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AND OTHER STORIES

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BY

ROLF BOLDREWOOD

AUTHOR OF

'ROBBERY UNDER ARMS,' 'THE MINER'S RIGHT,' 'THE SQUATTER'S DREAM,'
'A COLONIAL REFORMER,' ETC.

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IN BAD COMPANY

CHAPTER I

Bill Hardwick was as fine a specimen of an Australian as you could find in a day's march. Active as a cat and strong withal, he was mostly described as 'a real good all-round chap, that you couldn't put wrong at any kind of work that a man could be asked to do.'

He could plough and reap, dig and mow, put up fences and huts, break in horses and drive bullocks; he could milk cows and help in the dairy as handily as a woman. These and other accomplishments he was known to possess, and being a steady, sensible fellow, was always welcome when work was needed and a good man valued. Besides all this he was the fastest and the best shearer in the district of Tumut, New South Wales, where he was born, as had been his father and mother before him. So that he was a true Australian in every sense of the word.

It could not be said that the British race had degenerated as far as he was concerned. Six feet high, broad-chested, light-flanked, and standing on his legs like a gamecock, he was always ready to fight or work, run, ride or swim, in fact to tackle any muscular exercise in the world at the shortest notice.

Bill had always been temperate, declining to spend his earnings to enrich the easy-going township publican, whose mode of gaining a living struck him as being too far removed from that of honest toil. Such being his principles and mode of life, he had put by a couple of hundred pounds, and 'taken up a selection.' This means (in Australia) that he had conditionally purchased three hundred and twenty acres of Crown Land, had paid up two shillings per acre of the upset price, leaving the balance of eighteen shillings, to be paid off when convenient. He had constructed thereon, chiefly with his own hands, a comfortable, four-roomed cottage, of the 'slab' architecture of the period, and after fencing in his property and devoting the proceeds of a couple of shearings to a modest outlay in furniture, had married Jenny Dawson, a good-looking, well-conducted young woman, whom he had known ever since he was big enough to crack a stockwhip.

In her way she was as clever and capable; exceptionally well adapted for the position of a farmer's wife, towards which occupation her birth and surroundings had tended. She was strong and enduring in her way, as were her husband and brothers in theirs. She could milk cows and make excellent butter, wasn't afraid of a turbulent heifer in the dairy herd, or indisposed to rise before daylight in the winter mornings and drive in the milkers through the wet or frozen grass. She could catch and saddle her own riding-horse or drive the spring cart along an indifferent road to the country town. She knew all about the rearing of calves, pigs, and poultry; could salt beef and cure bacon—in a general way attend to all the details of a farm. Her father had acquired a small grant in the early colonial days, and from its produce and profits reared a family of healthy boys and girls.

They had not been educated up to the State school standard now considered necessary for every dweller in town or country, but they could read and write decently; had also such knowledge of arithmetic as enabled them to keep their modest accounts. Such having been the early training of Bill's helpmate, it was a fair augury that, with luck and good conduct, they were as likely as any young couple of their age to prosper reasonably, so as eventually to acquire a competence, or even, as indeed not a few of their old friends and neighbours had done, to attain to that enviable position generally described as 'making a fortune.'

For the first few years nothing could have been more promising than the course of affairs at Chidowla or 'Appletree Flat,' as their homestead was formerly named, in consequence of the umbrageous growth of the 'angophora' in the meadow by the mountain creek, which bordered their farm. Bill stayed at home and worked steadily, until he had put in his crop. He cleared and cultivated a larger piece of ground with each succeeding year. The seasons were genial, and the rainfall, though occasionally precarious, did not, during this period, show any diminution. But annually, before the first spring month came round, Bill saddled the old mare, and leading a less valuable or perhaps half-broken young horse, packed his travelling 'swag' upon it and started off for the shearing. Jenny did not particularly like being left alone for three months or perhaps four, with no one but the children, for by this time a sturdy boy and baby girl had been added to the household. But Bill brought home such a welcome addition to the funds in the shape of the squatters' cheques, that she hid her uneasiness and discomfort from him, only hoping, as she said, that some day, if matters went on as they were going, they would be able to do without the shearing money, and Bill could afford to stop with his wife and children all the year round. That was what *she* would like.

So time went on, till after one more shearing, Bill began to think about buying the next selection, which an improvident neighbour would shortly be forced to sell, owing to his drinking habits and too great fondness for country race meetings.

The soil of the land so handily situated was better than their own, and, as an adjoining farm, could be managed without additional expense.

The 'improvements' necessary for holding it under the lenient land laws of New South Wales had been effected.

They were not particularly valuable, but they had been passed by the Inspector of Conditional Purchases, who was not too hard on a poor man, if he made his selection his '*bona fide* home and residence.' This condition Mr. Dick Donahue certainly had fulfilled as far as locating his hard-working wife Bridget and half-a-dozen bare-legged, ragged children thereon, with very little to eat sometimes, while he was acting as judge at a bush race meeting, or drinking recklessly at the public-house in the township.

So now the end had come. The place was mortgaged up to its full value with the bank at Talmorah,

the manager of which had refused to advance another shilling upon it.

The storekeeper, who had a bill of sale over the furniture, horses and cows, plough, harrow, and winnowing machine, had decided to sell him up. The butcher and the baker, despairing of getting their bills paid, declined further orders. Poor Bridget had been lately feeding herself and the children on milk and potatoes, last year's bacon, and what eggs the fowls, not too well fed themselves, kindly produced.

Jenny had helped them many a time, from womanly pity. But for her, they would often have been without the 'damper' bread, which served to fill up crevices with the hungry brood—not that she expected return or payment, but as she said, 'How could I see the poor things hungry, while we have a snug home and all we can eat and drink?'

Then she would mentally compare Bill's industry with Dick's neglect, and a feeling of wifely pride would thrill her heart as she returned to her comfortable cottage and put her children, always neatly dressed, to sleep in their clean cots.

As she sat before the fire, near the trimly-swept hearth, which looked so pleasant and homely, though there was but a wooden slab chimney with a stone facing, a vision arose before her of prosperous days when they would have a ring fence round their own and the Donahues' farm—perhaps even an 'additional conditional lease,' to be freehold eventually—afterwards a flock of sheep and who knows what in the years to come.

'The Donahues, poor things, would have to sell and go away, that was certain; *they* couldn't prevent them being sold up—and, of course, Bill might as well buy it as another. The bank manager, Mr. Calthorpe, would sell the place, partly on credit, trusting Bill for the remainder, with security on both farms, because he was sober and industrious. Indeed, he told Bill so last week. What a thing it was to have a good name! When she thought of the way other women's husbands "knocked down" their money after shearing, forty and fifty pounds, even more, in a week's drunken bout, she felt that she could not be too thankful.

'Now Bill, when shearing was over, generally took a small sum in cash—just enough to see him home, and paid in the cheque for the season's shearing to his bank account. It was over sixty pounds last year, for he sold his spare horse—a thirty-shilling colt out of the pound, that he had broken in himself—to the overseer, for ten guineas, and rode home on the old mare, who, being fat and frolicsome after her spell, "carried him and his swag first-rate."

'As to the two farms, no doubt it would give them all they knew, at first, to live and pay interest. But other people could do it, and why shouldn't they? Look at the Mullers! The bark hut they lived in for the first few years is still there. They kept tools, seed potatoes, odds and ends in it now. Next, they built a snug four-roomed slab cottage, with an iron roof. That's used for the kitchen and men's room. For they've got a fine brick house, with a verandah and grand furniture, and a big orchard and more land, and a flock of sheep and a dairy and a buggy and—everything. How I should like a buggy to drive myself and the children to the township! Wouldn't it be grand? To be sure they're Germans, and it's well known they work harder and save more than us natives. But what one man and woman can do, another ought to be able for, I say!'

And here Jenny shut her mouth with a resolute expression and worked away at her needle till bedtime. Things were going on comfortably with this meritorious young couple, and Bill was getting ready to start for the annual trip 'down the river,' as it was generally described. This was a region distant three hundred miles from the agricultural district where the little homestead had been created. The 'down the river' woolsheds were larger and less strictly managed (so report said) than those of the more temperate region, which lay near the sources of the great rivers. In some of them as many as one hundred, two hundred, even three hundred thousand sheep were annually shorn. And as the fast shearers would do from a hundred to a hundred and fifty sheep per day, it may be calculated, at the rate of one pound per hundred, what a nice little cheque would be coming to every man after a season's shearing. More particularly if the weather was fine.

Bill was getting ready to start on the following morning when a man named Janus Stoate arrived, whom he knew pretty well, having more than once shorn in the same shed with him.

He was a cleverish, talkative fellow, with some ability and more assurance, qualities which attract steady-going, unimaginative men like Bill, who at once invited him to stay till the morning, when they could travel together. Stoate cheerfully assented, and on the morrow they took the road after breakfast, much to Mrs. Hardwick's annoyance, who did not care for the arrangement. For, with feminine intuition, she distrusted Janus Stoate, about whom she and her husband had had arguments.

He was a Londoner—an 'assisted' emigrant, a radical socialist, brought out at the expense of the colony. For which service he was so little grateful that he spoke disrespectfully of all the authorities, from the Governor downward, and indeed, as it seemed to her, of respectable people of every rank and condition. Now Jenny, besides being naturally an intelligent young woman, utilised her leisure hours during her husband's absence, for reading the newspapers, as well as any books she could get at. She had indeed more brains than he had, which gift she owed to an Irish grandmother. And though she did by no means attempt to rule him, her advice was always listened to and considered.

'I wish you were going with some one else,' she said with an air of vexation. 'It's strange that that Stoate should come, just on your last evening at home. I don't like him a little bit. He's just artful enough to persuade you men that he's going to do something great with this "Australian Shearers' Union" that I see so much about in the newspapers. I don't believe in him, and so I tell you, Bill!'

'I know you don't like Unions,' he answered, 'but see what they've done for the working classes! What could we shearers have done without ours?'

'Just what you did before you had anything to do with him and his Union. Do your work and get paid for it. You got your shearing money all right, didn't you? Mr. Templemore's cheques, and Mr. Dickson's and Mr. Shand's, were always paid, weren't they? How should we have got the land and this home, but for them?'

'Well, but, Jenny, we ought to think about the other workers as well as ourselves—"Every man should stand by his order," as Stoate says.'

'I don't see that at all. Charity's all very well, but we have our own business to look after and let other people mind theirs. Order, indeed! I call it disorder,—and them that work it up will have to pay for it, mark my words. You look at those children, William Hardwick, that's where you've got to 7
give your money to, and your wife, and not a lot of gassing spouters like Janus Stoate, who don't care if their families starve, while they're drinking and smoking, talking rubbish, and thinking themselves fine fellows, and what fools you and the rest are to pay them for it.'

'Well, but the squatters are lowering the price of shearing, Jenny; we must make a stand against that, surely!'

'And suppose they do. Isn't wool falling, and sheep too? Aren't they boiling down their ewes, and selling legs of mutton for a shilling apiece? Why should they go on paying a pound a hundred when everything's down? When prices rise, shearing'll go up again, and wages too—you know we can get mutton now for a penny a pound. Doesn't that make a difference? You men seem to have no sense in you, to talk in that way!'

'Well, but what are we to do? If they go on cutting down wages, there's no saying what they'll do next.'

'Time enough to think about that when it comes. You take a fair thing, now that times are bad, it'll help them that's helped you, and when they get better, shearing and everything else will go up too. You can't get big wages out of small profits; your friends don't seem to have gumption enough to see that. I'm ashamed of you, I really am, Bill!'

'Well, I must go now—I daresay the squatters will give in, and there'll be no row at all.'

'What do you want to have a row for, I should like to know? Haven't you always been well treated and well fed, and well paid?—and now you want to turn on them that did it for you, just as if you were one of those larrikins and spielers, that come up partly for work, and more for gambling and stealing! I say it's downright ungrateful and foolish besides—and if you follow all the Union fads, mark my words, you'll live to rue the day.'

'Well, good-bye, Jenny, I can't stop any longer, you're too set up to be reasonable.'

'Good-bye, Bill, and don't be going and running risks at another man's bidding; and if you bring that man here again, as sure as my name's Jane Hardwick, I'll set the dogs on him.' And here Jenny went into the cottage, and shut the door with a bang, while Bill rode down the track to join his companion, feeling distinctly uncomfortable; the more so, as he reflected that he and Jenny had 8
never parted in this way before.

'You've been a long time saying good-bye,' said that gentleman, with a sneering accent in his voice; 'that's the worst of bein' married, you never can follow your own opinions without a lot of barneyin' and opposition. It's a curious thing that women never seem to be on the side of progress—they're that narrow-minded, as they don't look ahead of the day's work.'

'My old woman's more given to look ahead than I am,' said Bill seriously. 'But, of course, we all know that we must stick together, if we expect to get anything out of the employers.'

'Yes, yes—by George, you're quite right,' said Stoate, as if Bill had enunciated an original and brilliant idea. 'What I and the workers want is to bring the capitalists on their knees—the labour element has never had its proper share of profits in the past. But we're going to have things different in the future. How was all the big estates put together, and them fine houses built, except by *our* labour? And what do we get after all, now the work's done? We've never had our fair share. Don't you see that?' Here he looked at Bill, who could find nothing to say but—

'I suppose not.'

'Suppose not? We've as much right to be ridin' in our buggies as the man as just passed us with that slashin' pair. Our labour made the land valuable—built the houses and put up the fences. Where do *we* come in, I ask you?'

'Well, I suppose the men that worked got their wages, didn't they?' answered Bill. 'There's been a deal of employment the last few years. I did pretty well out of a fencing contract, I know, and my mate started a big selection from his share.'

'Yes, yes, I daresay, that's where you fellers make the mistake. If you get a few pounds slung to you by these capitalists, you don't think of the other poor chaps walkin' about half starved, begging a meal here and a night's lodging there. What we ought to go in for is a co-operative national movement. That's the easiest of all. One man to find the money.'

'Is it?' Bill could not help saying, interrupting the flood of Stoate's eloquence. 'I've always found it 9
dashed hard to find a few pounds.'

'I don't mean fellers like us; we work hard—a dashed sight too hard for all we get. I mean the regular professional capitalist, in a manner of speakin', that's got his money by buying land, when

the Government oughtn't never to have sold it, if they'd had any savey, or had it left him by his father, as had robbed the people some other way. Well, he finds the money, you and I the muscle—and mark you, they can't do nothin' without *that*—and others, smartish chaps as comes from the people mostly, finds the brains.'

'And what after that?'

'That's what I'm a-coming to,' answered Stoate pompously. 'When the sheep's shorn, the fat ones sold, the wheat reaped, and the money put in the bank, we all divide fair, according to our shares. So much for interest on capital, so much for labouring work, so much for head work, so much for light, easy things like clerking, as most any fool can do.'

'That sounds pretty fair,' replied Bill, scratching his head, as he endeavoured to grasp the complex conditions of the scheme. 'But who's to boss the whole thing? There must be a boss?'

'Oh, of course, there'll be a council—elected by the people—that is of course the shareholders in each industrial, co-operative establishment; they all have votes, you know. The council will do all the bossing.'

'Oh, I see, and all share alike. One man's as good as another, I suppose.'

'Certainly, all have equal rights; every man willing to work has a right to have work found for him by the State.'

'But suppose he won't work when it *is* found for him? You and I have known plenty of coves like that.'

'Well, of course, there *is* a difference in men—some haven't the natural gift, as you may say—don't care for "hard graft," but you must remember no one'll have to work hard when labour's federated.'

'How'll the work be done, then?'

'Why, you see, every one will have to do four or six hours a day, rich and poor, young and old, from sixteen to sixty. Before that their eddication [Mr. Stoate's early environment—his father was a radical cobbler—had fixed his pronunciation of that important word inexorably], this eddication, I say (which is the great thing for a worker, and enables him to hold his own against the employers, who've always had a monopoly of it), has to be attended to. After sixty, they've to be pensioned off, not wanted to do no more work. And as Bellamy says in his *Looking Backward* (a great book, as all our chaps ought to read)—"If every one in the State worked their four hours a day, the whole work of the world could be easy done, and no one the worse for it."' 10

'That sounds well enough,' said Bill thoughtfully, 'but I'm afraid it wouldn't wash. A lot of chaps would be trying for the easy parts, and those that were cast for the rough and tumble wouldn't do it with a will, or only half and half. And who's to draft 'em off? The fellers elected to do it would have all the say, and if they had a down on a chap—perhaps a deal better man than themselves—they could drop him in for the lowest billets going.'

'That could all be set right in the usual way,' replied Stoate, pompously mouthing his words as if addressing an imaginary audience. 'Every member of the Association would have the right of appeal to the Grand Council.'

'And suppose they didn't side with the workin' feller—these talking chaps, as like as not, would hang together—he'd have to grin and bear it. He'd be no better than a slave. Worse than things are now. For a man can get a lawyer, and fight out his case before the P.M., and the other beaks. They're mostly fair and square—what I've seen of 'em. They've no interest one way or the other.'

'No more would the Grand Labour Council.'

'Don't know so much about that, working coves are middlin' jealous of one another. If one chap's been elected to the Council, as you call it, and another feller opposed him and got beat, there's sure to be bad blood between them, and the man that's up like enough'll want to rub it into the man that's down—and there'd be no one to see fair play like the beaks.'

'Why, you're getting to be a regular "master's man." That's not the way to talk, if you're goin' to be a Unionist.'

'Oh, I'll follow the Union,' replied Bill, 'if things are going to be fair and square, not any other way, and so I tell you. But if it's such a jolly good thing to put your money in a station and share and share alike with all the other chaps, why don't some of you Union chaps put your money together?—lots of you could raise a hundred or more if you didn't drink it. Then you could shear your own sheep, sell your own wool, and raise your own bread, meat, vegetables—everything. You could divide the profits at the end of the year, and if running a squatting station's such a thundering good thing, why you'd all make fortunes in no time. What do you say to that now?' 11

'Well, of course, it sounds right enough,' answered Stoate, with less than his usual readiness. 'There's a lot of things to be considered about afore you put your money into a big thing like that. You've got to get the proper sort of partners—men as you know something about, and that can be depended on for to work steady, and do what they're told.'

'Do what they're told? Why, ain't that the one thing you Union chaps are fighting the squatters about? They're not to be masters in their own woolsheds! The shearers and rouseabouts are *not* to obey the squatters' overseer, they must work as the Union's delegate tells 'em. What sort of fake d'ye call that? Suppose I'm harvestin'—my crop's not much now, but it may be, some day—d'ye mean to say I'm not to talk sharp to my own men, and say "do this" or "do that"? And a delegate walkin' up and down, makin' believe to be boss, while I'm payin' for the wages and rations, and horses and thrashing-machine, and the whole boiling, would I stand that? No! I'd kick him out of the

place, and that dashed soon, I can tell you!' And here Bill's eyes began to sparkle and his fists to tighten on the reins as if he itched to 'stand up to his man,' with steady eye and watchful 'left,' ready for the first chance to 'land' his adversary.

The sun was scarcely an hour high when the wayfarers came in sight of the village-appearing group of edifices familiarly known as a 'sheep station.' The 'men's hut' came first into view—a substantial dwelling, with horizontal sawn slabs and shingled roof, a stone chimney and a dining-room. Boasting a cook, moreover, of far from ordinary rank. A superior building, in fact, to the one which the owner of the station thought good enough for himself for the first few years of his occupation of North Yalla-doora.

This was the abiding-place of the resident labourers on the station; men who received a fixed 12
weekly wage, varying from a pound to twenty-five shillings per week, with board and lodging additional. The Australian labourer is catered for on perhaps the most liberal dietary scale in the world. He is supplied with three meals per diem, of beef or mutton of the best quality, with bread *à discrétion*, also tea (the ordinary drink of the country) in unlimited quantity, with milk and vegetables if procurable. Condiments, sauces, and preserves, if his tastes run that way, he has to pay for as extras.

They can be procured, also wearing apparel, boots, and all other necessaries, at the station store; failing that, at the 'township,' invariably found within easy distance of any large station.

Besides the 'men's hut' comes next in rank the 'shearers' hut,' dedicated to those important and (at shearing time) exclusive personages; the sheep-washers', the rouseabouts' huts, all necessary different establishments; as also the 'travellers' hut,' set apart for the nomadic labourer or 'swagman,' who sojourning but for a night is by the unwritten law of Bushland provided with bread and meat, cooking utensils, water, and firewood *gratis*.

Then, at a certain distance, the woolshed—with half an acre of roofed, battened yards and pens—the 'big house,' the stable, the horse-yard, the stock-yard, the milking-yard, with perhaps half-a-dozen additional nondescript constructions.

It may easily be imagined that such buildings, scattered and disjointed as they were, had much more the appearance of a village than of a single establishment owned, managed, and supported by one man (or one firm), and absolutely subject to his orders and interest.

'Might as well stop here to-night,' said Stoate; 'it's twenty-five mile to Coolah Creek for to-morrow, and the road heavy in places. Look at it! There's a bloomin' township to belong to one man, and *us* travellin' the country looking for work!'

'It took a lot of labour to put up all the huts and places, not to count in the shed and yards, you bet,' said his companion, who had been silent for the last half-hour, 'and many a cheque was drawed afore the last nail was drove in. I know a chap that's made a small fortune out of Mr. Templemore's contracts, and that's got a farm to show for it to-day. What's wrong with that?'

'Why, don't you see? Suppose the State had this first-rate block of country, cut it up in fair-sized 13
farms, advanced the men the money to put up their places and crop it the first year, see what a population it would keep. Keep in comfort, too,' he continued, as he refilled his pipe and made ready for a leisurely smoke. 'Let me see, there's fifty thousand acres of freehold on this North Yalla-doora run, besides as much more leased. Divide that into nice-sized farms, that'd give us a thousand fifty-acre lots, or five 'underd 'underd-acre ones. See what a crowd of families that'd keep.'

'And suppose there come a dry season,' queried Bill rather gruffly, 'how about the families then? I've seen the sheep dyin' by hundreds on this very place—and the whole forty thousand 'd 'a died in another month if rain hadn't come. But I'm gettin' full up of this Union racket. Small farms in a dry country's foolishness. Where are we goin' to camp? Look at the grass on that flat! And I've seen it like a road.'

'It ain't bad near the creek,' said his companion. 'You can let the horses go while I go up to the overseer and get a bit of ration.'

'There's no call to do that. See that bag? My old woman's put bread and beef enough in that for a week anyhow, besides bacon, and tea, and sugar.'

'That's all right,' answered Stoate airily, 'but we may as well get fresh mutton for nothing. They always give travellers a pound or two here, and a pannikin of flour. It comes in handy for cakes.'

'Well, I'm d—d!' said Hardwick, unable to contain his wrathful astonishment. 'D'ye mean to tell me as you're a-goin' to *beg* food from this squatter here and take his charity after abusing him and all belonging to him and schemin' to ruin 'em? I call it dashed, dirty, crawling meanness, and for two pins I wouldn't travel the same side of the road with you, and so I tell you, Janus Stoate.'

There was a snaky glitter in Stoate's small, black eyes as he met for an instant the bold gaze of the Australian; but, with characteristic cunning, he turned it off with a half laugh.

'Why, Bill, what hot coffee you're a-gettin', all over a little joke like this 'ere. Now I feel as I've a right to be fed on the road when I and my feller-workers bring our labour to the door—in a manner of speakin'. We've no call to think ourselves under obligation to the squatters for their "miserable 14
dole," as our Head Centre calls it. It's only our due when all's said and done.'

'Miserable dole,' growled Bill, now engaged in taking off his pack. 'That's a dashed fine name to give free rations, to the tune of half-a-dozen sheep a night, and a couple of bags of flour a week, which I know Tambo did last shearing. A lot of chaps going about the country askin' for work, and

prayin' to God they mayn't find it—and abusin' the people that feed 'em on top of it all. I wonder the squatters don't stop feedin' travellers, and that's all about it. I would if I was boss, I know, except the old men.'

'How about the sheds and the grass when the weather gets dry?' asked Stoate, with a sidelong glance of spite.

'That's easy enough, if a chap's a d—d scoundrel; but suppose he's caught and gets five years in Berrima Gaol, he'd wish he'd acted more like a white man and less like a myall blackfellow. But stoush all this yabber. You boil the billy, while I get out the grub and hobble the horses. I feel up to a good square feed.'

