."

"As many as you wish," replied Barry, "and you shall have them on the same terms as ourselves. It is a certain thing, Sir Lester, a real good spec."

Barry Tuxford was right, the Redland-Barry Mine shares went like wildfire, and there was a rush in 'Change to buy them. Before many weeks were past Jack was possessed of an ample fortune, and Sir Lester had increased his capital by the addition of many thousands of pounds.

Barry, to use his own expression, "sat tight" and said little, but he alone knew the enormous possibilities of the new El Dorado.

Jack, as a matter of form and courtesy, asked Sir Lester for Winifred's hand. In granting his request, Sir Lester said—

"I have always regarded you as a son, Jack, perhaps that is why I never contemplated the probability of you and Winifred falling in love. It was only after you left England that I found out how deeply she was attached to you. I regretted then that you had left us, but it was all for the best, although I assure you had you returned a poor man I should have put no obstacles in your way. I am glad you had the pluck to go out into the world and fight for your own hand, and nothing gives me more pleasure than to place in your keeping the future happiness of my child."

There was no occasion for a long engagement, and Sir Lester insisted upon Jack taking possession of The Downs until he had purchased a suitable property for himself.

The wedding proved how great was the popularity of both bride and bridegroom in the county, for there was an enormous attendance in the church, and the presents were costly and numerous. Barry Tuxford acted as best man, and quietly told Sir Lester, after the ceremony, that he had never gone through such a severe ordeal in his life.

"But it was worth it all to have the privilege of kissing the bride," he added, at which Sir Lester laughed heartily.

Of course Jack Redland had told Sir Lester all about the victory of Black Boy, and described the race to him in such a graphic way as to arouse his enthusiasm.

"I have brought the colours back with me," said Jack, "and hope to wear them for you before long. I gave Caleb the messages his brother sent and what do you think he suggested?"

"That the sooner you are in the saddle again the better."

"That was one thing, but he proposed that Black Boy should come over here and try what he could do on this side," said Jack.

"A capital idea," replied Sir Lester. "How is it to be done?"

"That will not cause much trouble," replied Jack. "When Barry returns he will see to it, and Joel Kenley will send a good man to be in charge of him during the voyage."

Barry Tuxford returned to Australia in the "Falcon" with Captain Seagrave, who had been at Jack's wedding. Before leaving he promised to take another trip in the course of a year or two.

"And who knows," he added, "but that I may end my days in the old country?"

"I hope you will," said Winifred. "We shall be charmed to have you near us. Promise me you will seriously consider it."

"I'd promise anything you asked," said Barry. "I don't know the man who could resist you, at any rate his name is not Barry Tuxford."

Black Boy arrived safely in England, in charge of Bricky Smiles, who was induced, without difficulty, to remain with Caleb Kenley, and look after the horse. Bricky's lot, in his declining days, had fallen in pleasant places, and he was very grateful to Jack for his kindness.

The Redland-Barry Mine turned out an even greater success than Barry Tuxford anticipated. The crushings were described as wonderful, and the shares went up by leaps and bounds, while the dividends were sufficiently high to make even a South African diamond magnate covetous.

Barry Tuxford arrived in England again in time to stand godfather to Jack and Winifred's second son, and he was very proud of the position.

"Makes me a sort of guardian of the youngster," he said. "I'll not be hard on him when he grows up."

"I do not think you will," replied Winifred, smiling. "You could not be hard upon anyone."

Barry Tuxford made no reply; he had been very hard on some men, but they deserved it.

Harry Marton frequently wrote to Jack. He had prospered exceedingly, and was Barry Tuxford's right hand man.

Sir Lester Dyke, now completely restored to health, often had the pleasure of seeing his son-in-law carry the black and orange jacket to victory, and during the Sussex fortnight there were no more popular colours seen on the racecourse.

THE END

SPORTING NOVELS. By NAT GOULD.

SPORTING SKETCHES.
A RACECOURSE TRAGEDY.
WARNED OFF.
LIFE'S WEB.
SETTLING DAY.
KING OF THE RANGES.
IN ROYAL COLOURS.
A RACING SINNER.
BROKEN DOWN.
THE SILKEN REIN.
THE THREE WAGERS.
RAYMOND'S RIDE.
BRED IN THE BUSH.
BLUE CAP.
IN LOW WATER.
THE GOLD WHIP.
THE RAJAH'S RACER.
A STABLE MYSTERY.

*** END OF
THE PROJECT
GUTENBERG
EBOOK THE
SECOND
STRING ***

Updated editions will replace the previous one—the old editions will be renamed.

Creating the works from print editions not protected by U.S. copyright law means that no one owns a United States copyright in these works, so the Foundation (and you!) can

copy and distribute it in the United States without permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules, set forth in the General Terms of Use part of this license, apply to copying and distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works to protect the PROJECT GUTENBERG™ concept and trademark. Project Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if you charge for an eBook, except by following the terms of the trademark license, including paying royalties for use of the Project Gutenberg trademark. If you do not charge anything for copies of this eBook, complying with the trademark license is very easy. You may use



this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and research. Project Gutenberg eBooks may be modified and printed and given away—you may do practically ANYTHING in the United States with eBooks not protected by U.S. copyright law. Redistribution is subject to the trademark license, especially commercial redistribution.

START: FULL LICENSE

THE FULL PROJECT GUTENBERG LICENSE

PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE YOU DISTRIBUTE OR USE THIS WORK

To protect the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting the free distribution of electronic works, by using or distributing this work (or any other work associated in any way with the phrase “Project Gutenberg”), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full Project Gutenberg™ License available with this file or online at www.gutenberg.org/license.

Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg™ electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. “Project Gutenberg” is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg™ electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg™ electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation (“the Foundation” or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg™ works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg™ name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg™ License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg™ work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country other than the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg™ License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg™ work (any work on which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” appears, or with which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase “Project Gutenberg” associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg™ trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg™ License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg™ License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg™.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg™ work in a format other than “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg™ website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg™ License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg™ works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works provided that:

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, “Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation.”
- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.
- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.
- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain “Defects,” such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the “Right of Replacement or Refund” described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this

electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you 'AS-IS', WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg™ work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg™ work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™

Project Gutenberg™ is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg™'s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg™ collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg™ and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at www.gutenberg.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's website and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations (\$1 to \$5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit www.gutenberg.org/donate.

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from

donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg™ concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg™ eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg™ eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: www.gutenberg.org.

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg™, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.