So did Mr. Stoate, apparently, as he consumed slice after slice of the cold corned beef and damper which Jenny had put up neatly in Bill's 'tucker bag,' not disdaining divers hunks of 'brownie,' washed down with a couple of pints of 'billy tea,' after which he professed that he felt better, and proceeded to fill and light his pipe with deliberation.

By this time the hobbled horses had betaken themselves through the abundant pasture of the river flat, and their bells sounding faint and distant, Bill declared his intention of heading them back, in case they should try to make off towards the home they had left. He returned in half an hour, stating that they were in a bend and blocked by a horseshoe lagoon.

Both men addressed themselves to the task of putting up the small tent which Bill carried, and bestowed their swags therein, after which Mr. Stoate proposed that they should go over to the men's hut, and have a bit of a yarn before they turned in.

Bill remarked that they had to be up at daylight, but supposed that an hour wouldn't matter. So the wayfarers strolled over to a long building, not far from the creek bank, which they entered without ceremony. They found themselves in the presence of about twenty men, in the ordinary dress of the station hand, viz. tweed or moleskin trousers and Crimean shirt. Some had coats, but the majority were in their shirt sleeves. There were mostly of ages between twenty and forty, differing in nationality, speech, and occupation. 15

England, Ireland, Scotland, and Australia were represented. A Frenchman, two Germans, a coloured man (American), besides a tall, well-made Australian half-caste, who spoke much the same English as the others, but had a softer voice, with rather slower intonation.

At one end of the large room was an ample fireplace, with a glowing wood fire, around which several men were sitting or standing, mostly smoking. Others were seated at the long, solid dining-table reading, for in one corner stood some fairly well-filled bookshelves. One man was writing a letter.

A few were lying in their bunks, rows of which were on either side of the room. A certain amount of quiet conversation was going on. There was no loud talking, swearing, or rude behaviour of any sort, and in spite of the bare walls and plain surroundings an air of comfort pervaded the whole.

Stoate was greeted by several of the younger men, one of whom was disposed to be facetious, as he exclaimed—

'Hulloa, my noble agitator, what brings you here? Goin' to call out the shearers, and play the devil generally, eh? You've come to the wrong shop at North Yalla-doora—we're all steady-going coves here.'

'I suppose you're game to stand up for your rights, Joe Brace, and not afraid of getting your wages raised, if the Union does that for you?'

'*If* it does,' rejoined Joe sarcastically; 'and who's to go bail for that, I'd like to know? You and your crowd haven't done any great things so far, except make bad blood between masters and men—when everything was peace and goodwill before, as the parson says.'

'Well—what's that? Yer can't get nothin' in the world without fightin' for it—I reckon we're going to have a bit of war for a change. Yes, *war*, and a dashed good thing too, when men have to take orders from their feller-men, and be worked like slaves into the bargain.'

'Brayvo, Janus, old man!' replied the other, with mock approval. 'I see what it's come to. You're to be a delegate with a pot hat and a watch-chain, and get four pound a week for gassin', while us fools of fellers does the hard graft. That's your dart, to sit alongside of Barraker and the rest of the people's try-bunes—ain't them the blokes that stands up and says, like Ben Willett, as we're trod on, and starved, and treated worse than nigger slaves?' 16

'So you are, if you only knew it. Look at all this here country-side in the hands of two or three men, as sucks your blood, and fattens on it!'

'The boss here ain't too fat, if that's what's the matter, and we're not a very hungry-lookin' crowd, boys,' said the speaker, looking round. 'We've got good wages, good food, a book or two to read, and a table to write our letters at. You've been loafin' in Melbourne, Janus, and got oppressed there—spent all your money, forgot to buy a decent rig-out (them's last year's boots as you have on), come on the roads to beg from station to station, and abuse them as feeds you, after your belly's full. What do *you* say, Paddy?'

The man whom he addressed folded up the sheet upon which he had been writing, and rising from the form on which he sat, stood before the fire, displaying an athletic figure, and determined countenance, lighted up by a pair of glancing blue eyes, which proclaimed his nationality.

'I say that this strike business is all d—d rot, run by a lot of sneaks for their own ends. *They're* the vermin that fatten on the working-men, that are fools enough to believe their rubbish—not the

squatters, who've mostly worked hard for what they've made, and spent it free enough, more power to them! Where's there a man on North Yalla-doora that's got anything to complain of? We're well paid, well fed, well cooked for, eh, Jack? and as comfortable in our way as the boss is in his. More indeed, for we've got a shingled roof, and his is box-bark. The travellers' hut's shingled, so is the rouseabouts'. He's never had time to have his own place done up, though he lives like a gentleman, as we all know.'

'Yer 'arf a gentleman yerself, ain't yer, *Mister* O'Kelly?' replied Stoate sneeringly. 'No wonder yer don't take no interest in the workers—the men that makes the wealth of this country, and every other. Yer the makin's of a first-class "scab," and if the chaps here was of my mind you'd be put out of every hut on the river.' Before the last word was fully out, O'Kelly made a couple of steps forward with so vengeful a glare in his blue eyes that Stoate involuntarily drew back—with such haste also, that he trod on the foot of a man behind him and nearly fell backward.

'You infernal scoundrel!' he cried; 'dare to take my name into your ugly mouth again, and I'll kick you from here to the woolshed, and drown you in the wash-pen afterwards. I've done a man's work in Australia for the last five years, though I wasn't brought up to it, as some of you know. I've nothing to say against the men who gave me honest pay for honest work, and whose salt I've eaten. But skulking crawlers like you are ruining the country. You're worse than a dingo—*he* don't beg. You come here and whine for food, and then try to bite the hand that feeds you. Didn't I see you at the store to-night, waiting for grub, like the other travellers?'

'No, yer didn't then,' snarled Stoate.

'Well, I have before this, and more than once. I expect you're loafing on your mate, who's a decent fellow, and the sooner he parts company with a hound like you, the better. But this is our hut, and out you go, or I will, and that's the long and short of it. Come on, Joe!'

'The public's not on for a sermon to-night, Janus, old man,' said the young fellow before mentioned. 'Paddy's got his monkey up, and it'll be bloody wars if you don't clear. Yer mate's a cove as we'd like to spend the evenin' with, but the votin's agin yer, Janus, it raly is.'

'I came in with Stoate,' said Bill, 'and in course I'm here to see it out with him, man to man. But this is your hut, and not ours, mate, so we'd better get back to our camp—good-night all!'

CHAPTER II

The sun-rays were slowly irradiating 'the level waste, the rounded grey' which accurately described the landscape, in the lower Riverina, which our travellers had reached after a fortnight's travel, and where the large and pastorally famous sheep station of Tandāra had been constructed. Far as the eye could range was an unbroken expanse of sea-like plain, covered at this spring time of year with profuse vegetation—the monotony being occasionally relieved by clumps of the peculiar timber growing only amid the vast levels watered by the Darling. The wilga, the boree, and the mogil copses were in shape, outline, and area so curiously alike, that the lost wanderer proverbially found difficulty in fixing upon any particular clump as a landmark. Once strayed from the faint irregular track, often the only road between stations thirty or forty miles apart—once confused as to the compass bearings, and how little hope was there for the wayfarer, especially if weary, thirsty, and on foot! The clump of mogil or wilga trees, which he had toiled so many a mile in the burning afternoon to reach, was the facsimile of the one left, was it that morning or the one before? More than once had he, by walking in a circle, and making for apparently 'creek timber' at variance with his original course, found himself at the *same clump*, verified by his own tracks, and the ashes of his small fire, as the one which he had left forty-eight hours ago.

Reckless and desperate, he takes the course again, feeling weaker by two days' hard walking—footsore, hungry—above all, *thirsty*, to the verge of delirium. Let us hope that he falls in with a belated boundary rider who shows him an endless-seeming wire fence, which he commands him to 19
follow, till he meets the jackaroo sent with a water-bag to meet him. If this good angel (not otherwise angelic-seeming) 'drops across' him, well and good; if not so, or he does not 'cut the tracks' of a station team, or the lonely mailman going a back road, God help him! Soon will the crows gathering expectant round a pair of eagles, telegraph to the sharp-eyed scouts of the wilderness that they may ride over and see the dried-up, wasted similitude of what *was* once a man.

No such tragedy was likely to be enacted in the case of our two shearers. They were fairly mounted. They had food and water to spare. Bill was an experienced bushman, and both men had been along this track before. So they followed the winding trail traced faintly on the broad green sheet of spring herbage, sometimes almost invisible—or wholly so, where an old sheep camp had erased the hoof-or wheel-marks—turning to the right or the left with confident accuracy, until they 'picked up' the course again. Wading girth-deep through the subsidiary watercourses—billabongs, cowalls, and such—bank high in this year of unusual rain and plenty (they are synonymous in riverine Australia, 'arida nutrix'), and scaring the water-fowl, which floated or flew in countless flocks.

That gigantic crane, the brolgan (or native companion), danced his quadrille in front of them, 'advance, retire, flap wing, and set to partner,' before he sailed away to a region unfrequented by the peaceful-seeming but dangerous intruder. Crimson-winged, French grey galah parrots fluttered around them in companies, never very far out of shot; the small speckled doves, loveliest of the columba tribes, rose whirring in bevies, while the

swift-footed 'emu' over the waste
Speeds like a horseman that travels in haste.

To the inexperienced European traveller beholding this region for the first time, all-ignorant of the reverse side of the shield, what a pastoral paradise it would have seemed! Concealed from his vision the dread spectres of Famine, Death, Ruin, and Despair, which the shutting-up of the windows of Heaven for a season, has power to summon thereon.

This was a good year, however, in pastoral parlance. Thousands of lambs born in the autumnal 20
months of April and May were now skipping, fat and frolicsome, by the sides of the ewes, in the immense untended flocks. They had been but recently marked and numbered, the latter arithmetical conclusion being obtained by the accurate if primitive method of counting the heaps of severed tails, which modern sheep-farming exacts from the bleeding innocents. The percentage ranged from ninety to nearly a hundred, an almost abnormally favourable result.

How different from the famine years of a past decade, still fresh in men's minds, when every lamb was killed as soon as born 'to save its mother's life,' and in many stations one-half of the ewes died also, from sheer starvation; when immense migratory flocks, like those of the 'mesta' of their Spanish ancestors, swept over the land, destroying, locust-like, every green thing (and dry, too, for that matter), steering towards the mountain plateaux, which boast green grass and rill-melodies, the long relentless summer through—that summer which, on lower levels, had slain even the wild creatures of the forest and plain, inured from countless ages to the deadly droughts of their Austral home.

When the kangaroos by the thousand die,
It's rough on the travelling sheep,

as 'Banjo' sings.

This station, when reached, presented a different appearance from North Yalla-doora. The prairie-like plain, far as the eye could reach, was bisected by a wide and turbid stream, flowing between banks, now low and partly submerged, now lofty and precipitous; occasionally overhanging as if cut away by the angry waters, in one of the foaming floods which, from time to time, alternated with seasons when the shallow stream trickled feebly over the rock-bars in the river-bed.

The buildings were large, but less complete in appearance than those of Yalla-doora. An air of feverish energy pervaded the whole establishment, which seemed to denote that time was more

valued than finish, for the pressing work in hand. The windings of the river could be distinctly marked by the size of the great eucalypts which fringed the banks, refusing to grow away from its waters. How often had they been hailed with joy by the weary wayfarer, athirst even unto death, who knows that his trials are over, when from afar he sights the 'river timber.' And now, the signs of the campaign were visible. Men rode in at speed from distant parts of the immense area known as Tandara 'run.' From the far horizon came nearer and yet nearer the lines of unladen waggons, with long teams of lagging horses or even bullocks, from twelve to twenty in number.

Far from fat and well-liking were these necessary beasts of draught, but sure to leave the station frolicsome and obese after a few weeks' depasturing upon the giant herbage which for a hundred leagues in every direction waved in vast meads like ripening corn. An assemblage of tents and hastily constructed shelters on a 'point' of the river proclaims the 'camp' or temporary abode of the expectant shearers and rouseabouts, wool-pressers, ordinary hands, and general utility men, upon every large run at shearing time, but more especially on so exceptionally important a property as that of Tandara.

'By George! there's a big roll up on Steamer Point this time,' said Bill. 'I've shorn here twice, and never seen as many afore. There won't be stands for half of 'em when the roll's called.'

'No more there will,' said Stoate, as he looked in the direction of the populous camp, where much talk and argument seemed to be going on. 'And them that wrote and got their names put down months back won't have a rosy time of it neither.'

'Why not?' queried Bill. 'Ain't they done right to come and shear when they promised last year, and got the cove to keep places for them?'

'Oh, I didn't mean that, though I don't hold, mind you, with taking places such a dashed long time before shearin's on. It's hard on a chap, when he comes to a shed after travellin' three or four 'underd mile, to be told that all the stands is took up. But there'll be a big row all the same.'

'How's that?'

'Why, Drench the delegate told me, the last place we stopped at, that orders had come up that if the boss wouldn't give in to the Shearers' Union agreement the men were to be called off the board.'

'Hunter won't stand it,' said Bill. 'You take my word. He's always been a good employer; no man can deny that. Good wages, good rations, and pays cash on the nail when the men want it. Don't even give cheques, and that blocks the publican, because a chap can pay as he goes, and needn't hand his cheque over the bar counter. But I know what he'll say to the delegate, or any other man that tells him he's not to be boss in his own shed.'

'What'll that be?' asked Stoate, with a sidelong look, half of curiosity, half of concealed malice.

'He'll tell 'em to go to hell and mind their own business, and leave him to look after his; that he'll see the Union and every one connected with it d—d first before he'll give up the right to manage his own property in his own way.'

'We'll show him different—that is, the Union will,' said Stoate, correcting himself hastily. '*His* property! Who made it? who dug the tanks and put up the fences, and shepherded the sheep afore they was paddocked? and built the blooming shed, as is an emblem of tyranny, to my thinking—when every man ought to have his five 'underd or a thousand ewes of his own, and a neat little place to shear 'em in? *His property!* I say it's *our* property. *We* made it—with the labour of our 'ands—and we ought to have the biggest say in the managin' of it.'

'What about buyin' the sheep and cattle, and the horses, and the payin' of wages this year?' said Bill. 'Suppose they come o' theirselves, "kinder growed," as the nigger gal says in that book about slavery in America, as Jenny read out to me last winter.'

'Wages be hanged!' retorted the disciple of Henry George and Bellamy. 'Our labour makes the fund out of which they pays their bloomin' *wages*, as they call 'em—infernal skinflints, as they are. It's dashed easy for them as gets the profits of our hard earnin's to dribble a trifle back, hardly enough to keep us in workin' order, like them team 'orses as is just turned out—a bite of chaff, and that's about all.'

'Well, only for the chaff, they'd be deaders the first dry season—down from weakness for a week or two, with their eyes picked out by the crows, and the ants eatin' 'em alive. I've seen the wild "brumbies" like that. I expect *they* ought to go on strike for stable keep, and three feeds of oats a day?'

'Men and 'orses is different—you can't compare 'em, in the way of their rights.'

'No; I know you can't,' answered Bill. 'The horses are a dashed sight the straightest crowd of the two. Howsomever, we shan't agree on them points, if we talk till Christmas. You take your way, and I'll take mine. But look here, Stoate, if there's goin' to be any of this burnin' and smashin' racket, as I've heard tell of, I'm *not on*. Mind that—don't you make any mistake! I've a bit of property of my own, as I've worked hard for, and I'm not goin' to hurt another man's savin's, Union or no Union, for all the Labour delegates in Australia, and so I tell you.'

Stoate did not speak for a few moments, then his eyes once more assumed the covert look of malice which they had worn before, as he said slowly—

'That means that you're not game to stand up for the rights of your horder, and you'll act the spy on the men as does.'

Bill's grey eyes blazed out with so sudden a light, as he made a half movement to jump off his horse, that Stoate involuntarily tightened his rein, and touched his leg-weary steed with the one spur of

which he made constant use. But Bill resumed his saddle seat, and putting strong constraint on himself, replied: 'I'm that game as I'll give you a crack on the "point," as 'll stop your blowin' for a bit, if you'll get down and put your hands up. You're a light weight, and not very fit, or I'd knock some of the gas out'n yer now if you'd stand up to me. Not as you would—you're a deal better at talkin' than fightin', let alone workin'. But you and me's mates no more, mind that. You clear out with your moke, and make your own camp, and don't you come anigh me never again, or I'll give you what for, in a style you'll remember till the shearin' after next.' And so saying, Bill touched up his horse, and went off at a hand gallop, with his pack-horse—which by this time had learned to follow his companion steed—after him. Mr. Stoate regarded this action on the part of his whilom companion with baleful eye and resentful feeling, which at length found vent in these memorable words—

'You're very flash, Bill Hardwick, with your fresh 'oss and yer packer. S'pose you think you've left me in a hole, all for a few words on these blarsted, hungry, grinding squatters; but I've seen better coves'n you straightened afore to-day. And by——! I'll be even with yer before the year's out, as sure as my name's Janus Stoate!'

After which pious resolve, Mr. Stoate jogged sullenly onward to the head station, where his sense of the dignity of labour did not prevent him from joining a crowd of men, who were in turn receiving the ordinary bush dole—viz. a pound or two of fresh beef or mutton, in addition to a pint pannikin of flour. As there were at least forty or fifty men who received these components of two substantial meals—supper and breakfast—it may be guessed what a daily contribution the squatter was required to make toward the support of the nomadic labourer of the period.

With respect to that universally recognised Australian institution, the 'travellers' hut,' to which Mr. Stoate betook himself, on receiving his free supper and breakfast materials, an explanation may not be out of place. In the good old times, 'before the war,' in the pre-union days, and when owing to the smaller size of pastoral properties the hands required were necessarily fewer, the chance labourer was made free of the 'men's hut.' In those Arcadian days the men's cook prepared his meals, and he sat at meat with the permanent employés.

This was all very well, when one or two casual guests at the outside were wont to arrive in an evening. But when, in consequence of the growth of population, and the increase of stock, the units were turned into scores, with a possibility of hundreds, the free hospitality had to be restricted.

Complaints were made by the permanent hands that the pilgrim was in the habit of picking up unconsidered trifles, when the men had gone to work after breakfast, and absconding with the same. The cook, too, expostulated, inasmuch as the 'traveller,' after availing himself copiously of the meals set before him, generally took the precaution of loading himself with 'cooked food' sufficient for the next day or two, whereby he, the cook, was kept baking and boiling all day and half the night, in addition to his ordinary work.

For some or all of these reasons, the 'travellers' hut' was decided upon. A roomy and substantial structure, placed near the creek or dam, as the case might be, at a certain distance from the other buildings, to which all future travellers not being gentlefolk, coming with introductions to the overseer's quarters, or 'the big house,' were relegated. 'Bunks' or sleeping-places, a table, and stools were mostly provided; also a load of firewood, an axe, a frying-pan, bucket, and iron pot.

Wayfarers henceforth came under the obligation to cook for themselves. The frying of chops, the boiling of beef and the baking of cakes—operations, with which every bushman is familiar, not being considered to be hardships worth speaking of. The stock of firewood was kept up, it being found that, in default, the uninvited guests felt no delicacy in burning the interior fittings, or even the doors and window frames. To this sanctuary, Mr. Stoate, in place of his former comfortable camp with Hardwick, was fain to betake himself. It was half a mile 'down the creek,' and he cursed freely at being told by the overseer that he must turn out his horse in the 'strangers' paddock,' another half-mile farther, and on no account to put him into the homestead horse-paddock.

'I'm not going to have all the feed ate up that I've saved for the station horses,' said that functionary, in decided tones, 'and so I tell you. You shearers and rouseabouts think it's nothing, I suppose, to find grass for a hundred or two horses, and a mob of bullocks big enough to stock a small run. But you'll have to pay for your grass one of these fine days, if you don't mind your eye.'

'D'ye think a man's to walk all over the bloomin' bush, lookin' for work and carrying oats and hay with him, if he's got a moke?' growled Stoate. 'The squatters have got all the blessed country, and they grudge a pore man a mouthful of food, and every blade of grass his horse eats.'

'A poor man!' said the overseer. 'What sort of a poor man d'ye call yourself, Stoate? Your cheque last year, what with fencing and shearing, was over forty pounds for three months' work. You've neither wife, chick nor child (not in this country, anyhow). What have you done with your money? Spent it in town; now you come up here crawling and begging for the bread you eat, and doing all the harm you can to the men you're living on. Why don't you keep a pound or two for the road, like Bill Hardwick and other chaps? Then you needn't be beholden to any one; and if you like to talk rot to the men that are fools enough to trust you, that's their look-out. But to come here and to every station along the river begging for food and trying to harm the men you're living on is mean, d—d mean, and treacherous to boot. If the boss was of my way of thinking, he'd never let you inside a shed of his, or pay you another pound for shearing, and now you know my mind,—take your grub.'

And then Mr. Macdonald, an athletic Australian Scot, who towered above the short though wiry Londoner as does a mastiff above a lurcher, poured the pannikin of flour into the 'tucker bag' which Stoate held out, and cutting off a lump of fat mutton tossed it contemptuously at him.

Stoate caught the meat before it fell, and looked at the overseer with evil passions writ plain in his

sullen face and snaky eye, as he said: 'You might come to be sorry for this some day, boss, big as you are!'

'Yes, you sneaking hound, I know what that means. But I've got old Harry Bower (who used to shepherd here long ago, before he turned bushranger) as night-watchman at the shed, in case some of you dogs that disgrace the Shearers' Union take a fancy to light it up. He was a *man* when he took to the bush. *You'd* do it and fellows like you, only you haven't the pluck. He's got a double-barrelled gun, and swears by his God he'll use it if he catches any curs sneaking about the shed after dark. The grass is too green to burn for a month or two, but if I come across you near a bush fire, after shearing, I'll shoot you like a crow. So take that with you—and do your worst.'

Mr. Macdonald, though a born Australian, had inherited, it will be seen, the characteristic 'perfervidum ingenium.'

It seemed imprudent of him to speak so openly before the crowd of shearers and '*bona-fide* travellers,' so called. But a bold, declared policy is sometimes more diplomatic than a halting, opportunist one. The men knew that war was declared, given certain acts of aggression or intimidation on their part. Severe sentences would unquestionably follow—if convictions were secured before the courts. On the whole, though they did not fear him, they respected him more for his openness and decided action.

'He's a *man* that hits out straight from the shoulder,' said one young fellow. 'I like that sort. You know where you have 'em. I don't hold with all this Union racket. It does more harm than good, to my mind. The most of these delegates is reg'lar blatherskites, as I wouldn't trust to carry a pound note across the street. Pretty coves to make laws for the likes of us.'

'I'm dashed sorry I ever had any truck with this Union crowd,' said his mate, as they walked away. 'I'd never no call to complain, as I know. If I didn't like a man's ways in his shed, I didn't shear there. There's plenty more. I don't fancy free men like us shearers bein' under one man's thumb, and him lookin' out for himself all the time. It's too much of the monkey for me, and I'm not goin' to stand it after this season, no matter what comes of it.'

The minor troubles having been surmounted, the roll-call read over, the rouseabouts settled and contented—each man in receipt of twenty-five shillings per week, with everything found on a scale of liberality, not to say profuseness, huts, cooks, wood and water, beef and mutton, tea and sugar, vegetables—everything reasonable and unreasonable, in fact, that the heart of bushman could desire.

The shearers, in number nearly a hundred, were apparently placated by being allowed to shear for the first time at Tandara under 'Union Rules,' a copy of which was posted up in a prominent part of the shed, setting forth that on certain points of dispute, if such should arise, the Delegate, that important, dignified personage, should have the power of joint decision with the shed manager. Wool had gone down nearly one-half in price, fat sheep as much or more; but holding to a modern doctrine that wages were not to be regulated by profits, and that Labour and not Capital provided the wage-fund, the same rate of payment per hundred sheep as was paid in more prosperous times had been exacted by the shearers' representatives. This was agreed to under protest, though considered inequitable by the proprietors of North Yalla-doora and other representative sheds as the lesser evil, compared with that of a delayed shearing and perhaps ruined wool clip. A truly serious matter.

For the same reason the Union Rules had been accepted by several proprietors, though much against the grain, and the woolshed ticketed for the first time as a 'Union Shed.' This was done under the impression that a feeling of loyalty to the principles which professed to guide the Shearers' Union would ensure steady and continuous work.

It was a concession to expediency, unwillingly made by Mr. Hunter and others at the last moment, in the hope of 'getting the shearing over quickly'—a matter involving great gain or loss. The latter, in this particular era of low prices of wool and stock of all kinds, cattle and horses, as well as sheep, approaching the margin of ruin, ominously close. 'If the fellows shear decently and behave themselves, I don't care what they stick up in the shed, or what they call their confounded Union. They shore well enough for me and Anderson last year, so I shall go on with them as long as they treat me well. You might as well do so, too.'

This had been the reasoning of Mr. M'Andrew, one of Mr. Hunter's neighbours, a shrewd, somewhat self-seeking man of the world. And it had a savour of argument about it. 'What did it matter,' he had said, 'how other squatters looked at the question? All they had to think of was to get their own work properly done, and let every man mind his own business. He was not sure that the Pastoral Association did much good. It only set the men and masters more at odds with each other. A great deal of this ill-feeling and strike had been brought on by such proprietors as old Jackson, M'Slaney, and Pigdon. Men notoriously hard and grasping in their dealings with their employés—cutting down wages, the price of shearing and contract bush work, in every way possible; feeding, housing, and paying their people badly, while charging exorbitant prices for necessaries—flour, meat, shears, tobacco—all things, in fact, which they could not carry with them and were bound to buy from the station store. These pastoralists were primarily responsible for the dissatisfaction which had led to the strikes and rioting. For his part, as he had always acted fairly and squarely with his men, as everybody knew, it was not to be expected that he should be compelled to pay up for a contest which he had no share in bringing on.'

This had seemed fair reasoning to that class of men who are glad of any excuse to avoid paying cash out of pocket and to the avowal of a decided policy. But there were other squatters equally averse to unnecessary outlay, who, possessing more forecast and logical acumen, refused on principle to

make terms with the shearers' or any other Union. They had stated their grounds of dissent from the policy of opportunism, and, what was more important, acted upon them with courage and consistency. 29

'This station,' said Archibald Douglas Kinross, 'chiefly freehold land, with the sheep depasturing thereon, is *my* property, as the law stands at present. And I claim the right of every Briton to manage his own affairs in his own way. To employ persons to do my work—*my* work, you understand, not any one else's—as I shall choose, in my own way and after my own taste. If any section of workmen does not wish to work for me, they are at liberty not to do so. I leave them absolute freedom in that respect; but if they accept my pay and my employment, they must do my work *as I choose*—not as *they* choose—all socialistic sophistry notwithstanding.

'Australia still contains men willing to work for high wages and good food, and to do what they are told by a fair employer, and if I am threatened or my property injured by lawless ill-disposed persons, I shall appeal to that statute under which law and order have hitherto, in Australia, been vindicated. Moreover I, Archie Kinross, am *not* going to place myself under the heel of any body of men calling themselves by one name or another. Once concede Trade Unions their right to coerce the individual, and farewell to that freedom which has so long been the Briton's boast.

'Every man who had the misfortune to acquire or inherit property would, as the so-called Unions gained power by cowardly subservience or mistaken reasoning, be at the mercy of an irresponsible, ignorant, perhaps more or less unprincipled committee, anxious to blackmail those more fortunately placed than themselves.

'They would be told how many servants they were to employ, and what they were to pay them; feed, clothe, and otherwise provide for them. Not improbably, other concessions would be gradually exacted. The whole result being reached in a state of modified communism, certain to end in bloodshed and revolution. A social upheaval, which all history tells us is the invariable precursor of a military despotism.'

After ever so much trouble, worry and anxiety, arising from the offensively independent and even obstructive attitude of the shearers at all the sheds in the Lower Darling and elsewhere in New South Wales, a start was made at Tandara.

Jack Macdonald, bitterly aggrieved that his employers should have given in, was almost out of his mind with the irritating, puerile demands and objections which he had to meet. 30

'In old days he would have knocked down the ringleader, and told the sympathisers to "go to the devil"—that they need never show up at this shed or station again. Never should they get a pound of mutton or a pannikin of flour from the store, if they were dying of hunger; that they were ungrateful dogs, and here—at Tandara of all places, known for the most liberal station in the whole blooming district for pay and rations, where useless old hands were pensioned and kept on at make-believe work, when no one else would have had them on the place; where more expensive improvements—huts, fencing, tanks, wells, and stock-yards—had been made and put up, than on any station from the Queensland border to the sea. And now, what had come of it all?

'Where was the gratitude of the working-man, who, with his fellows, had been fed, lodged, and supported in good seasons and bad—when wool was down and money was scarce, and half the squatters on the verge of ruin? When the shed was down with influenza last year, didn't the wife and daughters of the "boss," who happened to be staying over shearing that year, make jelly, sago puddings and cakes, all sorts of blooming luxuries for the men that were going to die (by their own account), and couldn't hold their heads up?

'And now, because labour was scarce, owing to the Coolgardie goldfield having broken out, and the season coming on early, with the burr and grass seeds ripening every day, they must try and ruin their best friends, the squatters—threatening to strike for this and that—faulting the meat, the bread, the sugar, the tea, every mortal thing (far better than ever they'd been used to), and all at the bidding of a fellow like Stead, a man that had been educated at the expense of the State, people putting their hands in their pockets to pay for his schooling. And this is the first use he makes of it. It was enough to make a man feel ashamed of the colony he was born in, ashamed of being an Australian native, enough to make him clear out to South Africa, where the Boers and blackfellows were said to be no great things, but couldn't be such sneaks and dogs and thieves as his countrymen here.'

Jack Macdonald repeated this unreserved statement of opinion so often, for the benefit of all whom it might concern, that he began to know it by heart, and half thought of standing for the district, when the next election came round. However, the men liked him, and didn't mind his hard words, knowing that they held the key of the position, and that he was powerless if he wanted his sheep shorn. He couldn't afford to kick them out, however much he might wish so to do. All the sheds in the district were short of men, and if the shearers left in a body, the year's clip would suffer ruinous loss and injury. So they turned up their noses at the beautiful, fat, well-cooked mutton,—said 'they wanted more chops.' To which Macdonald sarcastically replied 'that he supposed they must grow a new breed of sheep, *all chops*.' In spite of their *five* meals a day, early breakfast, tea and 'brownie' at eleven o'clock, dinner at one, afternoon tea at four o'clock, and supper at half-past six, they were not satisfied, and, indeed, would not have gone without a second supper at 9 P.M. if the cook had not refused point-blank, and being a fighting man of some eminence, invited the deputation to 'step outside and put up their hands,' one after the other. 31

However, as before mentioned, a start *was* made, and though the quality of shearing was no great things, and Mr. Stoate, duly elected Shearers' Delegate, produced his appointment and walked up

and down the shed, with great dignity, carefully ignoring Macdonald, and ostentatiously writing or telegraphing to W. Stead, Esq., President of the A.S.U., Wagga Wagga,[1] N.S. Wales, some kind of progress was made, and the super's face began to lose its saturnine expression. The weather, which in the early days of spring had been showery and unfavourable, changed for the better, and the heaviest of the flocks having been shorn, 'big tallies'—a hundred and thirty, and even one hundred and fifty or sixty—began to be made.

1. Pronounced 'Waūgăh Waūgăh.'

The discontented shearers even, whose minds had been unsettled by specious, communistic talk, prophesying a general distribution of property among the wage-earners, according to the gospel of Bellamy, commenced to be more or less satisfied. Visions of the big cheque, to which each man was adding now (prospectively) at the rate of from a pound to thirty-five shillings *a day*, commenced to float in the air. All was comparative peace and joy. Macdonald, it is true, had a trifling altercation with Mr. Janus Stoate one Friday afternoon, during which the last-named gentleman received a telegram, which he put into his pocket, after reading it, with a sneering smile. 'You'll know directly who's master on this floor—you, the hired servant of a capitalist, as is livin' on the blood of these pore ignorant chaps; or me, that's been elected by the workers of the land to see as they gets justice from their grindin' employers.'

Macdonald made one step towards the insolent underling, as might the second mate of a north sea whale-ship, if cook or fo'c's'le hand dared withstand him, while the wrathful glitter in his eye caused the offender to alter his tone. But the thought of the shearing, now three-parts through, being delayed on his account, was even a stronger controlling force.

Halting, with an effort, he glared for a few seconds at the contemptible creature, that yet had such power of annoyance, as if he could crush him with his heel. Then with studiously calm and measured tones, he said: 'You'd do great things if you were able, Mr. Delegate Stoate. If I had my way, I'd have you shot and nailed up on a barn door, as they do your namesakes in the old country. That's the only way to treat varmint, and it's a pity it isn't done here.'

The man received this little compliment with an attempt at cynical self-possession, which his shifty, malignant gaze belied, as the small eyes gleamed with reptilian malice. 'I'll learn yer,' he hissed out, 'to talk to the people's chyce as if he was the dirt under yer feet.' 'Men of the Australian Shearers' Union,' he said, raising his voice to a shrill cry, 'listen to me, and drop them shears—every man Jack of yer. D'ye know what's in this bloomin' tallagram? A strike's ordered. D'ye hear?—a *strike*! Here's the wire from the Head Centre at Wagga.

'"By order of the President and Council of the Australian Shearers' Union. Every shed in the Darling district, Union or non-Union, is hereby commanded to come out and stop working *instantly* on receiving this notice from the Delegate of the Branch, under penalty of being reported to the Council of the Union at Headquarters.

Signed by me, W. Stead,
At Wagga Wagga, this 30th September 189-."'

CHAPTER III

This was a bombshell with a vengeance. The anarchist, who threw it metaphorically, would have had no scruples—except those of personal apprehension—in casting a dynamite duplicate on the shearing floor. A sudden confusion filled the shed. Murmurs and sullen rejoinders were made, as the more prudent division of the men recognised that their shearing cheques, the outcome of weeks of hard work, were doomed to delay, perhaps to forfeiture. Some openly withstood the triumphant delegate, others, less impulsive, were disposed to temporise, while 'I thought this was a Union shed' remarked, with slow impressiveness, a gigantic native, considerably over six feet in height, whose wiry, muscular frame and tremendous reach stamped him as one of the 'ringers' of the shed. 'Ain't the Union Rules put up there?' pointing to the copy ostentatiously affixed at the end of the shed for reference. 'What's this darned foolishness, stoppin' men that's only a week's work between them and a big cheque?'

'You can read and write, I suppose,' replied Mr. Stoate contemptuously. ('Better nor you,' murmured a young fellow just within earshot.) 'Is them words on the telegram, what I told the men of this shed, and are you thereby ordered to come out, or are you not? That's what I want to know. Are you a-goin' to defy the Union? Think a bit afore you chance that and turn "scab."'

'I'm goin' to think a bit—just so,—and I hope you other chaps'll do the same, and not rush into law, like a bull at a gate, and lose your money, because of any second fiddle in the land. As to being a "scab," Delegate Stoate, I'm no more one than you are, perhaps not as much, if the truth's told. But 34
don't you say that to me again, or I'll pitch you through one of them skylights, with one hand too.' And here the giant stretched forward his enormous fore-arm, and looking upward to the skylight in the roof of the woolshed, made as though there would be no unusual difficulty in the feat. 'Show me that telegram, please; this step wants consideration.'

'Ain't you goin' to obey the Union?' demanded Stoate with a great assumption of dignity. 'P'raps you ain't aweer, men, as this is a serious act of disobedience, which I shall report accordin'.'

'That's all very well,' answered the dissenter, whose unusual height, as he towered above his fellows, seemed to give him a certain title to leadership. 'I'm as good a Unionist as any man here; but I see no points in chuckin' away our money and hurtin' an employer who's been fair and square with us. Where's he gone against our rules? I ask you all. Isn't the rules put up at the end of the shed, all ship-shape and reg'lar? Didn't we stop shearin' for two days last week, and the weather fine, because the delegate here said the wool was damp? I didn't feel no damp, nor my mate neither, and we lost two dashed good days' work—a couple of pounds each all round. Now, I don't want to go dead against the Union, though I can't see the fun of losin' a goodish cheque, and, as I say, hurtin' a gentleman as never did any man here a bad turn. Let's try a middle course. Suppose we pick a man as we all can trust, and send him to Wagga. He can interview the Head Centre there, and *make sure*, afore we chuck away our stuff, whether every Union shed's bound to come out, or whether, under partic'lar circumstances like this here, we can't *cut out the shed* afore we go. I move a resolution to that effect.'

'And I second it,' said Bill Hardwick. 'I want to take my money home to my old woman and the kids; I've got a lot to do with it this season, and so, I daresay, have most of you, chaps. I don't see no sense in clearin' out now, when we've got fifty or sixty pound a man, to take and goin' off with neither money nor grub. Of course, we can *wait* to be paid out of Union funds, but we know what *that* means. Those that votes for Jim Stanford's motion, and fair play, hold up your hands.'

The scene that followed was hard to describe. A forest of hands was held up, while there rose a 35
babel of voices, some laying down the law, others expressing a doubt of the prudence of flouting the mysterious powers of the A.S.U., in the midst of which Mr. Stoate, standing upon the wool table, vainly attempted to make himself heard.

The controversy continued until the dinner-bell rang, by which time it was clear that the sense of the meeting was overwhelmingly in favour of Stanford's amendment.

So, in spite of Stoate's threats and envious malice, a steady-going, middle-aged shearer of known probity and experience was chosen and despatched to Narandera, *en route* for Wagga Wagga, for further instructions. In the meantime, it was agreed to go on with the shearing, to which the men addressed themselves with such energy and determination, that when the knock-off evening bell sounded, the tallies were larger than on any preceding afternoon of the week. Jack Macdonald was delighted, though he refrained from open commendation, as he noticed that all the fast shearers made a point of shearing carefully and giving no room for disapprobation on his part.

Mr. Stoate viewed the whole proceedings with unconcealed disgust, and talked big about taking down the names of every man in the shed, and so reporting them that they would never get another 'stand' in a Union shed. He found, however, that except among the young, unmarried men, and a few reckless spendthrifts, who were carried away by the specious ideas at that time freely ventilated, he had little influence.

Stanford and Hardwick were noted men—honest, hard-working, and respected as 'ringers,' and as such, leaders in their profession. As Stanford bent his long back, and lifted out a fresh sheep every few minutes from the pen, with as much apparent ease as if the big, struggling seventy pound wether had been a rabbit, a feeling of industrial emulation seemed to pervade the great shed, and each man 'shore for his life,' as old Billy Day expressed it—'and that dashed neat and careful, as if there was a hundred pound prize at next Wagga Show hangin' to it.'

'Wait till George Greenwell comes back,' said Stoate—'and he ought to be here inside of eight days, as he can get the rail from Narandera—and see what you'll have to say, then.'

Of course, telegrams had been sent, and arrived with reiterated command from the Napoleon at Wagga Wagga—to lay down their arms, or rather their shears, as ordered. 36

And this was the crowning injustice and treachery of the ukase—that all the *Union* sheds in New South Wales, where the proprietors had surrendered their independence, and pocketed their pride, at the bidding of expediency, were penalised. Those squatters who 'bowed not the knee to Baal,' and fought out the contest, with sheds half full of 'learners,' and strangers from other colonies, brought over by the Pastoral Association, as well as the free shearers, who, intimidated by the Union guerillas, were often injured and hindered as to their lawful work, were now in a far better position. They were able to laugh at the surrendering squatters.

'You have given in,' said they; 'sacrificed principle and set a bad example for the sake of getting quickly through this season's shearing. You betrayed your pastoral comrades, and are *now betrayed by the Union*; you are left in the lurch. Serve you right!'

So, 'deserted in their utmost need,' with half-shorn sheep, and no hope of fresh men—as the non-Union sheds had secured most of the available labour—they were in a pitiable condition, neither help nor sympathy being procurable; while many of the free sheds were shearing steadily and comfortably, with a 'full board.'

In seven days, Mr. Greenwell was expected to appear. He could ride to Narandera in three days; twenty-four hours would take him to Wagga Wagga, after stopping for the night at Junee Junction. This was far and away the finest railway station in New South Wales, perhaps in Australia, having not only an imposing structure connected with the railway proper, but a very fine hotel, erected by the Government of New South Wales, liberally managed and expensively furnished.

There, the railway passenger could spend the night, or a week, if he so decided, being sure that he would be called at the proper time, either by night or day, to be despatched on his journey in an enviable and Christian state of mind.

The days passed on at Tandara, the week was nearly over. Such quick and clean shearing had never been done there before. The last day of the allotted time approached. Greenwell had not arrived, but surely he would turn up on the morrow. 37

Stoate was uneasily anxious. He hinted at treachery. But Greenwell, a regular, downright 'white man,' could not be 'got at.' Every one scoffed at the idea. One of the rouseabouts, who had known better times, hummed the refrain of 'Mariana in the moated grange': 'He cometh not, she said.' Worst of all, from Stoate's point of view, the shearing would be finished in two more days. The shed would then be paid off—shearers, pressers, rouseabouts, the cook and his mate, everybody down to the tar-boy. If their emissary didn't come before then, he might just as well not come at all. The 'might, majesty, and dominion' of the Australian Shearers' Union, with 20,000 members in all the colonies, which had aimed at one great 'Australian Labourers' Union' in town and country, would be set at nought. They had planned the inclusion of every worker—that is, muscle-worker, for brains didn't count—from the ship's cook of the coaster to the boundary rider on the Lower Darling or the Red Barcoo; from the gas-stoker in Melbourne or Sydney, where they hoped to plunge the cities into darkness, to the stock-rider, behind his drove of Queensland bullocks; and the back-block carrier, with his waggon and team of fourteen unshod Clydesdales or Suffolks.

And now, in the case of the Tandara shed, one of the best known and oldest stations on the Darling, this campaign against capital was to end in defeat and disappointment.

Stoate groaned in despair, as the eighth day arrived and no messenger. For the last forty-eight hours he had been looking anxiously for the cloud of dust at the end of the long, straight road across the endless plain, which heralded the approach of team, coach, or horseman.

As if to aggravate the Strike leaders, and all connected with that beneficent institution, the weather had been miraculously fine. No spring storms had come out of the cloudless sky, not so much as a 'Darling River shower'—four drops upon five acres,' in the vernacular—had sprinkled the red dust of the plain, to give the delegate the excuse to declare the sheep too wet to shear, and so lose a day. Nothing, in fact, happened. And on the noontide hour of the fourth day succeeding the week, Tandara shed 'cut out.' The 'cobbler,' the last sheep—a bad one to shear, and so considerately left for 'some one else,' by every man who picked out of the large middle pen—was lifted aloft by Stanford, amid the jeers of the men, now preparing with stiff backs and aching sinews to surrender their task for a full week at any rate, before they 'struck' the next shed, lower down the river. 38

'I could shear him,' said he, regarding the closely wrinkled 'boardy' fleece, 'if he was covered with bloomin' pin-wire. My word! isn't it a pity that Greenwell didn't turn up afore? Eh, Mr. Delegate? D'ye think the Union'll guillotine us, same as they did chaps at the French Revolution? I'm off to Launceston in case of accidents. My cheque'll keep me for the rest of the summer, in a country that *is* a country—not a God-forsaken dust-heap like this.' Thus speaking, and shearing all the while, with punctilious precision, Mr. Stanford trimmed the 'cobbler' with a great affectation of anxiety, and dismissing him down the shoot of the pen with a harmless kick, said, 'Good-bye, and God bless you, old man; you make eighty-nine—not a bad forenoon's work.'

'Come along, men, down to the office,' said Macdonald, 'your money's ready for you—the storekeeper and I were up pretty nigh all night getting the accounts made out. You'll enjoy your dinners all the better for having your money in your pockets. The rouseabouts and shed hands can come in the afternoon. They won't want to leave before morning.'

'Who's that coming along the Wagga road on a grey horse?' said a sharp-eyed young shearer. 'By Jing! I believe it's Greenwell. Whatever can have kep' him, Mr. Stoate?'

'Never mind him,' said Macdonald. 'John Anderson, this is your account; look it over. £45:10:6.

You'll take a cheque; here it is—sign the book. I'll take you all by the alphabet.'

As the men stood round the little room at the side of the big store, that served for the station office, the traveller on the grey horse rode slowly towards them.

The men were in a merry humour. Their keen eyes had recognised horse and rider afar off. It *was* the messenger who had so signally failed in coming up to time. He was received with a storm of ironical cheers and derisive exclamations. 39

'Halloa, George—where yer been? To Sydney and back? Got warrants for us all? To think as we should ha' cut out, and you on the road with an order from the Head Centre in your pocket! Come along, Mr. Delegate, and talk straight to him.'

These and the like specimens of humorous conversation were shouted at the unlucky emissary, who, as he came up and wearily dismounted, evidently knew that an explanation would be demanded of him.

Stoate walked out with a solemn and dignified air to meet him. 'Well done, Mr. Delegate, give it to him from the shoulder. He's a jolly telegraph, ain't he? Why, Joe Kearney the sprinter could have *run* all the way and beat him, hands down.'

'Will you oblige me by statin' the cause of your delay on a mission of importance to the Union and your feller-workers?'

'Now then, George, speak up—give us the straight griffin. What was it? Honour bright; did yer join a circus? Was there a good-looking girl in the way? And you a married man. For shame of you!'

Between the awful visage of Mr. Stoate and the running fire of chaff from his mates, Greenwell looked rather nonplussed.

However, girding himself for the contest, he mustered up courage, and thus delivered himself.

'Well, boys, the long and short of it is, I was took ill at Junee, on the return journey, and after stayin' a day, just as I was startin' back, some old mates of mine, as had just cut out at Hangin' Rock, come along, and—well, the truth's the truth, we all got on a bit of a spree. Now the murder's out, and you can make the best of it. I don't see as there's anything broke, so far.'

'Anything broke,' retorted Stoate indignantly. 'Hasn't the shed been cut out, in direct disobedience of orders, and the Union treated with contempt?'

'We're just gettin' our cheques,' called out a young fellow at the back of the crowd. 'Jolly awkward, ain't it? But I'll get over it, and so'll Dick Dawson.' 40

When the weighty matter of the payment was over, and the men were finishing their 'wash and brush up,' getting up their horses and settling their packs, one of the older men approached Stanford, who was quietly proceeding with his preparations, and thus addressed him—

'Now, Jim, you knowed that chap afore, didn't yer? Hadn't yer no notion as he might get on a "tear," with money in his pocket, and half nothin' to do like?'

Mr. Stanford made no verbal answer, but drawing himself up to the full height of his exalted stature, looked down into the interrogator's face, with an expression of great solemnity. It is just possible that he may have observed a slight deflection in the corner of his left eye, as he relaxed the severity of his countenance, while he observed resignedly, 'Well, it might have been worse; I've got the boss's cheque for £57:14s., and a few notes for the road in my pocket, this blessed minute.'

'Mine's a shade more'n that,' replied 'Long Jim,' with deliberation. '"All's well that ends well" 's a good motter. I've done enough for this season, I reckon. I had a fairish fencing contract in the winter. It'll be time enough to think about the "dignity of labour" and the "ethics of war" (wasn't that what the Head Centre called 'em?) afore next shearin' comes round. I'm off to a cooler shop across the Straits.'

The shearing at Tandara having ended satisfactorily to the shearer, the sheep-washers, the rouseabouts, the boundary riders, the overseers, to every one connected with the establishment in fact, from the 'ringer' to the tar-boy, all of whose wages and accounts were paid up to the last hour of the last day, in fact to every one except Mr. Janus Stoate, whose remuneration was in the future, a great silence commenced to settle down upon the place so lately resounding with the 'language used, and the clamour of men and dogs.' The high-piled waggons, drawn by bullock teams of from twelve to twenty, and horse teams of nearly the same number, had rolled away. The shed labourers had walked off with swags on their backs. The shearers, many of whom had two horses, poor in condition when they came, but now sleek and spirited, had ridden off with money in both pockets, full of glee and playful as schoolboys. The great shed, empty save for a few bales of sheepskins, was carefully locked up, as were also the shearers' and the other huts. Even Bower, the grim night-guardian of the woolshed, liberally remunerated, had left for Melbourne by Cobb and Co.'s coach. There, among other recreations and city joys, he betook himself to the Wax-works in Bourke Street. 41

As with hair and beard trimmed, newly apparelled from top to toe, he wandered around, looking at the effigies of former friends and acquaintances, now, alas, cut off in their prime, or immersed in the dungeon of the period for such venial irregularities as burglary, highway robbery, manslaughter, and the like, his gaze became fixed, his footsteps arrested. He stands before the waxen, life-like presentment of a grizzled elderly man, in rough bush habiliments, his hat a ruin, his clothes ragged and torn, his boots disreputable. A double-barrelled gun rests on his shoulder, while above his head is a placard, on which in large letters could seen by the staring spectator—

'Harry Bower, the Celebrated Bushranger.'

Cut to the heart, not so much by the heartless publicity of the affair as by the disgraceful attempt to brand him as a dirty disreputable-*looking* individual, he glared angrily at his simulacrum. 'And me that was always so tasty in my dress,' he muttered. So saying, he seized the hapless figure by the arm, and dragging it along with wrathful vehemence, made for the door.

'Oh, Mr. Bower, Mr. Bower!' cried the proprietress, 'ye'll ruin him—I mane yerself. Sure ye wouldn't go to injure a poor widdy woman, and all the people sayin' it's your dead imidge.'

'Imidge of me, is it?' shouted Bower, the furious, ungovernable temper of the 'long sentence convict' breaking out. 'I'll tache ye to make a laughing-stock of Harry Bower, this day. Ye might have dressed me dacent, while ye wor about it.'

So saying, he dragged the inanimate malefactor through the door, and casting him down upon the Bourke Street pavement, commenced to kick him to pieces, to the great astonishment of the crowd which speedily gathered around him. A rumour had started that 'Bower the bushranger was killing a man outside the Wax-works,' and before many minutes the street was blocked with men, women, and children, lured to the spot by the expectation of seeing a real live bushranger in the exercise of his bloodthirsty vocation. 42

A few minutes later—having dissevered several vital portions of the 'Frankenstein' individual, and, like Artemus Ward's enthusiastic Bible Christian, who 'caved Judassis' head in,' more or less demolished the victim—Mr. Bower, desisting, stalked moodily up the street, his peculiar reputation not leading any one to volunteer pursuit. There was no constable in sight, so the Mrs. Jarley of the establishment was left to her lamentations, and the dubious satisfaction of a remedy by civil process.

Next day, below startling headlines, similar paragraphs appeared in the leading journals.

'An Ex-Bushranger.

'*Assault with intent to do grievous bodily harm.*

'About three o'clock yesterday afternoon, such denizens of Bourke Street as were passing Mrs. Dooley's interesting collection of Wax-works were alarmed by the spectacle of an aged man of athletic proportions, who had assaulted an individual of similar age and appearance; had thrown him down on the pavement, and was savagely kicking him about the head and the body; indeed it was feared—such was the fury of his gestures—that he was actually trampling the unfortunate victim of his rage to death. None dared to interfere, every one appeared paralysed; but after one or two public-spirited individuals had started for the Swanston Street police station, an adventurous bystander called out, 'Why, it's a wax figure.' Though a shout of laughter greeted the announcement, no one cared to remonstrate with the hero of so many legends—the man who, long outlawed, and captured after a desperate resistance, had barely escaped the gallows for the manslaughter of the warders of the hulk *President* in a frustrated plot for escape—the dreaded bushranger, Henry Bower. We have since learned that this attempt at *felo de se* (in wax)—for the injured individual turned out to be a fairly correct likeness of himself—can only be proceeded for as a debt, which Bower in his cooler moments will not be averse to liquidating, he having returned from the bush with a reasonably large cheque, earned in the service of an old employer, who gave him a berth at a couple of pounds a week as night-watchman of his woolshed. In these times of disturbance and incendiary troubles, most of our readers will concur with our opinion, that old Harry Bower, with his double-barrel, not swayed by frivolous objection to bloodshed, was, in such a position of trust, "the right man in the right place."' 43

When the shearers took their cash or cheques as each elected, and departed, splitting into small parties, on different routes, division of opinion took place likewise. Bill Hardwick openly declared his intention, as did several others, to 'cut the Shearers' Union' and go 'on their own' for the future. 'I've had enough of this Union racket,' said he, as, lighting his pipe, and jogging off with his two fat horses, saddled and packed, he prepared to take the 'down river' road. 'I don't see no points in being bossed by chaps like this Stead, and callin' theirselves chairmen and presidents, and what not—fellers as have done dashed little but blather this years and years. They've turned dog on the squatters as trusted 'em and "went Union," and deuced near done us out of six weeks' hard graft at this very shed. We've got our cash, boys; that'll carry us on for a bit. But suppose we'd turned out when that galoot at Wagga wanted us to, where should we be now? Travellin' the country without a shillin' in our pockets, our shearin' money forfeited by the next police magistrate (and serve us right, too, for bein' such bally fools), and summonses and warrants out against every man on the board. I'm full of Mr. Head Centre at Wagga, with his top hat, and gold chain, and his billiards, as our money goes to pay for. But he won't get none of mine to monkey with, nor you either, Janus Stoate, and so you may tell him next time you wire.'

'I'll report your language to the Union secretary, William Hardwick, never fear,' replied Stoate, fixing his snaky eye upon him. 'You'll soon know which is the strongest—you or the Association, as protects the workers' interests. So I warn you, and all others as is fools enough to stand by you.' 44

'That'll do, Mr. Delegate,' said Bill; 'don't you go to bully me. Say another word, and I'll give you a smack or two, that'll make a better yarn when you're touching up the tell-tale business for the Head Centre. I'm off to Moorara, where there's 300,000 sheep to shear, and a board only half full. Who's comin' my way?'

There had been a hum of approbation when Bill finished his humble oratorical effort, after which a dozen of the best and fastest shearers announced their intention to go with him, to the wrath and

despair of Mr. Stoate.

'I'll be even with you, Bill Hardwick,' he yelled, 'and you too, Johnny Jones—see if I don't. You'll get no stands from us this year, nor next either.'

A hundred and fifty miles below Tandara. A red-walled promontory overlooking the Darling, in this year a broad, majestic stream, with anabranches of equal breadth and volume running out for many a mile, where the river steamers took their course, cutting off corners, and, because of the depth of water in this most bountiful season, almost indifferent to obstacles. Here stood the great Head Station of Moorara. Miles of fencing of substantial character surrounded it on all sides. There was none of the ordinary carelessness as to finish, popularly supposed to be characteristic of back-block stations 'a thousand miles from everywhere,' as had been said descriptively by an imaginative tourist. On the contrary, every hut, paling, fence, gate, wall, and roof in that immense holding was in what old-fashioned English country people called 'apple-pie order.'

Everything was mended and kept right, up to date. Six carpenters and three blacksmiths lived on the premises all the year round. There was no waiting until that pastoral millennium 'after shearing' arrived. Everything was done at once, and done well. The 'stitch in time' was an article of the faith at Moorara, and, as such, religiously observed. If any superficial judging tourist, observing these things, ventured to remark that such improvements must have cost a mint of money, or to hint a doubt whether such a place 'paid,' he was frowned down at once and haughtily reminded that this 45
was Moorara, the property of the Hon. Mr. M'Cormack, whose sheep shorn last year (this was *one* of his long list of stations) would total up to over a million!

Just calculate what so many fleeces come to, the average weight being eight or nine pounds, and the value per head *rarely* under as many shillings. Then, of course, there are the other stations, carrying six hundred thousand high-class merino sheep!

Now the woolshed to which Bill and his ten or twelve companions were bound was one of which the owner had 'stood out' from the first against the tyranny of the Shearers' Union.

As Bill and his companions journeyed down the river, rumour reached them of serious developments of the Great Strike. This protest against the alleged dictation of Capital had reached its culminating stage. The o'er-vaulting ambition of the State-school educated Mr. Stead, the originator and prime mover of the Civil War, which was now fully recognised, had struck a blow at the State itself—that State under which he had been bred and nurtured, fed, protected, and presented with a 'free, compulsory, and secular education.' He had justified the forebodings of old-fashioned Conservatives, who had always doubted the wisdom of educating the labouring classes at the expense of the ratepayers, of breeding up an army of enemies to Capital and to the settled order of the Government.

And now the long-threatened result *had* come to pass—a revolt against order and good government, a deliberate attempt to subvert the Constitution under the specious guise of federated labour. It had commenced with a quarrel between the cook's mate of a coasting steamer and the so-called 'delegate' of the crew, spreading with portentous rapidity, like the bush-fires of the land, until it enveloped the stock-riders of the Paroo and the teamsters of 'the Gulf.' It menaced life and property. It attempted to plunge cities into darkness by 'calling out' the gas-stokers. It essayed to paralyse commerce by intimidating the carriers, whom it forbade to convey the wool—the staple Australian export—to the wharves, by restraining the wharf labourers from loading the vessels.

But, in these two instances, the common-sense of the city populations came to the rescue. The 46
young men of the learned professions, of the upper classes—in the true sense of the word—came out to play a man's part in the interests of law and order. They manned the gas-works, and, amid furnace-heat and grime, provided the necessary labour, all unused as they were to toil under such conditions. The cities were *not* wrapped in darkness, and the streets were *not* made ready for the spoil by the burglar, the garrotter, and the thief. A line of wool teams was driven down the principal street of Sydney by barristers and bankers, by clerks and merchants, chiefly young men, high-couraged and athletic. But on the foremost waggon, high-seated behind his four-horse team, which he tooled with practised ease, might be recognised the leonine visage and abundant beard of Winston Darling, the Explorer, the Pioneer Squatter, the well-known Pastoral Leader and Ruler of the Waste.

The streets were crowded with yelling, blaspheming, riotous Unionists, with difficulty kept within bounds by a strong body of police.

Stones were thrown, and foul epithets freely used. But though one youthful driver had his head cut open, no further damage was done. And the wool was safely conveyed to the wharves and shipped in spite of the threatening demeanour of the assembled thousands.

These amateurs, native-born Australian gentlefolk, worked for weeks, from six to six, in many instances galling the hands, which were wholly unused to such rude treatment. But they kept at it till the stubborn conflict subsided, and not till then did they fall out of the ranks of the 'muscle-workers,' who in this and other instances have arrogated to themselves the title of the *only workers* in this complex and many-sided body politic.

This demonstration was chiefly confined to the seaports. When, however, the Ministry was sufficiently strong to call out the Volunteer regiments, their disciplined action gained control of the disorderly mobs, and order was regained, without discouraging delay.

But in the bush, far from help, police or military protection, matters were far otherwise. Lonely stations were terrorised. Large camps of armed and apparently desperate men were formed, who 47

intimidated those non-Union shearers and bush labourers who neither conformed to their rules nor submitted to their dictation.

They were in many cases captured, so to speak, assaulted, maltreated, and illegally restrained from following their lawful occupation. The carriers' horses or bullocks were driven away or slaughtered, their waggons, in some instances, burned.

These outrages were directed against men and their employers who had dared to be independent, to exercise the right of free Britons to manage their own affairs and their own property.

It may easily be imagined how bodies of two or three hundred men, well armed and mounted, could terrorise a thinly-populated country. Specific acts of incendiarism and other offences against property were frequent. Woolsheds were burned with their contents, sometimes to the value of thousands of pounds; fences were cut and demolished; bridges and telegraph lines destroyed; in short, no lawless action which could result in expense and loss to the pastoralist, or those of the labourers who defied the New Tyranny, was omitted.

CHAPTER IV

Some explanation of the Great Australian Strike of 1890, which lasted in more or less virulence and intensity until 1895, producing widespread damage and ruinous loss, may not here be out of place.

This important industrial conflict exhibited the nearest approach to civil war which Australia has known. It originated, as did certain historical revolutions and mutinies, from an occurrence ludicrously insignificant compared with the magnitude of the results and the widespread disasters involved.

A fireman was discharged by the captain of a coasting steamer belonging to the Tasmanian Steam Navigation Company, whereupon the Seamen's Union took up the matter, the man being their 'delegate,' and demanded his reinstatement.

He had been 'victimised,' they asserted, by the chief steward, who must be dismissed or the fireman reinstated. The Cooks' and Stewards' Union, in the interests of the chief steward, held an inquiry, in conjunction with the Seamen's Union, to which the fireman belonged. The result failed to substantiate any charge against the chief steward. But the Seamen's Union decided to hold the captain responsible, threatening to take the crew out of the ship. No inquiry was asked of the owners.

About a month after the threat the crew gave notice, and were paid off. The captain had received the following letter:—

'Seamen's Union Office,
Sydney, *July 1890*.

'Captain ——, Steamer ——.

'Dear Sir—We are instructed by the members of the above Society to state that we intend to have our delegate —— reinstated on board. If he is not reinstated by the return of the ship to Sydney, the crew will be given twenty-four hours' notice.

'We intend to protect our members from being victimised (*sic*) by chief stewards and others, and intend at all hazards to have him reinstated.—I remain, yours truly,

'The President and Acting Secretary.'

'Sydney, *6th July 1890*.

'The Acting Secretary.

'Sir—With regard to your letter as to the discharge of a fireman from the steamer *Corinna*, the captain informs me that the chief steward had nothing whatever to do with the discharge. The fireman made no complaint about his food. He was discharged in the Company's interests, but there is no objection to his joining any other of the Company's vessels. The captain also was not aware that he was a delegate, and had nothing to do with his discharge. It seems strange that men should leave the Company without explanation, while the Company is denied the same right.—I remain, etc.'

Now, what in the world had the colliers of Newcastle, N.S.W., to do with the injustice or otherwise meted out to the fireman through that powerful and distinguished official, the ship's cook, or even by the chief steward? Such would be the common-sense view of any ordinary person, especially if he had been reared in the belief that 'mind your own business' was a maxim of weight and authority, verified by the lore of ages. Not so thought the leaders of the mining community. A fatal fascination appeared to have actuated one and all under the influence of a false and specious principle.

No sooner had the steamer arrived at the Agricultural Association's wharf desiring a cargo of coal than the miners 'came out' of the Sea Pit, at that time in full work. Then the Northern Colliery owners, justly indignant at this breach of agreement, stopped work at all the pits under their control. Fourteen days' notice should have been given by the miners, on the terms of their agreement.

There was no grievance between master and man, and yet at the bidding of an outside person the miners abandoned their work without notice.

The Unionist shearers, at the instigation of their dictator, hasted to join the revolt. They commenced to formulate an agreement imposing higher pay, shorter hours, the supervision of sheds by workmen appointed by themselves, the deposition of the rule of the employer over his own work, as to his own property, in his own woolshed.

Then the employers, up to that time slow to move and more or less disunited, saw that the time had come for them to combine against the tyranny of a communistic organisation. The Shearers' Union, however, as represented by their president, thought it improper of other people to form Unions. They began to threaten as follows:—

'Should the employers maintain their present attitude, the trades' organisation will be compelled to use *every means* to win their cause, methods which at present they have avoided.

'For instance, they could call out *all the shearers* (*sic*), and at one blow cause widespread disaster.

[This they did later on, including those who, in reliance on their promises, were shearing under Union Rules.] The effects of such a step would be to paralyse the whole industry of the colony. In Victoria, shearing is only just commencing. In New South Wales it is barely half over. At the Labour Conference in Sydney it was decided that the Western miners be called out next day. This meant cutting off the sole remaining coal supply of the colony. Decided also that all the shearers, rouseabouts, and carriers be called out. Instructions sent accordingly.

'In New South Wales alone this will affect 22,000 shearers, 15,000 rouseabouts, 10,000 carriers also, together with all affiliated trades, such as butchers, bakers, grocers, and compositors. Whether the railway men will be included cannot be now ascertained.'

As a sample of the class of arguments used to set class against class, and to inflame the minds of the bush labourers against their employers, the following circular, signed by the leaders, and privately distributed, may serve as a specimen. It was headed:—

AN APPEAL TO STATION LABOURERS.

'A shed labourer's lot is not a happy one. To work all hours and to endure all manner of privations. To work hard for a miserable starvation wage. A victim of capitalistic greed and tyranny. Suffering *worse treatment than the negro slaves* of the Southern States of America. The reason for this being 51
that they have had no means of protection. Let them unite. Let them be men, free men, and have a voice in the settlement of the terms at which they shall sell their labour.

'The rights of the labourers will then be recognised. Capital will no longer have Labour by the throat. The mighty heritage of a glorious independence is in their grasp.

'Let them rise above the bondage of capital, and be a unit in that which will make one powerful whole—the General Woolshed Labourers' Union of Australia!'

That this sort of language was calculated to arouse the passions and heighten the prejudices of uneducated men may well be conceded. The ludicrous comparison with the 'wrongs of slaves' in the Southern States of America might raise a smile, had not reports of outrages, unhappily but too well authenticated, followed this and similar proclamations.

However, the Employers' Union and the Pastoral Association were not minded to submit tamely to the oppression of a 'jacquerie,' however arrogant, as the following extract from a metropolitan journal, under date 22nd September 1890, will show:—

'In Sydney that picturesque procession of lorries, loaded with non-Union wool, and driven by leading merchants and squatters, will once more betake itself through the streets, and may be the signal of actual civil war. These waggons, with their unaccustomed drivers, embody in a dramatic shape that aspect of the strike in which the Unionists have morally the weakest case. The shearers have undertaken to make Unionism *compulsory* at one stroke, in every woolshed in Australia, by the tyrannical process of forbidding every bale of wool shorn by non-Unionists to reach a market. Why must merchants and squatters, at the risk of their lives, drive these particular bales of wool to the wharf? We frankly hope that the wool "boycott" will break down hopelessly, ignobly. All reasonable men are against this fatal blunder of the Unionists.'

Commencing in 1890 among men 'who go down to the sea in ships,' the revolt against employment and authority spread among 'all sorts and conditions of men' dwelling in the continent of Australia. All trades and occupations by which the muscle-workers of the land, falsely assumed to be the only labourers worthy of the name of 'working-men,' were attempted to be captured and absorbed. To 52
account for the readiness with which the new gospel of labour was accepted, it must be borne in mind that many of the better-educated labourers and mechanics had been for years supplied by their leaders with so-called socialistic literature. They had in a sense sat at the feet of apostles of the school of Henry George and Mr. Bellamy.

The former was convinced that all the 'riddles of the painful earth' might be solved by the taxation and gradual confiscation of land; this plausible-appearing policy would remove all the oppressions and exactions under which the excellent of the earth had so long groaned. Mr. Bellamy's method of procuring universal happiness, solvency, and contentment was simple and comprehensive. Every adult was to be compelled to labour for four hours of the day—no one to be permitted to work for *more* than this very reasonable, recreational period. Every one to be pensioned when he or she reached the age of sixty.

By this happy apportionment of the primeval curse, every one would be obliged to furnish a sufficient quantity of labour to provide for his own and other people's wants.

No one would be expected to do a full day's work—always unpopular as a task, and suspected to be unwholesome.

Dining and Music Halls, an artistic atmosphere, with all mental and physical luxuries, to be provided by the State, in exchange for Labour Coupons of specified value.

It cannot be doubted that speculative theories of this nature, proposals for minimising labour and dividing the wealth, accumulated by the industry and thrift of ages, among individuals who had neither worked nor saved for its maintenance, had a wide-reaching influence for evil among the members of the Labour Unions. Dazzled by alluring statements, they were ready to adopt the wildest enterprises, founded on delusive principles and untried experiments.

Perhaps the most important of the Utopian projects, which at the close of the conflict found favour in the eyes of the Unionists, was that of a Communistic settlement in Paraguay, to which the leader,

an Americanised North Briton, gave the name of New Australia. This was to be somewhat on the lines of the settlement so delicately satirised by Hawthorne in the *Blithedale Romance*.

It was decided by a caucus of certain wise men of the Union that a country where the dietary scale for working-men was the most liberal in the world, the hours of work the *shortest*, the pay the highest, the climate the most genial, the franchise the most liberal, was not adapted for British labourers. It was accordingly agreed to establish a co-operative community in a foreign land, where brotherly love and the unselfish partition of the necessaries of life might exhibit to an admiring world an ideal State, free from the grasping employer and the callous capitalist. This modern Utopia they proposed to call New Australia. Money not being so scarce among Australian labourers as, from the tremendous denunciations of their leader, which freely compared them to negro slaves (only worse paid, fed, and driven), might have been supposed, they were expected to pay sixty pounds each towards the charter and freight of a suitable vessel.

This notable plan they carried out. One man indeed sold a cottage in a country town for £400, and putting the cash into the common fund, sailed away for South America amid great jubilation from the Radical press and Labour organs; thankful, however, before long to work his passage back to England.

Hope and Mr. W. G. Spence told a flattering tale before experience came to the audit. A tract was found in the Paraguayan Chaco—'234,000 acres, well watered and timbered—splendid land,' thus described in the New Australia newspaper, the journal of the New Co-operative Settlement Association, Wagga, New South Wales, 28th January 1892.

In September 1893 two hundred and sixty New Australians arrived to take possession of the Promised Land. Even on board ship differences of opinion arose. In December there was a notable desertion. The 'five-meal, meat-fed men' doubtless thought sadly of poor 'Old Australia,' where they had no dictator and few privations, save those irreparable from high wages and good food. They missed many things for which they had been the reverse of thankful, when supplied gratis. They even missed the police and the magistrate. One man at any rate did, who was thrashed for impertinence, and could not so much as take out a summons for assault. They must have gasped when they saw, in their own journal, in answer to questions—'A. K. If you didn't like it, you could leave. The equal annual yearly division of wealth production would enable you to ship back to Australia, if you wanted to.' Many wanted to, but the Dictator's reply, slightly altered from that of Mr. Mawworm in *The Serious Family*, was—'We deeply sympathise, but we *never* refund.' As to how the deserters got to Buenos Ayres, on their way 'home,' doubtless many tales of adventure could be told. The equal partition did not work out well. No one had a right to anything, apparently—milk for a sick child—a razor—any trifling personal possession, when all had a right to everything. The dissatisfaction deepened to despair. The 'rest is silence.' Migration to the 'Gran Chaco' is played out.

The Shearers' Strike drifted into the Shearers' War. Not vigorously dealt with at the beginning by the Government of any colony, it emboldened the agitators, who called themselves tribunes of the people, to suggest bolder assaults upon the law, to carry out yet more dangerous disturbances of the public peace.

The specious process of 'picketing'—an illegal practice involving insult and intimidation, under the transparent guise of 'persuasion'—was tacitly permitted. Becoming habituated to the assembling in force, armed and drilled in military fashion, it was patent to the lowest intelligence that the Government, if worthy of the name, must confront these menacing and illegal levies.

The tardy Executives, which had watched the ill-usage of free citizens, the burning of woolsheds, the killing of stock, with apparent apathy, now became alarmed and ordered out the Volunteer regiments. Directly a disciplined contingent, properly armed and officered, took the field, the pseudo-guerillas disbanded and disappeared. If prompt measures had been taken at the start, years of demoralisation and damage, loss of wages, and ruin of property would have been saved both to employers and workmen.

Such a disgraceful incident as that reported from Bowen Downs in July 1895 might never have occurred.

'A private message states that *two attempts* have been made within three days to poison free shearers here. On the first occasion eight men were poisoned; on the second, forty-nine.'

A Barcaldine telegram states: 'Forty-nine fresh cases reported from Bowen Downs. Strychnine suspected to have been put into the meat and sago pudding used by the men. A letter received states that the scenes in the shed at Bowen Downs were beyond description. The men, contorted with agony, lying about in all shapes. One man named Thomas has since died. He is not known in the district. Name probably an assumed one. Richardson, one of five brothers, said to be very bad; also Christie Schultz; a second death expected.

'Bowen Downs was managed by Mr. Fraser for a Scottish Investment Company. It is expected that 250,000 sheep will be shorn there this year. Sharing in the "strike troubles" last year (1894), the sheep were shorn by free labourers and some Unionists.

'They followed the example of Howe and others on the Barcoo run, and went to work in defiance of the Union mandate. This year many of the same men returned to the station to shear.

'The authorities had previous information that poisoning was likely to be resorted to on some stations. The Aramac and Mutta-burra police are at the station. No evidence was attainable against the authors of this cowardly crime, resulting in one murder at least, and the possible death of a score or more of their fellow-workmen. It is significant, however, as against the theory of *accident*,

that the injured men, well-nigh sick unto death, were *free shearers*.

'It is notorious that elaborate preparations have been made for committing further outrages on property, and violence on persons. Hitherto the Government has erred on the side of insufficient precaution and protection to loyal subjects.

'Violence and intimidation, on the other hand, have been approved by the Labour Federations. A demand is made by them that employers should not be allowed the right to employ any but Union men, on Union terms. Such an edict is inadmissible in a free country. So Sir Samuel Griffith, C.J., of Queensland, stated the case.

'The Moreton Mounted Infantry left by the Wodonga for the seat of the disturbance. In consequence of further outrages by the so-called Labour organisations, one of which was the shooting of a team of working bullocks, eleven in number, belonging to a non-Union carrier, Colonel French has been sent to the north with a force of 130 men, having also a field-piece and a Gatling gun. The Union leaders had boasted of the wreck and ruin of squatting property which would follow the strike.' 56

In the second year of the revolt a special parade of the Queensland Mounted Infantry was ordered. They were ready to a man. In view of the outrages already committed, and the justifiable expectation of more to follow, military protection was manifestly needed. This drew forth a pathetic remonstrance from the 'General Secretary of the Australian Labour Federation.' He was virtuously indignant at the whole force of the Government being 'strained to subjugate the wage-earners of the central district, under the dictation of capitalistic organisations.' It was emphasised that 'the Australian Labour Federation's steady influence had always been used to substitute peaceful agitation and moderation for needless suspension of industry. The Government is urged to use its influence to induce organised capitalism to meet organised labour in the conference.'

The high official so addressed replied: 'The Government is merely endeavouring to maintain law and order; to punish disorder, violence, and crime. The existing state of matters is misrepresented by the Labour organs.'

As might have been expected, manslaughter and arson, if not murder and spoliation, *did* result from this and similar teachings. Some of these crimes were undetected, others were partially expiated by imprisonment; while in more instances the wire-pullers—the deliberate and wilful offenders against the law of the land—escaped punishment. But when the burning of the *Dundonald* took place, with the capture of free labourers by disguised men, the tardy action of the Executive was accelerated. That the apprehensions of the dwellers in the pastoral districts, and their appeals to the Government of the day in the first years of the strike, were not without foundation, an extract from a letter taken, among others, from the person of an arrested 'labour organiser,' affords convincing proof.

'Queensland Labour Union, Maranoa Branch,
'Roma, *10th March 1891*.

'Dear George—It is a mistake collecting our men at the terminus of the railway. Better to split them up in bodies of a hundred and fifty each. One lot to stop at Clermont, another at Tambo; others at outside stations, such as Bowen Downs, Ayrshire Downs, Richmond Downs, Maneroo, West-lands, Northampton, and Malvern Hills. Say a hundred and fifty at Maranoa; same below St. George. Every station that a hundred and fifty men came to would demand police protection from the Government. Then, if you wanted to make a grand coup, send mounted messengers round and have all your forces concentrated, away from railways if possible, and force the running by putting *a little more devil* into the fight. They will have no railways to cart the Gatling guns and Nordenfeldts about.—Yours, etc. 57

Ned ——.'

Such were the missives which passed between the 'labour organisers' and their 'brother officers.' Small wonder that the rank and file were stirred up to deeds of wrong and outrage, stopping short by accident, or almost miracle, of the 'red fool-fury of the Seine.' Imagine the anxiety and apprehension at the lonely station, miles way from help, with a hundred and fifty horsemen, armed and threatening, arriving perhaps at midnight—the terror of the women, the mingled wrath and despair of the men. And the temperate suggestion of the labour organiser to 'put a little more devil into the fight, to force the running!'

Doubtless it would, but not quite in the manner which this calculating criminal intended. Such a wave of righteous indignation would have been evoked from the ordinarily apathetic surface of Australian politics, that the culprits and their cowardly advisers would have been swept from the face of the earth.

If it be doubted for a moment whether the serious acts of violence and outrage alluded to were actually committed, or, as was unblushingly asserted by the so-called democratic organs, invented, exaggerated, or—most ludicrous attempt at deception of all—got up by *capitalists and squatters* for the purpose of throwing *discredit upon Unionists*, let a list of acts perpetrated in deliberate defiance of the law of the land be produced in evidence.

The Dagworth woolshed had seven armed men on watch, as the Unionists had threatened to burn it. Among them were the Messrs. Macpherson, owners of the station. When the bushranger Morgan was killed at Pechelbah, in their father's time, they hardly expected to have to defend Dagworth against a lawless band humorously describing themselves as Union Shearers. 58

In spite of their defensive operations, a ruffian crawled through and set fire to the valuable

building, which was totally consumed.

They were armed, and shots were freely interchanged. One Unionist found dead was believed to be one of the attacking party.

The 'Shearers' War' languished for a time, but was still smouldering three years afterwards, as on the 4th of August 1894 the Cambridge Downs woolshed was burnt. This was a very expensive building, in keeping with the size and value of the station, where artesian bores had been put down, and artificial lakes filled from the subterranean water-flow. Money had been liberally, lavishly spent in these and other well-considered improvements, aids to the working of the great industrial enterprise evolved from the brain of one man, and having supported hundreds of labourers and artisans for years past. In the great solitudes where the emu and kangaroo or the roving cattle herds alone found sustenance, the blacksmith's forge now glowed, the carpenter's hammer rang, the ploughman walked afield beside his team, the 'lowing herd wound slowly o'er the lea,' recalling to many an exiled Briton his village home.

The 'big house,' the squire-proprietor's abode, rose, garden-and grove-encircled, amid the cottages and humbler homes which it protected—a mansion in close resemblance, allowing for altered conditions and more spacious surroundings, to homes of the Motherland, which all loved so well. At what cost of head and hand, of toil, and danger, and hardship, ay, even of blood, let the headstones in the little shaded graveyard tell! And now, when long years, the best years of early manhood, had been expended freely, ungrudgingly in the conflict with Nature, was the workman, the junior partner in the enterprise, well paid, well fed and housed during the doubtful campaign, the loss of which could smite to ruin the senior, to lay his rash destroying hand upon the beneficent structure he had helped to raise?

Pulling down in suicidal mania, at the bidding of a secret caucus, the industrial temple, which so surely would whelm him and his fellows in its ruins! 59

Ayrshire Downs woolshed followed suit. At Murweh, the roll of shearers was about to be called, and fifty thousand sheep were ready for the shears, when it was set on fire and burned—all the preparations for shearing rendered useless. A makeshift woolshed would probably be run up, which meant loss of time—hasty indifferent work, a few thousand pounds loss and damage inevitable. At Combe-Marten a station hand was shot, and several prisoners committed to take their trial at Rockhampton. The woolshed at Errangalla was burned to the ground.

The Netallie shed, with eighty thousand sheep in readiness, was attempted to be set on fire—kerosene having been profusely exhibited for the purpose—but, with all the goodwill (or rather bad) in the world, the plot miscarried. After a riot at Netallie a large force of Unionists attempted, but failed, to abduct the free labourers.

At Grasmere woolshed the police were compelled to use firearms. Shortly before 9 P.M. a hundred Unionists came to Grasmere, and gathered at the men's huts, saying that they were armed and determined to bring out the free labourers. Sergeant M'Donagh said they could not be allowed to do so. He was felled to the ground, and the door of the free labourers' hut smashed in with a battering-ram. Shots were exchanged between the police and the Unionists. Two of the latter were wounded. One free labourer fired with a revolver. The attacking party then retired, taking the wounded men with them.

The police overtook them, and, taking charge of the wounded men, conveyed them to Wilcannia Hospital in a buggy. One was shot in the left breast; the other near the same spot. The bullet travelled to the back, near the spine. From the size of the bullet it would appear to have been fired by a free labourer, the police navy revolvers carrying a larger bullet.

Unaware of the extreme length to which 'the ethics of war' (to use a phrase grandiloquently applied in one of Mr. Stead's harangues) had been pushed, Bill Hardwick and his comrades rode gay and unheeding 'down the river.'

They were within a dozen miles of Moorara, and had travelled late in order to get to the station that evening, as shearing had commenced. An unwonted sight presented itself. Before them lay a large encampment, from which many voices made themselves heard, and around which were fires in all directions. 'Hulloa!' said one of the men, 'what's all this? Have they moved the station up, or what is it? Have the men got to camp here because of the grass, and ride to Moorara and back, like boys going to school?' 60

'By Jove! it's a Union Camp,' said Bill; 'we'd better look out. They're a rough lot here by all accounts. They might go for us if they hear we've dropped the A.S.U.—for a bit.'

'I don't see as they can do much,' said a grey-haired man, one of the best shearers in the shed. 'We've come last from a Union shed. We've no call to say more nor that till we get to Moorara.'

'That's all right,' said a younger man, who, like Hardwick, was a selector on the Upper Waters, 'but that sweep Janus Stoate might have wired to the delegate here and put us away. Anyhow, we'll soon see.'

'Who goes there?' suddenly demanded a voice from the pine scrub. 'Who are you, and where from?'

'Who are you, if it comes to that?' answered Bill. 'Is this here an army, and are you goin' to take the bloomin' country, that a man can't ride down the river on his own business?'

'We'll soon learn yer,' said the man who had challenged. 'Where are yer from last?'

'From Tandara. It's a Union shed, I believe, and we shore under Union Rules.'

'We know all about that. What's yer name—is it William Hardwick?'

'I never was called anything else,' answered Bill, who, now that he had got his monkey up (as he would have said), cared for nothing and nobody.

'Well, yer accused by the delegate, as was in charge of that shed, of disobedience of orders; also of conspiring to bring the Union into contempt, and of being on the way, with others, to shear at a non-Union shed against the interests of the Australian Workers' Federated Union. What d'ye say in reply to the charge?'

'Go to the devil,' said Bill, at the same time spurring his horse. But the strange man jumped at his bridle-rein, and though Bill got in a right-hander, before he could get loose, armed men broke out of the pine clump, and, rifle in hand, forced the party to dismount. 61

'Tie their hands,' said the leader. 'We'll show the bally "scabs" what it is to pal in with the squatters, as have ground down the workers long enough. March 'em up to the camp and bring 'em afore the Committee.'

'This is a jolly fine state of things,' said one of the younger men of Bill's party. 'I used to believe this was a free country. One would think we was horse-stealers or bushrangers. Are ye goin' to hang us, mate?'

'You hold yer gab, youngster, or it'll be the worse for you. We'll straighten yer a bit, afore yer goes shearin' again in the wrong shed,' said a man behind him, sourly, at the same time giving him a blow on the back with the butt-end of a rifle.

'By——! if my hands was loose, I'd give yer something to remember Dan Doolan by, yer cowardly, sneakin', underhand dog, crawlin' after fellers like Stoate, keepin' honest men out o' work, and spendin' it on spoutin' loafers. Well, we'll see who comes out on top, anyhow,' upon which Mr. Dan Doolan relapsed into silence—being 'full up,' as he would have expressed it, of 'Government of the people, by the people, for the people,' in its logical outcome.

Arrived at the camp, they were surrounded by a crowd of men, looking less like workmen of any kind than an array of freebooters. Nearly all had arms. Others had apparently put them by for the night. They affected a raffish, semi-military rig, and evidently regarded themselves as revolutionists; which, in point of fact, they were. Not as yet, perhaps, ripe for a policy of plunder and bloodshed, but within measurable distance of it—needing but an accidental contest with the police or a well-defended station (and there were such) to be irrevocably committed to it.

A great show of form and ceremony was aimed at, as Bill and his companions in captivity were brought before half-a-dozen serious-looking individuals, seated before a table outside of a tent of larger than average size. One man was in the centre, and was addressed as Mr. President.

'Have you brought the suspected individuals, mentioned in the communication received by the Committee this morning, before us?' 62

'Yes, Mr. President. Here they are. We found them close by the camp, a-ridin' towards Moorara.'

'What are their names?'

The apprehending personage read out from a telegraph form the names of William Hardwick, Daniel Doolan, George Bond, Donald MacCallum, James Atkins, Joseph Warner, John Stevens, Cyrus Cable, Thomas Hyland, John Jones, William Murphy, Jacob Dawson, and Martin Hannigan.

'You stand charged with obstructing the work of the Delegate of the A.S.U. at Tandara, and disobeying an order to come out, sent by the duly authorised Vice-President at Wagga Wagga. How do you plead?'

'Is this a bally Supreme Court?' inquired Bill. 'What are we to plead for? I never signed no agreement to obey a pair of loafers like Stoate and Stead. I've seen one of 'em beg rations from a squatter, layin' by to do him all the harm in his power, and the other tried his best to take their money out of the pockets of hard-working men at Tandara. You may talk till you're black in the face, I'm not goin' to play at court work, for you or any other blatherskite, and so I tell you.'

'Remove these men to the lock-up hut, and place a sentry before the door,' said the chairman, with dignity.

So Bill and Co. were hauled off, and bundled into a small hut, where they spent the night without food or bedding.

Their swags had been considerately taken care of, and their horses turned out among the camp herd for the night. This done, they listened to the order given to the sentry to shoot any man that attempted to come out; and much musing upon the strange condition in which they found themselves in their native country, spent the night in a most unpleasant state of discomfort.

As for the *corps d'armee*—as they, no doubt, considered themselves to be—they were more jovial and self-contained.

Songs and recitations were given, apparently met with admiration and applause. Rifles and revolvers were discharged, as well to have the loading replaced as to inform any employés of the adjoining station that the camp was armed, and considered itself to be an independent, well-provided contingent. Orations were made by speakers filled with detestation of the tyranny of the squatter, and the malignant nature of all Capital, except when diverted into the pocket of the virtuous (and muscular) working-man. 63

Hints were thrown out, not too closely veiled, of the retribution in store for those treacherous enemies of the working-man, who, instead of supporting him, like brothers, against the curse of Capital, presumed to have opinions of their own, and exercised the right of private judgment even

against the interests of their own *Order*—this was a great word with them. Dark suggestions were made with regard to a cargo of free labourers (otherwise 'scabs' or blacklegs) now coming down river in a steamboat. They were to be met and 'dealt with,' after what fashion the speakers did not as yet enlighten their hearers.

When the wire-pullers of the Australian Shearers' Union had converted or terrorised the labourers of the land to such an extent that employers were met at every turn by exorbitant demands, or impossible regulations, it became necessary to form a Pastoral Association to oppose the tyranny. For it was evident that unless united action was taken they would be no longer permitted to manage their own affairs.

The work and wages connected with an immense export, with a property to the value of hundreds of millions sterling, were to be regulated by irresponsible impecunious agents, chosen by a plebiscite of labourers naturally unfitted for the direction of affairs involving important national issues.

Some idea of the magnitude of the interests involved may be gathered if it is considered that the cost of management of the vast flock of sheep depastured on the freehold and Crown lands of the colonies necessitates the paying away annually not less than £10,000,000 sterling, most of which is expended for wages, for shearing, and for stores. Shearing, which lasts for a considerable period of each year, finds employment for 25,000 shearers, and the extra hands required in connection with this work may be put up at 10,000 to 12,000.

The following figures tend to further explanation of the position:—Value of freehold land on which stock is depastured, £200,000,000 sterling; value of sheep and plant, £100,000,000 sterling. The income from the properties is, as nearly as possible—from wool, say £22,000,000, from surplus stock £5,250,000, and stock £27,250,000. 64

The outgoings will be—for wages, carriage, stores, £10,000,000; interest on £300,000,000 capital at 5¾ per cent, £17,250,000; total outgoing, £27,250,000. The returns are comparatively small, taking the whole of the population together.

The frequent droughts, causing the loss of millions of sheep, with other ills and ailments fatal to stock, have not been taken into the calculation. The properties as a whole will bear no increase in cost of management.

Another reason which actuated the employers, pastoralists, merchants, and others connected with the pastoral industry, was that the sudden withdrawal of their labourers was attended with greater loss and expense than, say, in the case of mines or shipping. The mines could be closed, the ships laid up. Expenditure on the part of owners would then cease until the strike was ended. But, on the far back stations, wells had to be worked, wood carted for machinery, edible shrubs cut for starving sheep, in default of which *immediate loss* of stock to a very great extent would take place.

65

CHAPTER V

One of the methods which the Pastoralists were compelled to use to defeat the attempted domination of the Shearers' Union was to import free labour: men who were contented to work for high wages and abundant food; to obey those who paid, lodged, and fed them well. It may here be stated that the fare in shearing time, provided for the shearers, the station hands, and the supernumerary labourers, was such as might well be considered not only sufficing and wholesome, but luxurious, in any other part of the world. Three principal meals a day, consisting of beef or mutton, good wheaten bread, pudding, vegetables when procurable; three minor repasts of scones and cakes, with tea *ad libitum*; the whole well cooked, of good quality, with no limitation as to quantity. Where is the rural labourer in Europe similarly provided?

Agencies were established in the principal towns of the colonies. Men were hired and forwarded to such stations as were in need. The cost of transit was paid by the associated employers. They were forwarded by rail, by coach, on horseback, or by steamer, as such transit was available. An unfair, even illegal system of intimidation, under the specious name of 'picketing,' to prevent the men thus engaged from following their lawful occupation, came into vogue. Unionists were stationed along roads or near stations, nominally to 'persuade' the free labourers not to fulfil their agreements, but, in reality, to threaten and abuse, not infrequently with brutal violence to assault and ill-treat the nonconformists.

The majority of the Unionists were well-intentioned men, led away by specious demagogues; but among them were lawless ruffians, who, ignorantly prejudiced against their superiors and even 66
their equals, who had risen in life by the exercise of industry and thrift, were capable of any villainy, not even stopping short of arson and bloodshed. Up to this time the Ministry of the day had been tardy and over-cautious, both in the protection of property and in the punishment of a criminal crew. But they were gradually coming to a determination to stop such disorders summarily. The strong arm of the law was invoked to that intent. For too frequently had peaceable workmen, under the ban of the Unionist tyranny, been captured, ill-treated, robbed, and temporarily deprived of their liberty.

Grown bold by previous toleration, the Union Camp by Moorara had determined to make an example of this particular steamer, with her load of free shearers and rouseabouts—to teach them what the penalty was of withstanding the Australian Shearers' Union and bringing a load of blacklegs past their very camp.

It was nearly midnight when a scout galloped in to announce that the *Dundonald* was within half a mile of the camp, on her way down river with fifty free labourers on board.

'By the God of Heaven,' shouted a dissolute-looking shearer, 'we'll give them a lesson to-night, if we never do it again. I know the agent well—a d—d infernal swell, who looks upon working-men as dogs, and talks to them like the dirt under his feet. I told him I'd meet him some day, and that day's come.'

'Come along, lads,' shouts an evil-faced larrikin from a city lane; 'let's give it 'em hot. We'll burn their bloomin' boat, and have roast blackleg for breakfast.'

'You'd as well mind your eye, my lad,' said a slow-speaking, steady-going Sydney-sider, from Campbelltown. 'Seth Dannaker's the skipper of this boat—I can hear her paddles now, and he'll shoot straight if you meddle with his loadin'. You're not the sort to face Seth's pea-rifle, 'nless yer got a fairish big tree in front of yer.'

Upon this discouraging statement, the product of 'a city's smoke and steam'—under-sized, untended from childhood, grown to manhood, untaught save in precocious villainy—slunk into the background, while from the centre of a group emerged the man who had posed as the 'President of the Council,' and thus addressed the crowding shearers:—

'Bring out Bill Hardwick and them other "scabs." We'll have 'em in front when the shootin' begins. 67
It'll do 'em good to feel what their friends' tyranny's brought the people to.'

The sentry was directed to quit his post, and a score of eager hands competed for the privilege of dragging out the weary, famished men, and rushing with them to the river-bank, while with slow, reverberating strokes the measured beat of the paddles was heard, as the dimly-lighted hull of the steamer showed amid the ebon darkness—the throbbing of her overpowered engines sounding like the heart-beats of some monstrous creature, slow-emerging from the channels of a prehistoric morass.

'Boat ahoy!' shouted the President, with an accent telling of a seaman's experiences. 'Heave to, and let us have a look at your passenger list.'

'Who the hell are you, anyway?' was returned in answer—the intonation confirming the Sydney-sider's information. 'What's my passenger list to you? I'm bound to Moorara, and the men on board hev' their passage paid—that's all I've to look to. Full steam ahead!'

A derisive laugh was the only answer from the river-bank. But the skipper's complacency was of short duration, as a violent shock almost dislodged him from the bridge, and made every bit of loose timber, or unsecured deck cargo, rock and rattle again. The *Dundonald* had gone full speed against a wire rope, or rather against two twisted together, which had been feloniously taken from a punt higher up the river, because the misguided lessee had carried across free labourers.

A yell of exultation burst from the excited crowd, now fully determined to board the obnoxious steamer, while a voice from their midst, after commanding silence, called out, 'Steamer ahoy!'

'Well, what is it? What do you want, stopping me on a voyage? You'd as well take care; I'm a quiet man, but a bad one to meddle with.'

'We want those infernal traitors you've got aboard.'

'And suppose I won't give up my passengers?'

'Then we'll burn yer bloomin' boat, and roast them and you along with it. Don't yer make no mistake.'

'Then you'd better come and do it.'

At this defiance, a chorus of yells and execrations ascended through the warm, still air, as a hundred men dashed into the tepid waters of the smooth stream, the slow current of which hardly sufficed to bear them below the steamer's hull. Like a swarm of Malay pirates, they clambered on the low rail of the half barge, half steamer, which had done her share in carrying the wool-crop of the limitless levels so many times to the sea. But her last voyage had come. The crew stubbornly resisted. Many a man fell backward, half stunned by blows from marline-spikes and gun-stocks—though as yet only a few shots were fired—and more than one of the rioters narrowly escaped death by drowning. But the 'free labourers,' disordered by the suddenness of the onslaught, fought but half-heartedly. Outnumbered by ten to one, they were driven back, foot by foot, till they were forced aft, almost to the rail, before the skipper yielded. 68

A few shots had been fired from the bank before the charge through the water was made, in the pious hope of hitting the captain or one of the crew; better still, a free labourer. They were promptly returned, and one of the men nearest the leader fell, shot through the body. But at that moment the leader's strident voice was heard. 'Stop firin'; I'll shoot the next man that holds up a gun. Let's catch 'em alive and deal with 'em and their blasted boat afterwards. There's enough of yer to eat 'em!'

When the surrender was imminent, the skipper had one of the boats lowered—a broad-beamed, serviceable, barge-like affair, in which great loads had been conveyed in the flooded seasons—and putting a white cloth on to the end of his rifle-barrel, called for a parley. It was granted.

'See here, yer darned pirates! I want a word or two. There's a ton of powder on board, and the man you wounded with your cowardly first shoot is sitting on a chair beside a coil of fuse, with a sperm candle and a box of matches. It's a sure thing he won't live, and he don't love the men that took his life, foul and coward-like. I'm to fire this revolver twice for a signal, and next minute we'll all go to hell together, sociable like. Jump into the boat, men, and take your guns, some grub, and a tarpaulin. Those that like may stay with me—I stop with the ship.'

If there's anything that undisciplined men fear, it is an explosion of gunpowder. They did not know for certain whether there was any on board. But if there was, there was no time to lose. A panic seized them, one and all. The crew descended into the boat in good order, obeying the captain's commands. His cool, decided voice imposed upon the rioters. They tumbled into the river by scores—knocking over their comrades and even striking them, like men in a sinking vessel, under the influence of fear—until the last man had reached the bank, when they even ran some distance in their terror before they could rid themselves of the fear of hearing *too late* the thunderous roar of the explosion, and being hurled into eternity in an instant. 69

The free labourers, on the other hand, from having assisted in the navigation of the steamer in her slow voyage from Echuca, had made themselves acquainted with every nook and cranny and pound of cargo on the boat. They knew that there was no magazine, nor any powder, and, divining the captain's ruse, made for the opposite bank with all convenient speed. Those who could swim, lost no time; and those who could not, escaped into the bush, undisturbed by the privateering crowd that had been so valorous a few minutes before.

When the boat returned and not before, the captain descended with deliberation, remarking, 'Now, lads, we've got a clear track before us. There ain't no powder, there ain't no wounded man, and I reckon them long-shore skunks will find themselves in an all-fired mess when the police come. There's a big body of 'em only ten miles from here, at Moorara Station. We'll just make camp and have a snack—some of us want it pretty bad. We'll build fires to warm those that's wet—wood's plenty. Leave 'em burning and make down river so's to warn the police under Colonel Elliot. The Union army won't cross before morning, for fear of the old tub blowing up and making a scatteration among 'em.'

The programme was carried out. The night was of Egyptian darkness. Supper was hastily disposed of. The fires were freshly made up, and shortly afterwards the whole contingent took the down-river road and by daylight were miles away from the scene of the encounter.

The unusually large body of police which had been ordered up by the Government, to join with another force on the Darling, had made rendezvous at Moorara, having heard from a scout that mischief, rather above the ordinary limit, was being enacted near Poliah. When, next morning, the captain and crew of the *Dundonald*, with the greater portion of the free labourers, arrived, a strong sensation was aroused. This was an unparalleled outrage, and, if unchecked, meant the commencement of *Civil War*, plain and undisguised. 70

What horrors might follow! A guerilla band, with its attendant crimes—murder, pillage, outrage! Such a band of reckless desperadoes, armed and mounted, like a regiment of irregular horse, was sufficient to terrorise the country; gathering on the march, till every criminal in the land that could steal a horse and a gun would be added to their ranks in a surprisingly short time.

Once launched on such a campaign of crime, the country would be ravaged before a military force

could be organised. The proverbial snowball may be arrested at the first movement, but after gathering velocity, it descends the mountain-side with the force and fury of the avalanche.

The colonel in command of the Volunteers was a soldier to whom border raids in wild lands, with a wilder foe, was not unfamiliar. 'Boot and saddle' was sounded. Without a moment's unnecessary delay, the troop was in full marching order along the 'river road,' a well-marked trail, heading for Poliah.

The night was still dark, but comparatively cool. No inconvenience was felt as the men trotted briskly along and joked as to the sort of battle in which they would engage.

'Bless yer, they won't fight, not if there was another thousand of 'em,' said a grizzled sergeant, 'and every man with the newest arm invented. I've seen mobs afore. Men as ain't drilled and disciplined never stands a charge.'

'They've got rifles and revolvers, I know,' said a younger man, 'and they can shoot pretty straight, some of 'em. Suppose they keep open order, and pepper us at long range? What's to keep 'em from droppin' us that way, from cover, and then makin' a rush?'

'There's nothin' to keep 'em, *only they won't do it*,' replied the sergeant oracularly. 'They know the law's agin' 'em, which means a lot in Australia—so far. Besides that, they've never faced a charge, or don't know what it's like to stiffen up in line. You'll see how they'll cut it when they hear the colonel give the word, not to mention the bugle-call. Why, what the devil——?' 71

Then the sergeant, ending his sentence abruptly, almost halted, as a column of flame rose through the night air, sending up tongues of flame and red banners through the darkness which precedes the dawn.

'D—d if they haven't burned the bloomin' steamer!' quoth he. 'What next, I'd like to know? This country's going to the devil. I always thought it was a mistake sending our old regiment away.'

'Halt!' suddenly rang out in the clear, strong tones of the colonel—the voice of a man who had seen service and bore the tokens of it in a tulwar slash and a couple of bullet wounds. 'These fellows have set fire to the steamer, and of course she will burn to the water's edge. They will hardly make a fight of it though. In case they do, sergeant, take twenty men and skirt round so as to intercept their left wing. I'll do myself the honour to lead the charge on their main body, always supposing they wait for us to come up.'

The character of the resistance offered proved the sergeant's estimate to be absolutely correct. A few dropping shots were heard before the police came up, but when the rioters saw the steady advance of a hundred mounted men—an imposing cavalry force for Australia—saw Colonel Elliot, who rode at their head with his sword drawn, heard the clanking of the steel scabbards and the colonel's stern command, 'Charge!' they wavered and broke rank in all directions.

'Arrest every man on the river-bank with firearms in his hands,' roared the colonel. The sergeant, with a dozen of his smartest troopers, had each their man in custody a few seconds after the order was given—Bill Hardwick among the rest, who was fated to illustrate the cost of being found among evil-doers. One man alone made a desperate resistance, but after a crack from the butt-end of a carbine, he accepted his defeat sullenly. By the time his capture was complete, so was the rout of the rebel array. Hardly a man was to be seen, while the retreating body of highly irregular horse sounded like a break-out from a stock-yard.

Matters had reached the stage when the stokers at the Gas Works were 'called out,' and the city of Melbourne threatened with total darkness after 6 P.M. 72

Then a volunteer corps of Mounted Rifles was summoned from the country. The city was saved from a disgraceful panic—perhaps from worse things. The Unionist mob quailed at the sight of the well-mounted, armed, and disciplined body of cavalry, whose leader showed no disposition to mince matters, and whose hardy troopers had apparently no democratic doubts which the word 'Charge!' could not dispel.

At the deserted Gas Works, aristocratic stokers kept the indispensable flame alight until the repentant, out-colonelled artisans returned to their work.

This was the crisis of the struggle—the turning-point of the fight; as far as the element of force was concerned, the battle was over. It showed, that with proper firmness, which should have been exhibited at the outset, the result is ever the same. The forces of the State, with law and justice behind them, must overawe any undisciplined body of men attempting to terrorise the body politic in defence of fancied rights or the redress of imaginary wrongs.

The rioting in the cities of Melbourne and Sydney was promptly abated when the citizen cavalry, 'armed and accoutred proper,' clanked along Collins Street in Melbourne, while Winston Darling led the sons of his old friends and schoolfellows, who drove the high-piled wool waggons in procession down George Street in Sydney to the Darling Harbour Warehouses.

Much was threatened as to the latter demonstration, by blatant demagogues, who described it as 'a challenge; an insult to labour.' It was a challenge, doubtless—a reminder that Old New South Wales, with the founders of the Pastoral Industry—that great export now reaching the value of three hundred millions sterling—was not to be tyrannised over by a misguided mob, swayed by self-seeking, irresponsible agitators.

No doubt can exist in the minds of impartial observers that if the Ministries of the different colonies over which this wave of industrial warfare passed, in the years following 1891, had acted with promptness and decision at the outset, the heavy losses and destructive damage which followed

might have been averted.

But the labour vote was strong—was believed, indeed, to be more powerful than it proved to be when tested. And the legislatures elected by universal suffrage were, in consequence, slow to declare war against the enemies of law and order. 73

They temporised, they hesitated to take strong measures. They tacitly condoned acts of violence and disorder. They permitted 'picketing,' a grossly unfair, even illegal (see Justice Bramwell's ruling) form of intimidation, employed to terrorise the free labourers.

The natural results followed. Woolsheds were burned, notably the Ayrshire Downs; the Cambridge Downs shed, 4th August 1894; Murweh, with 50,000 sheep to be shorn—roll to be called that day. Fences were cut, bridges sawn through, stock were injured, squatters and free labourers were assaulted or grossly reviled.

Everything in the way of ruffianism and disorder short of civil war was practised, apparently from one end of Australia to the other, before the Executive saw fit to intervene to check the excesses of the lawless forces which, well armed and mounted, harassed the once peaceful, pastoral Arcadia.

At length the situation became intolerable; the governing powers, with the choice before them of restraining bands of *condottieri* or abdicating their functions, woke up.

It was high time. From the 'Never Never' country in remotest Queensland, from the fabled land 'where the pelican builds her nest' to the great Riverina levels of New South Wales, from the highlands of the Upper Murray and the Snowy River to the silver mines of the Barrier, a movement arose, which called itself Industrial Unionism, but which really meant rebellion and anarchy.

It was rebellion against all previously-accepted ideas of government. If carried out, it would have subverted social and financial arrangements. It would have delivered over the accumulated treasure of 'wealth and knowledge and arts,' garnered by the thrift, industry, and intelligence of bygone generations, to one section of the workers of the land—the most numerous certainly, but incontestably the least intelligent—to be wasted in a brief and ignoble scramble.

The list of outrages, unchecked and unpunished, during this period, makes painful reading for the lover of his country.

A distinguished and patriotic member of the 'Australian Natives' Association,' in one of his addresses before that body, declared 'that, for the first time in his life, he felt ashamed of his native country.' That feeling was shared by many of his compatriots, as day after day the telegrams of the leading journals added another to the list of woolsheds deliberately set on fire, of others defended by armed men—sometimes, indeed, unsuccessfully. 74

When the directors of the Proprietary Silver Mine at Broken Hill saw fit to diminish the number of miners, for which there was not sufficient employment, it was beleaguered by an armed and threatening crowd of five thousand men. A real siege was enacted. No one was allowed to pass the lines without a passport from the so-called President of the Miners' Committee.

For three days and nights, as the Stipendiary Magistrate stated (he was sent up specially by the New South Wales Government, trusting in his lengthened experience and proved capacity), the inmates of the mine-works sat with arms in their hands, and without changing their clothes, hourly expectant of a rush from the excited crowd.

The crisis was, however, tided over without bloodshed, chiefly owing, in the words of a leading metropolitan journal, to the 'admirable firmness and discretion' displayed by the official referred to —now, alas! no more. He died in harness, fulfilling his arduous and responsible duties to the last, with a record of half a century of official service in positions of high responsibility, without a reflection in all that time having been cast upon his integrity, his courage, or his capacity.

More decisive action was taken, and was compelled to be taken, in Queensland than in the other colonies.

There, owing to the enormous areas necessarily occupied by the Pastoralists, the immense distances separating the holdings from each other, and, perhaps, the heterogeneous nature of the labour element, the acts of lawlessness became more serious and menacing. A military organisation was therefore found to be necessary. Volunteers were enrolled. Large bodies of these troops and of an armed constabulary force were mobilised, and many of the incidental features of a civil war were displayed to a population that had rarely seen firearms discharged in anger.

The nomadic population had been largely recruited from the criminals of other colonies, who, fleeing from justice, were notoriously in the habit of crossing the Queensland border, and evading a too searching inquiry. 75

These were outlaws in the worst sense of the word; desperate and degraded, conversant with undetected crime, and always willing to join in the quasi-industrial revolts, unfortunately of everyday occurrence.

In these, bloodshed was barely avoided, while hand-to-hand fights, inflicting grievous bodily injury, were only too common.

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CHAPTER VI

After the burning of the *Dundonald*, a score of the rioters had been arrested and imprisoned. But owing to the confusion of the *mêlée* and the prompt dispersion of the Unionists it had been found difficult to procure the necessary identification and direct evidence of criminality. Thus, after some weeks of imprisonment, all were discharged except six prisoners, among whom, unfortunately for himself and his family, was that notorious malefactor, William Hardwick. Fate, in his case, would appear to have leaned to the wrong side!

His appearance and manner had so favourably impressed the Bench of Magistrates, before whom, after several remands, he and his fellow-prisoners had been brought, that they were on the point of discharging him, when Janus Stoate was tendered by the Sub-Inspector of Police in charge of the case as a material witness for the Crown. He had kept in the background after he saw the affair well started, taking care to be heard protesting against violence on the part of the Unionists. Having been sworn, he admitted his connection with them, to the extent of belonging to the camp and having acted as a delegate, appointed by the Council of the Australian Shearers' Union. He had worked last at Tandara woolshed. At that station the men had completed their contract and been paid off in the usual way. He as delegate had received notice from the President of the Union to call out the shearers before shearing was concluded. They declined, temporarily, and a messenger, elected by the men, was sent to Wagga Wagga for further instructions.

Before he returned, the shed had 'cut out'—finished shearing, that is. He could not say he approved 77
of the arrangement, but was glad that the contract was completed and all settled amicably. He was an upholder of passive resistance, and could bring witnesses to prove that he dissuaded the men from violence.

'Did he know the defendant, William Hardwick?'

'Yes, very well—he was sorry to see him in this position.'

'Had he seen him inciting or assisting the men who were concerned in the burning of the steamer?'

'No, he could not say that he had, but——'

The witness was urged to explain, which he did, apparently with unwillingness.

'He had seen him standing by the river-bank, with a gun in his hand.'

'Did he discharge the gun?'

'Yes, he did; he saw him put the gun to his shoulder and fire.'

'Was it directed at any one of the crew of the *Dundonald*?'

'He could not say that. The night was dark—just before daylight. He fired at or near somebody, that was all he could say.'

'That will do.'

Another Unionist witness was brought forward. This man was actuated by a revengeful spirit towards the free labourers, and especially towards those shearers that had opposed the Union. He therefore gave damaging evidence against Bill and his companions. He swore that he had seen Hardwick—that was his name, he believed—anyway he was the 'blackleg' now before the Court—loading and firing, like some of the camp men.

He was warned not to use the expression 'blackleg,' as it was disrespectful to the Court. Such conduct might lead to his being committed for contempt of Court and imprisoned.

The witness had 'done time' in another colony, been before a Court more than once or twice probably. He laughed impudently, saying, 'He didn't mean no offence, but it was 'ard on a man, as was true to his fellow-workers, to keep his tongue off such sneaks.'

This was one of the cases where a magistrate, not being able to deal effectively with a witness, will take as little offence as possible, so as to get him out of the box and have done with him. In a city or 78
county town such a man would be sent to gaol for twenty-four hours, for contempt of Court, to appear next morning in a chastened frame of mind. But as the fire-raisers were to be committed for trial and forwarded under escort to the Circuit Court at Wagga Wagga, nothing would be gained by delaying the whole affair for the purpose of punishing a single witness.

So poor Bill, being asked by the magistrate what he had to say in his defence, made a bungling job of it, as many an innocent man, under the circumstances, has done before, and will again.

'He could only state, that though seen among the Unionist rioters, he was there under compulsion; that he and his mates, who had come from Tandara, had determined, after seeing the unfair way in which the sheds that "shore Union" had been ordered out, to cut loose from the tyranny. But they had been captured by the rioters at Moorara; made to carry arms and stand in front, where they were nearly being shot. As God was his Judge, he never fired a shot or meant to fire one. He would far rather have emptied his gun at the fellows who had robbed and ill-treated him—for his horses, saddles, and swag were "put away," he believed, his cheque and loose money were gone, and he had nothing but what he stood up in. What call had he to hurt the boat, or any one aboard her? It was the other way on. The witnesses had perjured themselves, particularly Janus Stoate, who had eaten his bread and borrowed money from him in times past, and now was swearing falsely, to ruin him, and rob his wife and children of their home. He had no more to say.'

Unluckily for poor Bill, several of the accused, who *were* guilty, had made substantially the same defence. They were proved, by the evidence of the crew of the *Dundonald* and the police, to have

been actively aiding and abetting in the outrage. One, indeed, who tried to look virtuous and made a plausible speech, had been seen pouring kerosene over the doomed steamer, preparatory to her being set on fire.

This prejudiced the Bench against all defences of the same nature as Bill's. He might, of course, have called on his mates, who had left the Tandara shed with him, resolving to sever all connection with the Union. They would, of course, have been able to corroborate his story, and have ensured his discharge. But, here again, Fate (or else blind Chance, which she too often resembles) was against him. 'Fortune's my foe,' he might have quoted, with reason, had such literary *morceaux* been in his line.

One of the shearers from Tandara, being a smart bushman, had escaped, in the uncertain light and confusion of the *mêlée*, and discovering the horses of the party, feeding by themselves, in an angle of the station fence, caught the quietest of the lot, annexed a stray halter, and ran them into a yard. He then returned to the insurgents, and mingling with the crowd, managed to warn his comrades, except Bill, who was wedged in between two armed men, with another at his back, by special instruction of Stoate. Leaving unostentatiously, they escaped notice, and providing themselves with saddles and bridles from the numbers which lay on the ground outside of tents, or on horizontal limbs of trees, departed quietly, and by sundown were many a mile away on the road to the next non-Union station. They would not have abandoned their companion had they the least idea of what he was likely to undergo at the hands of the law; but the last thought that could have entered into their heads would be that *he* was liable to arrest and trial in connection with the burning of the steamer. So, believing that they might run serious risk by remaining among the excited, dangerous crowd, at the same time being powerless to do him any good, they decided to clear off.

As there was sworn evidence to incriminate him without available witnesses to testify in his favour, the Bench had no alternative but to commit William Hardwick for trial at the next ensuing Assize Court, to be holden at Wagga Wagga. Thither, with the other prisoners, ruffians with whom he could neither sympathise nor associate, was poor Bill, manacled and despairing, sent off in the up-river coach, a prey to anxiety and despondent imaginings.

What would be Jenny's feelings when she saw in an extract from the *Wilcannia Watchman*, too faithfully copied into the *Talmorah Advertiser*:—

'Outrage by Unionists.

'*Burning of the "Dundonald."*

'Arrest and trial before the Bench of Magistrates at Tolarno. William Hardwick, John Jones, J. Abershaw, T. Murphy, and others, committed for trial at next Assize Court. Severe sentences may be looked for.'

Jenny's distress at this announcement may be imagined. She had not heard from Bill since he left Tandara, at which time he had written in good spirits, mentioning the amount of his cheque, and his resolution to cut loose from the Shearers' Union (which he was sorry he ever joined), and more particularly from Stoate and all his works.

'It's that villain, and no one else,' cried poor Jenny. 'I knew he'd do Bill a mischief before he'd done with him—a regular snake in the grass. I'd like to have a crack at him with a roping pole. He's worked round poor Bill, some road or other, who's that soft and straightforward, as any man could talk him over—and yet I wonder, after what he wrote——'

And here Jenny took Bill's last letter out of her homely treasure-chest, read it once more and cried over it, after which she dried her eyes and changed her dress, preparatory to seeking counsel of Mr. Calthorpe, the banker in the township. This gentleman received her sympathetically, and heard all she had to say, before giving an opinion.

In small and remote centres of population such as Talmorah the bank manager is, even more than the clergyman or the doctor, the 'guide, philosopher, and friend' of the humbler classes, whom he chiefly advises for their good, and, in moderation, aids pecuniarily, if he can do so, with safety to the bank. He is often young, but, from a wider than ordinary outlook on men and affairs, endowed with discretion beyond his years. For Jenny and her husband he had a genuine liking and respect, based chiefly on his knowledge of character, but partly on the creditable state of Bill's bank account.

'It's a bad business, Mrs. Hardwick,' he said, when Jenny had concluded her story in a fit of weeping, which she could not restrain. 'And Bill's the last man I should have expected to be mixed up with this affair. It's wonderful what harm this strike business is doing all over Australia. However, it's no use thinking of that. The question is, how to help your husband out of the trouble, now he's in it. He's only committed now—which doesn't go for much. It's the trial before the Judge and Jury we have to look to.'

Here Mr. Calthorpe took down a file of newspapers and looked through them. 'Yes, I thought so; to be tried at next ensuing Assize Court at Wagga. You'd like him to have a lawyer to defend him, wouldn't you?'

'Of course I would,' replied the loyal wife. 'We've worked hard for our bit of money, but I'd spend the last shilling of it before Bill should go to gaol.'

'Quite right. Bill's man enough to make more—his liberty's the main thing. Well, I'll send a letter by this night's mail to the Manager of our bank at Wagga and ask him to see Mr. Biddulph, the solicitor

—I was stationed there years ago—and *he'll* get him off if any one can. Money is wanted, though, to pay witnesses' expenses—you must be prepared for that.'

'Whatever's wanted, let him have, in God's name,' Jenny cried recklessly. 'You know Bill's good for it, sir, and I've butter-money saved up of my own. Bill always let me keep that. I've got it in this bag. It will do to begin with.'

'Never mind that,' said the banker, good-humouredly. 'I have your deeds, you know, and the balance is on the right side of your account. So don't be down-hearted, and I'll let you know as soon as I hear from Biddulph. Good-bye, and keep up your spirits; fretting won't do you any good, or Bill either. All right, Mr. Mason,' he said, as his assistant, after knocking, looked in at the door; 'tell Mr. Thornhill I can see him in a minute.'

'I'll never forget your kindness,' said Jenny, as she shook hands warmly with the friend in need. 'You'll let me know directly you hear anything.'

'You may depend on that. Good-bye till Saturday; the up-river mail will be in then.' As she passed out, a stoutish, middle-aged man came in.

'Morning, Calthorpe. Comforting the widow or the orphan? Saw she was in trouble.'

'Deuced hard lines,' said the Manager gravely. 'Very decent people—selectors at Chidowla, near Curra Creek. Her husband's got into trouble—committed for trial about that burning of the *Dundonald*.'

'Serve him right, too. Those Union fellows are playing the deuce all over the country. If they're not stopped there's no saying what they'll do next. The country's going to the devil. The Government won't act with decision, while property is being destroyed and life menaced every day. I don't blame the men so much; it's these rascally agitators that ought to suffer, and they mostly get out of it.'

'I'll never believe that Bill Hardwick went in for the steamer-burning business,' said the banker, 'though he seems to have got mixed up with it somehow. There's some cur working it, I'm sure. He's got a decent stake in the country himself. He'd never risk losing his farm and the money that he's saved. I won't believe it till it's proved.'

'But he must have been with those Union fellows or they couldn't have arrested him,' answered the squatter. 'What was he doing in a Union Camp? Comes of keeping bad company, you see. I'm sorry for his wife—she seems a good sort; but if a man takes up with such people, he must pay the penalty.'

And then the Manager went keenly into his client's business, removing all thought of Bill's hard luck and Jenny's sad face from his mental vision. But after his day's work was done, and his books duly posted up, as he took his usual walk round the outskirts of the township, the 'case of William Hardwick, charged with arson in the matter of the steamer *Dundonald*,' recurred again and again with almost painful iteration.

'Must be a put-up job!' he ejaculated, as he turned towards the unpretending four-roomed cottage which served him for dwelling-place, office, and treasure-house. His clerk and assistant, a young fellow of twenty, in training for higher posts when the years of discretion had arrived, slept there with him.

But both took their meals in the best hotel of the township (there were only two)—a more interesting way of managing the commissariat than house-keeping where servants were scarce, as well as presenting distinct advantages from the cooking side. It may be added that they were never absent from the bank at the same time.

In addition to the convenience of the latter arrangement a country banker in Australia finds his account in a general suavity of demeanour. Bits of information then fall in his way, which a less cordial manner would not have attracted.

At the ordinary table of the Teamsters' Arms, Talmorah, being a great 'carrying centre,' all sorts and conditions of men were represented. Not that the partially renovated swagman or bullock-driver sat at meat with the correctly attired squatter, station-manager, or commercial traveller. Such is not the fashion in rural Australia. Meals, except in case of illness, are not served in private rooms—a limited staff of servants forbidding such luxury. But a second table is provided, of which the lower tariff practically effects a separation between the socially unequal sections. If not, a hint is never wanting from the prudent but decisive landlord.

At the bar counter, however, a nearer approach to democratic equality is reached; and it was here that Mr. Calthorpe caught a few words that decided him to ask for a glass of beer, while a rather heated argument was being carried on.

'Heard about Bill Hardwick fallin' in, over that steamer-burnin' racket?' queried a sunburnt teamster, whose dust-enveloped garb and beard proclaimed a long and wearisome trail.

'We all heard of it,' answered the man addressed—an agricultural-appearing person, not so distinctively 'back-block' in appearance as the first speaker—'and we're dashed sorry it's true in this quarter. Bill's a neighbour of mine, and a straighter chap never stepped. I don't hold with that sort of foolishness that the Union's been carryin' on lately. I joined 'em and so did Bill, and I'd be as well pleased I hadn't now, and so'd he I reckon. But as for him helpin' to burn a steamer, I'd just as soon believe he'd stick up this bank.'

'Banks is one thing and Union leaders is another,' decided the man from the waste, finishing a portentous 'long sleever.' 'But a chap's fool enough to go with his crowd now and again; he don't care about being ticketed as a "blackleg." Why shouldn't Bill do it as well as another?'

'Because he's the wrong sort; he's married and has a couple of kids. His wife's a hard-working, savin' kind of woman as ever you see—always at it from daylight to dark. Besides, he's lookin' to go in for another selection. That's not the sort of chap that goes burnin' sheds and steamers. It's a bloomin' plant, I'll take my oath.'

'That's your notion, is it?' quoth the teamster, who, having imbibed as much colonial beer as would have half-drowned a smaller and less desiccated man, was disposed to be confidential. 'I wouldn't say as you're far out. I was comin' by Quambone with Bangate wool—forty-five bales of greasy—it's now onloadin', and I'd a yarn with a chap that was in the Union Camp at Moorara. He kep' as far back as he could, and cleared out first chance. Of course they was all mixed up when the firin' came, and some of 'em, as hadn't wanted to go too far, took their chance to cut it. But afore he went, he heard Stoate ('you know him?'—the listener nodded) tell another of the "committy," as they called theirselves, "that he'd fix up Bill Hardwick if it come to a trial—if any man had to do a stretch over it, *he'd* not get off."

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'"How'll you work that?" says the other cove. "He's never gone solid along of us; and now he'll be dead agen Unionism, and no wonder. He told some one this morning he'd lost his shearing cheque."'

'So that's the way they nobbled him,' said his hearer. 'Infernal bloomin' scoundrels to swear a man's liberty away. Bill's got a friend or two yet, though, and money in the bank, though some of them spoutin' loafers has his cheque in their pockets. So long.'

The gaunt, sun-baked teamster departed to turn out his bullocks, and generally recreate after his journey, deferring till the morrow the pleasant process of receiving his cheque for carriage and safe delivery of his valuable load—over five hundred pounds' worth of merino wool.

But Mr. Calthorpe, the banker, who, without listening to the whole conversation, had caught Bill's name occasionally, touched Donahue's arm (for that perfunctory agriculturist it was) as he turned reluctantly homeward, and questioned him concerning his late acquaintance's words.

Nothing loath, indeed gratified with the chance of placating the local potentate who wielded the power of life and death (financially) over him and others, he cheerfully disclosed all that he had heard, being, moreover, a good-natured, obliging sort of fellow, as indeed thriftless persons often are.

'Now, look here, Donahue!' said the great man. 'I've a liking for Hardwick, whom I've always found a steady and industrious chap, that it's a pleasure to help. Some men are not built that way, Dick'—here he looked Donahue squarely in the face. 'They idle their time, and spend the money drinking and horse-racing that ought to go to paying their debts and keeping the wife and children.' Mr. Donahue looked embarrassed, and gazed into the distance. 'But I want your help to take this business out of winding, and if you'll work with me, I *might*—I don't say I will, mind you—recommend the Bank to give you time to pay off the arrears on your selection.'

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Dick Donahue, whose cheerful demeanour covered an aching heart and remorseful feelings whenever he thought of the possibility of the family losing their home because of his want of steady industry, turned round, almost with the tears in his eyes, as he said, not without a touch of natural dignity—

'Mr. Calthorpe, I'd do what I could for Bill, who's a better man than myself, with all the veins of my heart—as poor old father used to say—and ask no return in the world; and for Jenny Hardwick, who's been a good head to Biddy and the children (more shame for me that they wanted help), I'd risk my life any day. And if you think well of givin' me more time to pay up, I've got a fencing contract from Mr. Dickson, after the New Year, and I'll never touch a drop till it's finished, and give you an order on him for the lot.'

'All right, Dick, we can arrange that; you work like a man and do your duty to your family, and you'll find a friend in me.' He held out his hand, which the repentant prodigal shook fervently, and turned away without another word.

Nothing more was said on that day, but in the following week Richard Donahue, fairly well turned out, and riding a horse 'fit to go for a man's life,' as he expressed it, started 'down river,' leaving Mrs. Bridget in a state of mind very different from that with which she ordinarily regarded her husband's absence from home 'on business,' always uncertain as to return and rarely satisfactory as to remuneration.

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CHAPTER VII

The inland town of Wagga Wagga, in New South Wales, historically celebrated as the dwelling-place of the Tichborne Claimant, where that lapsed scion of the aristocracy followed the indispensable but not socially eminent occupation of butcher, was, if not *en fête*, pardonably excited at the arrival of the Judge and officers of the Assize Court to be holden on the morrow.

This traditional spectacle—almost as interesting as the Annual Race Meeting or the Agricultural Show—was afforded to the inhabitants at half-yearly intervals. The curiosity aroused by these unfamiliar personages, before whom were decided the issues of freedom or imprisonment, life or death, was concentrated and intense. The Judge who presided, the Bar, the Deputy Sheriff, the Crown Prosecutor, the Associate, were objects of admiration to the denizens of a city three hundred miles from a metropolis—chiefly ignorant of other than rural life, and to whom the ocean itself was almost unknown. To the jurymen, culled from the town dwellers and the surrounding farms, the summons to aid in the administration of justice was a memorable solemnity.

The compulsory withdrawal from their ordinary avocations was fully compensated by urban pleasures, and doubtless aided their intelligent comprehension of the laws of the land.

Among the townspeople a certain amount of social festivity was deemed appropriate to the occasion.

It may therefore be imagined that among the young men and maidens the infrequent procession of the Judge's carriage, escorted by the Superintendent of Police and half-a-dozen troopers, well armed, mounted, and accurately turned out, created a thrill of pleasurable anticipation. 87

These feelings were heightened by the fact that Wagga (as, for convenience, the thriving town on the Murrumbidgee River was chiefly designated) stood at the edge of a vast pastoral district, being also bounded by one of the finest agricultural regions of Australia.

The cases to be tried at this sitting of the Court concerned as well the great pastoral interest as the army of labourers, to whom that interest paid in wages not less than ten millions sterling annually.

Punctually as the Post-office clock struck ten, the Court House was filled, great anxiety being shown to behold the six prisoners, who were marched from the gaol and placed in the dock, a forbidding-looking, iron-railed enclosure with a narrow wooden seat. On this some promptly sat down, while others stood up and gazed around with a well-acted look of indifference. Bill Hardwick had never been in such a place before, and the thought of what Jenny's feelings would be if she had seen him there nearly broke his heart. He sat with his head covered with his hands—the picture of misery and despair. He knew that he was to be defended—indeed had been closely questioned long before the day of trial about his conduct on the eventful morning of the burning of the *Dundonald*.

He had asserted his innocence in moving terms, such as even touched the heart of the solicitor, hardened as he was by long acquaintance with desperate criminals as well as cases where plaintiffs, witnesses, and defendants all seemed to be leagued in one striking exhibition of false swearing and prevarication calculated to defeat the ends of justice.

'That's all right,' said the lawyer, 'and I believe every word you've said, Bill, and deuced hard lines it is—not that I believe defendants generally, on their oath or otherwise. But you're a different sort, and it's a monstrous thing that you should have to spend your hard-earned money on lawyers and witnesses to defend yourself from a false charge. But what we've got to look to, is to make the Judge and jury believe you. These d—d scoundrels that were on for burning the boat, saw you with a gun in your hand while the affair was going on, and will swear to that, back and edge. Your friend Stoate, who isn't here yet, but will be up in time for the trial, will clinch the nail, and he can bring 88 the constable to back him up, who saw you holding a gun. He doesn't say more than that, but it goes to corroborate. The jury must go by sworn evidence. There's only your own statement, which won't weigh against deponents, who've apparently nothing to gain on the other side.'

'It's all the spite of that hound Stoate,' cried out Bill passionately. 'He was crabbed for my belittling him in the Tandara shed. He's put those Unionists up to ruining me, and I'll break his neck when I get out, if I have to swing for it.'

'No, you won't, Bill! If you get a sentence, which I hope you won't, when you come out you'll be so jolly glad to find yourself free, that you won't want to go back even for revenge. But never mind that for the present; we must look things in the face. It's a thousand pities you couldn't get some of those chaps that were driven into the hut along with you, by the Unionists, the first night. Any idea where they've gone? Know their names?'

'They went down the river, I heard say. They're hundreds of miles away by this time. What's the use of knowing their names?'

'That's my business. It's wonderful how people turn up sometimes. Come, out with their names—where they came from—all you know about them.'

Thus adjured, Bill gave their names and a sketch of personal appearance, home address, and so on. 'All of them were natives, and some of them, when they were at home, which was not often, had selections in the same district.' This being done, Mr. Biddulph folded up the paper, and left Bill to his reflections, telling him that he could do nothing more for him at present, but to 'keep up his pecker,' and not to think the race was over till the numbers were up.

This quasi-encouragement, however, availed him but little. 'He had lost his shearing cheque; and here was money,' he sadly thought, 'being spent like water, to prove him innocent of a crime for which he never should have been charged. His wife would be nearly killed with anxiety, besides

being made aware that they could not now think of buying Donahue's or any other selection. How everything had gone wrong since he rode away from home that morning with Stoate (infernal, blasted traitor that he was!), and had been going from bad to worse ever since. It was against Jenny's advice that he joined the Union. She had a knack of being right, though she was not much of a talker. Another time—but when would that be?'

So Bill—'a hunter of the hills,' more or less, as was the Prisoner of Chillon—had to pass the weary hours until the day of trial, and he could exchange the confinement of the gaol for the expansive scenery of the dock—restricted as to space, certainly, but having an outlook upon the world, and a sort of companionship in the crowd of spectators, lawyers, and witnesses, finishing up with the Judge.

At this judicial potentate Bill looked long and wistfully. He had an idea that a Judge was a ruthless administrator of hard laws, with a fixed prejudice against working-men who presumed to do anything illegal, or in fact to trouble themselves about anything but their work and wages. However, he could not fail to see in this Judge a mild, serious, patient gentleman, showing greater anxiety to understand the facts of the case than to inflict sentences. Still, he was only partly reassured. Might he not be one of those benevolent-seeming ones—he had heard of such—who would talk sweetly to the prisoner, reminding him of the happy days of childhood, and his, perhaps, exemplary conduct when he used to attend Sunday School—trust that he intended to lead a new life, and then paralyse him with a ten years' sentence, hard labour, and two days' solitary in each month?

He did not know what to expect. Wasn't there Pat Macarthy, who got three years for assault with intent to commit grievous bodily harm (certainly he more than half killed the other man)? Well, his wife worked his farm, and slaved away the whole time, denying herself almost decent clothes to wear. At the end of his term, he came out to find her hopelessly insane; she had been taken to the Lunatic Asylum only the week before.

Bill hardly thought that Jenny would go 'off her head,' in the popular sense. It was too level and well-balanced. But if he was sentenced to three or five years more of this infernal, hopeless, caged-in existence, he expected *he* would.

The prisoners that he had watched in the exercise yard didn't seem to mind it so much. But they were old and worn-out; had nothing much to wish themselves outside for. Others did not look as if they had worked much in their lives—had indeed 'done time' more than once, as the slang phrase went, content to loll on the benches in the exercise yard and talk to their fellow-convicts—not always after an improving fashion. But to *him* it would be a living death. Up and out every morning of his life at or before daylight,—hard at work at the thousand-and-one-tasks of a farm until it was too dark to tell an axe from a spade,—how *could* he endure this cruel deprivation of all that made life worth living?

Fortunately for him, in one sense, the day of his trial was absolutely perfect as to weather. Bright and warm—it was late December—the sky unflecked by a single cloud. But there was a cool, sea wind, which, wandering up from the distant coast, set every human creature (not in sickness, sorrow, or 'hard bound in misery and iron'), aglow with the joy of living. It raised the spirits even of that plaything of destiny known among men as William Hardwick, so that as the whispering breeze stole through the open windows of the Court he held up his dejected head and felt almost like a man again.

The proceedings commenced, the jury had been impanelled. The Crown Prosecutor threw back his gown, and fixing his eyes on the Judge's impassive countenance opened the case.

'May it please your Honour, you will pardon me perhaps if, before calling witnesses, I sketch briefly the state of affairs which, more or less connected with the strike of 1891, has developed into a condition of matters perilous to life and property, and altogether without precedent in Australia.

'From a determination on the part of the seamen on coasting steamers to refuse work unless certain privileges were granted to them by the owners, a commencement was made of the most widespread, important, and, in its effects, the most disastrous strike ever known in Australia. Into the question of the adequacy or otherwise of the wage claimed, it is not my intention to enter.

'The consequences, however, of the refusal of these seamen and others to continue at work except under certain conditions, were far-reaching, and such as could not have been reasonably anticipated. The revolt, as it was called by the leaders of the movement, spread from sea to land, and throughout all kinds and conditions of labourers, with startling rapidity.

'Many of these bodies of workmen could not have been thought to have been concerned with the original dissentients, by any process of reasoning. But by the leaders of the rebellion—for such it may truly be designated—the opportunity was deemed favourable for the promulgation of what are known as communistic or socialistic doctrines. More especially was this observable in the conduct of a large body of workmen, members of the Australian Shearers' Union. Guided by ambitious individuals of moderate education but considerable shrewdness, not wholly unmingled with cunning, the shearers, and indeed the whole body of labourers connected with the great wool export, had been misled. They were asked to believe that a conspiracy existed on the part of the representatives of capital, whether merchants, bankers, or landholders—indeed of all employers, whether private individuals or incorporated companies—to defraud the labourer of his hire.

'Inflamed by seditious pamphlets and utterances, shearers and others banded themselves together for the purpose of intimidating all workmen who were unwilling to be guided by the autocratic Unions, and arranged on their own terms with employers.

'Not only did they, by "picketing,"—an alleged method of moral suasion, but in reality a policy of insult, annoyance, and obstruction,—forcibly prevent other workmen from following their lawful occupations, but they commenced to destroy the property of the pastoral tenants, believed to be opposed to Union despotism. As a specimen of the inflammatory language used, perhaps your Honour will permit me to read an extract from a paper published in the (alleged) interest of the working classes.'

His Honour 'thought that however such extracts might indicate a tendency on the part of certain sections of workmen to engage in acts of violence causing injury to property,—a most lamentable state of feeling, in his opinion,—yet the Court was directly concerned to-day with only specific evidence as to the complicity of the prisoners in the crime of arson on which they were arraigned. He thought the extract at this stage irrelevant.'

'After drawing the attention of your Honour and the jury to the seditious, dishonest statements referred to, I will briefly refer to the lamentable list of outrages upon property, not stopping short 92
indeed of personal violence and grievous bodily injury.

'Matters have reached such a pitch that a state of civil war may be said to have commenced. If not only the country but the towns and cities of Australia are not to be theatres of bloodshed, outrage, and incendiary flames, from which, by the mercy of Providence, Australia has up to this period been preserved, the law in its majesty must step in, and adequately punish the actors in the flagrant criminality as to which I have to address your Honour this day.'

The prisoners, having been duly arraigned, with one accord pleaded not guilty. The last name was that of William Hardwick. Just before his name was called, room was made in the crowded Court and a seat provided by the Sergeant of Police for a woman with two children, whose travel-worn appearance denoted recent arrival.

Bill turned his head, and in that fragment of time recognised Jenny with their little boy and girl. His name had to be repeated a second time. Then he drew himself up, squared his shoulders, and looking straight at the Judge, said 'Not Guilty' in a voice which sounded throughout the Court, and if it had not the ring of truth, was a marvellous imitation.

Poor Jenny, who had preserved a strained, fixed look of composure, broke down at this juncture. The sight of her husband, standing in the dock with men of crime-hardened and to her eyes of guilty appearance—one of whom, indeed, wore leg-irons, which clanked as he moved—overcame all attempts at self-possession. Her sobs were audible through the whole Court.

'Wife of the prisoner, your Honour,' explained the sergeant. 'Just off the coach; been travelling twenty hours without rest or sleep.'

'Had she not better stay in the witnesses' room?' suggested the Judge sympathetically. 'Refreshment can be brought to her there.'

But Jenny, though temporarily overcome, was not the woman to give in at such a time. Wiping her eyes, 'I've come a long way, if you please, your Honour,' she said, 'to hear my man tried on a false charge, if ever there was one; and I hope you'll let me see it out. I'll not disturb the Court again.'

It was a piteous spectacle.

Little Billy Hardwick, a precocious, resolute youngster 'rising five,' looked for a while with much 93
gravity at his father, and then said, 'Is this a church, mother? Why doesn't father come out of that pew?'

Jenny was nearly overcome by this fresh assault on her sympathies, but accentuating her order by a shake, replied, *sotto voce*, 'It's not a church, Billy; but you mustn't talk, or else a policeman will lock you up in prison.' The child had heard of prisons, where bad people were locked up, even in Talmorah, where the primitive structure was, in his little mind, associated with the constable's children, who used to play therein when the cells were empty. He would have liked further explanation, but he read the signs in his mother's set face and closed lips, and spoke no more; while the little girl, holding on to her mother's gown, mingled her tears with those of her parent. Jenny Hardwick was 'not much in the crying line,' as an early friend had said of her, and was besides possessed of an unusual share of physical courage as well as of strength of mind. So, when she had hastily dried her eyes, she gave every indication of being as good as her word.

'Call the first witness,' said the Crown Prosecutor, anxious to get to work. This proved to be the Captain of Volunteers, who marched into the box accordingly.

'Your name is Gilbert Elliot, formerly of the 60th Regiment, now commanding a mounted Volunteer force. Were you at Moorara on the Darling on the 28th of August 1894?'

'I was.'

'Please to state what you did and what you saw then.'

'When the troop reached Poliah, at the date mentioned, I saw the steamer *Dundonald* floating down the river. She was on fire and burning fiercely. Apparently no one was on board. There was a large camp of armed men—several hundreds—whom I concluded to be Union shearers. They were yelling and shouting out that they had just burned the —— boat and would roast the crew and captain for bringing up "blacklegs." I called upon them to disperse, and as they made a show of resistance I ordered my men to charge. They commenced to retreat and disperse, upon which I caused all the men to be arrested who had arms in their hands, and who were pointed out to me as having fired at the crew of the steamer or having set fire to the vessel.'

'Do you recognise the prisoners before the Court?' 94

'Yes; all of them.'

'Your Honour, I appear for prisoner William Hardwick,' said a shrewd, alert-looking person, who had just then bustled into the Court and appeared to be well known to the legal section. 'May I ask to have the captain's evidence read over to me? Ordinarily I should not think of troubling your Honour or delaying the business of the Court; but I have travelled from Harden, and, being delayed on the road, have only this moment arrived.'

'Under the circumstances, Mr. Biddulph, the evidence of Captain Elliot may be read over from my notes.' This was done.

The witness's evidence was proceeded with.

'Was there any show of resistance by the men assembled in the camp?'

'There was a movement as if they were disposed to fight. They outnumbered my troopers more than six to one, but at the first charge they wavered and dispersed. They made no opposition to my arresting the prisoners before the Court. One of them, the one now in irons, made a desperate resistance, but was not supported.'

'Now, Captain Elliot,' said Mr. Biddulph, 'will you look at the prisoner at this end of the dock; do you remember him?'

'Perfectly. He had a rifle in his hand when I ordered him to be arrested.'

'Did he resist?'

'No.'

'Did he say anything? If so, what was it?'

'He said, "I'm not here of my own free-will. I've been robbed and ill-treated by these men. I was forced to carry this gun. You can see that it has not been discharged. My mates (there are several of them) can prove that." I asked him where they were. He said he did not know.'

'Then you had him arrested, though he disclaimed taking any part in the unlawful proceedings? Did you not believe him?'

'I did not. As it happened, other prisoners made substantially the same defence who had been seen firing their guns just as we rode up.'

'That will do, captain.' 95

The next witness was called.

'My name is Humphrey Bolton. I am a Sergeant of Volunteers, and came up from Moorara by a forced march as soon as we heard that the steamer was burnt. When we struck the camp there were six or seven hundred men, most of them armed. They appeared very excited. I saw the steamer drifting down the river. She was on fire. I saw a barge with a number of men in it. I noticed the Unionists standing on the bank of the river and firing from time to time in the direction of the barge. The men in the barge were bending down and lying in the bottom as if afraid of being hit. I did not hear of any of them being hurt; a few shots were fired back, and one man in the camp was wounded.'

'What happened next?' said the Crown Prosecutor.

'Captain Elliot ordered me to capture all men on the river-bank who had arms in their hands. The six prisoners before the Court and about a dozen others were taken in charge accordingly.'

'Did the crowd resist their capture?'

'They made a show of it at first, but as soon as we charged, they gave way and cleared off in all directions.'

'Now, sergeant,' said Mr. Biddulph, 'look at the prisoner William Hardwick. Had he arms?'

'He was carrying a gun.'

'Did you see him fire it?'

'No.'

'Did you examine it, when he said it had not been fired?'

'Yes, the captain ordered me to do so; it had not been fired recently.'

'Wasn't that proof that he was speaking the truth?'

'How could I tell? He might have been going to fire, or picked up one that had not been used. Besides, my officer told me to arrest him, and, of course, I obeyed orders. He was in company with men who had just committed a felony, at any rate.'

'I see—evil communications. You may go down, sergeant.'

The next witness was the captain of the *Dundonald*.

'My name is Seth Dannaker, Master Mariner, out of Boston, U.S.A. I was lately in command of the steamer *Dundonald*—now at the bottom of the river Darling. I had come from Pooncarrie, carrying 96
forty-five free labourers, last Saturday, without obstruction or disturbance. I took wood on board, and tied up, with swamp all round, a little below Poliah. We heard that a large camp of Unionists were waiting to attack us there; they had wire ropes across the river. We had steam up all night and a watch was kept. About four o'clock A.M. a mob of disguised men rushed on board the boat, and took possession of her. They knocked me about, and put me and the crew on board the barge, now

moored at Moorara. They afterwards set the *Dundonald* on fire. She drifted down the river, and finally sank. They took possession of the free labourers, and counted them. They had guns and revolvers, threatening to shoot me and all who resisted them. I have lost all my personal effects, including money. I thought this was a free country; now I know it isn't.'

Cross-examined by Mr. Carter, appearing for the prisoners—with the exception of William Hardwick.

'You say you were threatened by one or more of the Unionists. Can you recognise any of the prisoners now before the Court?'

'Yes; the man in irons. I was told his name was Abershaw. He put a revolver to my head, swearing he would shoot me if I resisted; also that he would burn the b——y steamer, and roast me and the Agent of the Employers' Association for bringing up blacklegs.'

'Was he sober?'

'I cannot say. He was much excited, and more like a madman than any one in his senses. Two or three men struck me. I cannot identify any other prisoners. I had left my revolver in the cabin, or I should have shot some of them.'

'Did you see any persons firing at the vessel or crew?'

'Yes; there was a line of men on the bank firing with rifles at the crew. They wounded two of them. I cannot identify any of them.'

Cross-examined by Mr. Biddulph.

'Will you look at the man in the corner of the dock nearest to you? Did you see him firing or carrying a gun?'

'I never saw him at all, to my knowledge. Of course there was confusion.'

Next witness. 'My name is James Davidson. I am the Agent of the Employers' Association. On or about the 28th August 1894, I came up in the *Dundonald* in charge of free labourers (forty-five) to a spot near Poliah. The police had been sent for from Tolarno. We had heard of the Unionists intending to obstruct the boat, and so kept watch above and below. Next morning, just before daylight, a number of men rushed on board. One of them pointed a gun at the man who tried to set the boat free, threatening to kill him if he moved. They went into the wheel-house, and struck the captain; I heard them tell him they would kill him and burn the boat. He was knocked about badly. I got a few blows before the leaders got the men quiet. Then they started getting my men out.' 97

By the Crown Prosecutor. 'Whom do you mean by your men?'

'The free labourers.'

'Did they resist, or go quietly?'

'Some went quietly—others resisted, and were thrown overboard. A few were only in their shirts, as they had not had time to dress. They were then set up in a line and counted, to see if they were all there. A guard was put over them.'

'Was the guard armed?'

'Yes. Another gang was busy unloosing the steamer, and preparing her for the fire. They smashed in the cabins and stole everything. Nothing escaped them when they began to pillage. I lost my portmanteau, clothes, and money. Everything was taken out of my cabin, leaving me nothing but the clothes I had on.'

'Were the Unionists much excited?'

'Excited?—raving mad, I should call it. We were lucky to get off with our lives. Fortunately, few persons were injured. We received every attention when we got to Moorara. There is a large Union Camp at Tolarno. They have given out that they intend to burn two more steamers, for carrying free labourers.'

'Do you identify the prisoners in the dock?'

'Two of them. The man in irons struck the captain, and said he would burn the boat and roast him alive. The one with the large beard was the one who said he would shoot the man who was unloosing the cable. The others I have no knowledge of.'

By Mr. Carter. 'Did you see the prisoner William Hardwick—the one at this end of the dock?'

'Not that I am aware of.' 98

'You said you lost some money?'

'Yes, ten or twelve pounds; it was in a purse in my portmanteau. I had to draw on the Association for a few pounds, as I was left penniless and without a change of wearing apparel.'

'I suppose that was a form of "picketing," in accordance with the "ethics of war."'

'"Pickpocketing," I should call it.'

'One moment, Mr. Davidson,' interposed Mr. Biddulph, as the Agent turned to leave the witness-box. 'Did you see the prisoner at this end of the dock, carrying a gun or in any way joining in this creditable work?'

'I never saw him at all.'

'That will do.'

'Call Janus Stoate, witness for the Crown.'

As his name was mentioned, Bill turned his head towards the door where the witnesses came in, with a look of murderous hate, such as no man had ever seen before on his good-natured countenance.

Jenny, as she looked anxiously towards the dock, hardly knew him. By that door was to walk in the man who had eaten many a time at his humble but plentiful table, and in return had treacherously denounced him, ruined his character, helped to deprive him of his hard-earned wages, gone near to render his children paupers, and break his wife's heart. A man of his easy-going, confiding character, easily deceived, is not prone to suspicion, but when injured—outraged in his deepest, tenderest feelings—is terrible in wrath. As Bill unconsciously clenched his hands, and stared at the open door, he looked as one eager to tear his enemy limb from limb.

But the thronged Court was disappointed, and Bill's vengeance delayed, as no Janus Stoate appeared.

Mr. Biddulph, who had left the Court, now appeared in company with a mounted trooper, whose semi-military attire told of a rapid ride. He spoke in a low voice to the Sub-Inspector of Police, who thereupon proceeded to address the Judge.

'If your Honour pleases, there will be a trifling delay before this witness can give his evidence, owing to circumstances to which I cannot at present allude. As the hour for your Honour's luncheon has nearly arrived, may I suggest a short adjournment? I can assure your Honour that I make the application for sufficient reasons.' 99

'I am opposed,' answered the Judge, 'to adjournments in criminal cases; but on Mr. Sub-Inspector's assurance, I consent to relax my rule. Let the Court be adjourned until half-past one o'clock.'

There was a gasp of relief, half of satisfaction, half of disappointment, from the crowd as they hurried from the Court to snatch a hasty meal and ventilate their opinions.

'It's another dodge of the Government to block our workers from gettin' justice,' said one oratorical agitator, partially disguised as a working-man, and whose soft hands betrayed his immunity from recent toil. 'It's a conspiracy hatched up to block Delegate Stoate's evidence agin that blackleg Hardwick.'

'You be hanged!' said a rough-looking bushman, who had just hung his horse up to one of the posts in front of the Murrumbidgee Hotel. 'You won't have so much gab when you see Delegate Stoate, as you call *him*, before the Court, and some one as can tell the truth about him. Bill Hardwick's as honest a cove as ever walked, and he *is* a worker, and not a blatherskite as hasn't done a day's work for years, and sets on skunks like Stoate to rob honest men of their liberty. Don't you stand there gassin' afore me, or I'll knock your hat over your eyes.'

There was presumably a majority of Mr. Stoate's own persuasion around listening to the foregoing remarks, but the onlookers did not seem inclined to controvert this earnest speaker's arguments—seeing that he was distinctly an awkward customer, as he stood there, obviously in hard condition, and eager for the fray.

'See here now, boys,' said a large imposing-looking policeman, 'sure it's betther for yees to be gettin' a bit to ate and a sup of beer this hot day, than to be disputing within the hearin' of the Coort, and may be gettin' "run in" before sundown. Sure it's Misther Barker that's sittin' the good example.' Here he pointed to the agitator, who, after mumbling a few words about 'workers who didn't stand by their order,' had moved off, and was heading straight for the bar of the Murrumbidgee Hotel.

This broke up the meeting, as the Union labourers were anxious to hear the conclusion of the case, Regina *v.* Hardwick and others, and were not unobservant either of the unusually large force of police which the Resident Magistrate of Wagga Wagga, a man of proverbial courage and experience, had called up, in anticipation of any *émeute* which might arise as a result of this exciting trial. At half-past one o'clock the Judge, accompanied by the Deputy Sheriff, took his seat upon the Bench, and the Court was again formally declared open. 100

As the name Janus Stoate was called by the official, in a particularly clear and audible voice, every eye was turned toward the door by which the Crown witnesses entered, and that distinguished delegate walked in, closely accompanied by a senior constable.

His ordinarily assured and aggressively familiar manner had, however, deserted him; he looked, as the spectators realised, some with surprise, others with chagrin, more like a criminal than a Crown witness.

Bill's gaze was fixed upon him, but instead of homicidal fury, his whole countenance exhibited unutterable scorn, loathing, and contempt. As he turned away, he confronted the spectators and the Court officials generally, with a cheerful and gratified expression, unshared by his companions in misfortune.

Even they regarded Stoate with doubt and disfavour. Deeply suspicious and often envious of their fellow-workmen who attained parliamentary promotion, and more than that, a fixed and comfortable salary, they were skilled experts in facial expression. In the lowered eyes and depressed look of Mr. Delegate Stoate they read defeat and disaster, not improbably treachery.

'The beggar's been squared or "copped" for some bloomin' fake,' said the prisoner on the other side of the man in irons. 'He's goin' to turn dog on us, after all.'

'If I don't get a "stretch,"' growled the other, 'his blood-money won't do him no good.'

'Silence in the Court,' said the senior Sergeant, and Mr. Stoate was duly sworn.

'Your name is Janus Stoate, and you are a shearer and a bush labourer?' said the Crown Prosecutor.

'That is so, mostly go shearin' when I can get a shed.'

'Now, do you know the prisoners in the dock? Look at them well. Their names are William Stokes, Daniel Lynch, Hector O'Halloran, Samson Dawker, Jeremiah Abershaw, and William Hardwick.' 101

'Yes, your Honour; I've met 'em as feller-workers. I don't know as I've been pusson'ly intimate with 'em—except prisoner Hardwick.'

'*He does know him*, to our sorrow, the false villain!' cried out Jenny, coming a pace forward with a child in each hand, and delivering her impeachment before any one could stop her. 'Ask him, your Honour, if he hasn't lived with us, lived *upon* us I call it, for weeks at a time—and now he's going to bear false witness and ruin the family, body and soul.'

'Is this the person who interrupted before?' said the Judge. 'Order *must* be kept in the Court. Let her be removed.' Here the Deputy Sheriff said a few words in a low tone to his Honour. 'Indeed!' said the Judge mildly. 'She must control her feelings, however. My good woman, if I hear another interruption, it will be my duty to have you removed from the Court.'

'Mrs. Hardwick,' said Biddulph, when Jenny's sobs had ceased, 'don't you make a fool of yourself, you're hurting Bill's case. I thought you had more sense. Do you want me to throw it up?'

This settled poor Jenny effectually, and humbly begging pardon, she promised amendment, and kept her word—only regarding Stoate from time to time with the expression which she had assumed at times when a native cat (*Dasyurus*) had got into her dairy.

'Were you at a place called Poliah, on the river Darling, on or about the 28th August last?'

'Yes, I was.'

'Was there a camp there of Unionist shearers?'

'There was workers of all sorts, besides shearers, rouseabouts, and labourers, also loafers.'

'Very likely; but what I want you to tell me is, were they chiefly shearers? In number, how many?'

'Well, say six or seven 'underd.'

'You acted as a delegate, I believe, under rules of the Australian Shearers' Union, at several stations during shearing?'

'I was app'inted as delegate by my feller-workers, and acted as sich on several occasions.' 102

'What were your duties as a delegate?'

'I 'ad to be in the shed while shearin' was goin on, to see the rules of the Australian Shearers' Union was carried out strickly, and that the men got justice.'

'In what way?'

'Well, that they wasn't done out of their pay for bad shearin', when they shore reasonable well; that they got proper food and lodgin', and wasn't made shear wet sheep, which ain't wholesome—and other things, as between employer and employee.'

'As delegate, did you go to Poliah? and did you see a steamer called the *Dundonald* on the river?'

'Yes, I did.'

'Did you see a number of men rush on board of her, and take the free labourers out of her?'

'No. I was at the back of the camp persuadin' of the men not to use no vi'lence. Then I heard a great hubbub, and guns fired. After that I saw the steamer afire and drifting down river.'

'Did you see who set it on fire?'

'No.'

'Did you see who fired the guns?'

'No; I heard the reports of 'em.'

'Did you see any men on the bank with guns in their hands?'

'Yes; a line of 'em along the river.'

'Were the prisoners now before the Court there?'

'They might have been, I can't speak positive.'

'Was the prisoner Hardwick there carrying a gun?'

'I can't be sure. He might have been. I thought I saw him, but I wasn't near him, and I can't be sure in my mind.'

'You can't be sure?' asked the Crown Prosecutor angrily. 'Didn't you swear at the Police Court at Dilga that you saw him not only holding a gun, but firing it towards the steamer? I'll read your deposition. "I saw the prisoner holding the gun produced. He appeared to have been firing it."'

'Now, Mr. Stoate, is that your signature? and how do you account for your going back on your sworn evidence? You're intelligent enough—in a way. I am at a loss to understand your conduct.' 103

'Well, I was a bit flurried at the time—confused like. The police came down and charged the mob, and a lot of the shearers cleared out.'

'Then you won't swear that Hardwick held the gun, or fired it?'

'No; I wasn't near enough to him to be dead certain. It was a man like him.'

'Your Honour,' said the Crown Prosecutor, 'this is a most extraordinary change of front on the part of this witness; it amounts to gross prevarication, if not something worse. I *may* have occasion to prosecute him for perjury. You may go down, sir.'

'Not yet. With your Honour's permission, I propose to cross-examine the witness,' interposed Mr. Biddulph. 'Now, Mr. Delegate Stoate, is Janus your Christian name?'

'Yes.'

'Janus, is it? Sounds more heathen than Christian; more suitable also, if I mistake not. Now, Janus Stoate, you're my witness, for the present—remember that—and I advise you to be careful what you say, for your own good, and don't "suppose" so much as you did in your answer to my learned friend. You and Hardwick were on friendly terms before shearing, and came down the river together?'

'Yes, we were friends, in a manner of speakin'.'

'Were you friends or not? Answer me, and don't fence. Have you not stayed at his house often, for more than a week at a time?'

'Yes, now and then—workers often help one another a bit. I'd 'a done the same by him if he'd 'a come along the road lookin' for work.'

'Given him house-room, and three meals a day for a week or more, I daresay. But, let me see—*have you a house*?'

'Well, not exactly. I live in Melbourne.'

'Where?'

'At a boarding-house.'

'You left his house, then, for the shearing, the last time you were there. You had board and lodging for the previous night, and came down the river to North Yalla-doora together; is that so?'

'Yes.' 104

'Did you say you were a delegate before the shearing began?'

'No.'

'Why not?'

'For no reason in partic'lar.'

'Did you and he have a dispute on the road, and part company before you came to North Yalla-doora?'

'Well, we had a bit of a barney, nothing much.'

'Oh! nothing much? You were at Tandara while the shearing was going on; and did he and others refuse to come out on strike when you produced a telegram from the Head Centre, or whatever you call him, at Wagga?'

'He refused to obey the order of the properly app'inted hofficer of the Australian Shearers' Union; and was disrespectful to me, pusson'ly.'

'Did you then say that you would make it hot for him at the next shed?'

'I don't remember. But I was displeased at his disloyal haction.'

'Disloyal to whom? to the Queen?'

'No, to a greater power than the Queen—to the People, as is represented by the Australian Shearers' Union.'

'Very good; keep that for your next speech. You'll find out something about the powers of Her Majesty the Queen before long.'

'Do you not think, Mr. Biddulph,' said the Judge, with much politeness, 'that you have tested this part of the cross-examination sufficiently?'

'It was necessary to prove malice, your Honour; but I will proceed to the witness's acts and deeds, which are more important. Now, Mr. Delegate, answer these few questions straightforwardly.'

'I am on my oath, Mr. Lawyer.'

'I am aware of that; I don't attach much importance to the obligation, I am sorry to say. Did you not say to the President of the Shearers' Committee, during the riot, which might have ended in murder, and did end in arson—"Send a couple of men with Bill Hardwick and put him in the front with a rifle"?'

'Nothing of the sort.'

'If it is sworn by a respectable witness that he heard you, will you still deny it?' 105

'Certainly I will.'

'Call Joseph Broad. (I merely call this witness to be identified, your Honour.) Did you see this man at the shearers' camp?' to Stoate.

'I saw him there, but that's all.'

'That will do, Broad; go out of Court for the present. Did you hear your President speak to him?'

'Not to my knowledge.'

'Did Lynch and another man stand on each side of Hardwick on the bank of the river, and threaten to shoot him if he didn't stop there and hold out his rifle?'

'I didn't hear them.'

'Now listen to me, and be very careful how you answer this question. Did *you* stand close behind him with a revolver and say, "Don't you move for your life"?'

'Not that I remember. We was all crushed up that close together, as the crew of the steamer fired into us, that a man couldn't tell who was next or anigh him.'

'Very probably. That will do. Stay,' as Mr. Stoate turned away, and left the witness-box with a relieved expression. 'Go into the box for a moment. How did you come here—walk or ride?'

'Rode.'

'Rode your own horse?'

'No, a police horse; I came up with Sergeant Kennedy.'

'Oh, then, he lent you a horse—very kind of him—and accompanied you here. How was that?'

'Well, I believe there was some sort of a case trumped-up against me.'

'Oh! some kind of a trumped-up case, was there? We'll hear more about that, by and by. That will do for the present, Mr. Delegate.'

The witness then left the Court, followed by the strange trooper, so closely indeed, that but for the absence of handcuffs he might have been thought to have been in custody.

'Call Sergeant Kennedy.'

John Kennedy, being duly sworn, deposed as follows: 'I am a senior Sergeant of Police, stationed at Dilga, on Cowall Creek, which runs into the Darling. I saw the last witness at Tandara Run on December the 20th instant. He was given into my custody by Mr. Macdonald, the manager, charged with wilfully and maliciously setting fire to the run. I searched him in his presence and found on him two half-crowns, a knife, a meerschaum pipe, a plug of tobacco, two sovereigns, a copy of Union Shearers' rules, a letter, and a cheque. The cheque was drawn by John Macdonald in favour of William Hardwick, dated 10th October. The amount was £55: 17s.'

When this announcement was made an audible murmur arose from the body of the Court, even a few hisses were heard, which were promptly suppressed. Bill opened his eyes in wonder and amazement, and then turned to where Jenny sat crying peacefully to herself, but not from grief. Their money had been recovered, their traitorous enemy disgraced and confounded. She, in her mind's eye, saw her home once more glorified with Bill's presence—a free, unstained man. God was merciful, and she despaired no longer of His goodness.

'You didn't observe anything in the rules of the A.S.U. as to pocketing the cash of all shearers unfriendly to the Union? No? Then you may go down.'

'I have no questions to ask this witness,' said the Crown Prosecutor, with emphasis—'at present, that is to say.'

So Mr. J. Stoate, who had departed with the trooper, was for greater safety and security lodged in the modern substitute for the dungeon of the Middle Ages, until the Judge, after the finding of the jury, should have pronounced sentence or otherwise on the *other* prisoners.

CHAPTER VIII

'Call Cyrus Cable!' for the defence. As the long-legged, bronzed Sydney-sider lounged up to the witness-box, Bill's face, which had assumed a more hopeful expression, became distinctly irradiated. For this man was one of the shearers who had travelled down with him from Tandara, and had agreed to drop all connection with the Union and its revolutionary tactics. They had both been imprisoned at Poliah; had suffered wrong and indignity at the hands of the insurgents. How had he come up from the Darling, just in the nick of time? Bill didn't know, but if he had seen Dick Donahue outside of the Court he might have guessed.

'My name's Cyrus Cable, native of Bathurst. I'm a shearer in the season; have a selection at Chidowla, this side of Tumberumba. I know some of the men in the dock; saw them at Poliah when the row was on and the steamer was burnt.'

'Will you point out any of the prisoners that you can identify?'

'Well, there's Bill Hardwick, an old mate of mine—and fellow-prisoner, if it comes to that. It's dashed hard lines on him to be scruffed and gaoled by those Union scallowags, first for not joinin' 'em, and then locked up and tried because they ill-treated him and he couldn't get away. I call that a queer sort of law.'

The witness is requested to confine himself to answering such questions as are put to him, and not to give his opinion as to the law of the land.

'Do you identify any other prisoners?'

'Yes. I saw that beauty with the hobbles on, fire his gun at the crew on the boat twice; I saw him reload. He was one of the men as hustled Bill, and the rest of our mob that came from Tandara, into the tent and set a guard on us. I took notice of him then, and can swear to him positive.' 108

'Was the prisoner Hardwick with the rioters?'

'Yes, like me, because he couldn't help himself. I heard the President, as he calls himself—there he is, the t'other end of the "bot" (I mean the dock, but it's so like a branding pen)—say to that Janus Stoate, him as passed the wire with our names when we left Tandara—"Put a good man on each side of Bill Hardwick, so's he can't stir, and they'll take him for a Unionist and keep pottin' at him. What fun it'll be!" and he laughed. "I'll be behind him," says Stoate, "so he won't have no chance of boltin'." That's the way it was worked to bring Bill, as straight a chap as ever sharpened shears, into this steamer-burnin' racket.'

'How was it that you and your mates left your comrade in the lurch?'

'Well, we cleared as soon as the police came. The Union men bolted in all directions and left the free labourers to mind themselves. We thought Bill was comin' after us, and never missed him till we were miles away.'

'Did you not return to rescue him?'

'No fear! We thought the police might run *us* in for "aidin' and abettin'." It was every man for himself, and the devil take the hindmost.'

The witness was reprimanded for levity, and directed not to refer to the devil unnecessarily. In cross-examination he stated that he took particular notice of the man in irons, as he had repeatedly struck him and his mates with the butt-end of his rifle. Like the other rebels, he was very brave against unarmed men, but cut it when the police showed they meant business.

'Have you not a revengeful feeling against the prisoner Abershaw, the one who is (very improperly, in my opinion) brought into the Court in leg-irons?'

'Well, I've the feelings of a man, and I don't cotton to a cowardly dog who kept rammin' the butt-end of his gun into the small of my back, when I couldn't defend myself. But I'm here to speak the truth, and to get justice for an innocent man.' 109

'I suppose you were told that you would be paid your expense for attending this trial?'

'I got a Crown subpœna. So did Martin.'

'Who served it to you?'

'A police constable at Toovale.'

'Was anybody with him?'

'Yes, Dick Donahue. He told me and my mate, Martin Hannigan, that Bill Hardwick was to be tried at Wagga for burnin' the *Dundonald* and shootin' at the crew. "That be hanged for a yarn!" says I. "Fancy Bill, with a farm and a wife and kids, settin' out to burn steamers and kill people! Holy Moses! Are you sure he didn't rob a church, while he was about it?" But he said it was no laughing matter, and he might get three years in gaol. So of course we come, and would have turned up if we'd had to do it on foot and pay our own expenses!'

'Of course, your Honour will note this witness's evident bias?' said the counsel for the prisoners.

'I shall take my notes in the ordinary manner,' said the Judge. 'It is not necessary for counsel to suggest points of practice to a Judge before he addresses the Court at the conclusion of the evidence.'

'Your Honour will perhaps pardon me; I thought it might have escaped your notice.'

'I trust, Mr. Carter, that *nothing* escapes my notice in an important criminal case. Let the next

witness be called.'

'Martin Hannigan is your name?' said Mr. Biddulph. 'You were at Poliah Camp on the 28th of August, were you not? Do you know the prisoners before the Court?'

'Some of them. I know Bill Hardwick, and the man with the leg-irons, but not his name. Yes; I know the one with the black beard—they called him the President.'

'Who called him by that title?'

'The shearers, or rioters, or loafers, whoever they were. They were six of one and half-a-dozen of the other, if you ask me.'

'Never mind answering what you are not asked. What did you *see them do*?'

'Well—Mr. President and his mob, all armed, made Bill and me and eight or nine other chaps that came down from Tandara, prisoners of war, in a manner of speakin'—"robbery under arms" I call it, for they boned our swags, our horses, our grub, and our pack-saddles. I found the horses, when they were boltin' from the police, or we should 'a never seen 'em again; two of us had to ride bareback. I seen that gaol-bird there—he's "done time," I'll take my oath—and another man shovin' Bill Hardwick between them towards the river-bank—one of 'em was puttin' a gun into his hand—swore he'd shoot him if he didn't carry it. I saw one of 'em fire at the boat. I'd not swear he hit anybody. I heard the "President" say, "We'll burn the bally boat; that'll learn 'em to bring 'scabs' down the river." I saw the steamer blaze up after the crew and free labourers was out. Then the police came, and Martin, my mate, and I cleared for our lives. We caught our horses in a bend and rode down the river to Toovale, when we got a non-Union shed, and wired in. That's about all I know.' 110

By the Crown Prosecutor.

'Your name is Martin Hannigan. Are you an Irishman?'

'No, nor an Englishman either. I'm an Australian, and so was my father. What's that to do with the case?'

'I thought you were rather humorous in your evidence, that's all. The Irish are a witty race, you know.'

'So they say. I've never been there. Anythin' else you'd like to ask me?'

'Only a few questions. When were you served with a subpœna to attend this Court, and where?'

'At Toovale, on the Lower Darling. The policeman came to the shed where Cable and I were working and served us. Dick Donahue came with him, and told us that Bill Hardwick was being tried with the other men for burning the *Dundonald*.'

'Didn't you know before? That seems strange.'

'Well, we were workin' hard to make up for lost time, by this strike foolishness, and we were too dashed tired at night to go in for readin' papers, or anything but supper and a smoke.'

'I suppose Donahue told you all about Hardwick's being arrested, and you had a talk over the case—what evidence you could give, and so on.'

'He didn't say much about evidence. He knew we was there, and seen all there was to see; might have *felt* something too, if a bullet had come our way—they were flying pretty thick for a few minutes. I seen that President chap fire once, and load again.' 111

'And that was all that passed?'

'Yes, pretty well all; we weren't "coached," if that's what you mean.'

'You swear that you saw that man fire, and load again?'

'Yes.'

'Did you see the free labourers?'

'Yes, forty or fifty; some looked damp, as they had been chucked into the river. Some had only their shirts on. They were stood up in a line, and counted like a lot of store cattle. They cleared off like us, when the police came, and the Union fellows bolted. We passed little mobs of them makin' down the river.'

'You swear you didn't see Hardwick fire his gun?'

'It wasn't his gun, and he didn't shoot.'

The sensational part of the trial was over; other witnesses were examined for the defence. They agreed in 'swearing up' for the prisoners before the Court, always excepting for Bill Hardwick. 'The other four men had exhibited great mildness, and a desire for peace. They had not seen the captain of the *Dundonald* assaulted; they saw the steamer on fire—they didn't know how it had started burnin'—might have been from kerosene in the cargo—it often happened. There was some shooting, but the crew of the steamer fired first. They didn't see any of the prisoners firing at the boat, except William Hardwick. Would swear positive that he had a gun, and loaded, after he fired every time—yes, every time. Saw no men thrown overboard. Some of them swam ashore, but they did it of their own accord.'

These witnesses broke down under cross-examination.

The Crown Prosecutor made a brief but powerful address to the jury, pointing out discrepancies in evidence, and the manifest perjury committed by the last witnesses. He trusted the jury would not

overlook their conduct, and appraise their evidence at its true value.

The counsel for the defence, a well-known barrister, made a long and impassioned appeal to the jury 'to excuse the more or less technically illegal acts, which, he admitted, could not be defended. 112
It was, however, in the line of "rough justice," the origin of which was a long series of capitalistic tyranny and oppression. They had suffered long from inadequate payment for their skilled labour, for shearing was no ordinary muscle work which could be performed by the mere nomadic labourer of the day. It required an apprenticeship, sometimes lasting for years. It was difficult, and exhausting beyond all other bush labour, having to be performed at a high rate of speed and for long hours, unknown to the European workman. The food was of bad quality, the cooking rude. The huts in which they had to dwell, worse than stables, nearly always. They had besides to travel long distances, expensive in time lost and wayside accommodation. For all these reasons, they had come to the conclusion that the question of pay and allowances, with other matters, required reconstruction, and failing to obtain a conference with the Employers' Union—a combination of squatters, merchants, bankers, and plutocrats generally—they had used the only weapon the law allowed to the workers of Australia and had organised a *strike*.

'The labour leaders had in all cases counselled moderation and constitutional action for the redressing of their wrongs. But—and it was by none more regretted than by the labour organisers themselves—rude and undisciplined members of the Union had resorted to personal violence, and had injured the property of squatters and others, believed to be desirous of crushing Unionism. Some allowance might be made for these men. They saw their means of livelihood menaced by cargoes of free labourers, bought up like slaves by the capitalistic class. They saw their wages lowered, their industry interfered with—the bread taken out of their mouth, so to speak—by a wealthy combination, which had no sympathy for the workers of the land, who had by their labour built up this enormous wool industry, now employing armies of men and fleets of vessels.

'Were they, the creators of all this wealth, to be put off with a crust of bread and a sweating wage? No! They had been worked up to frenzy by a plutocratic invasion of their natural rights; and if they crossed the line of lawful resistance to oppression, was it to be wondered at? He trusted that his Honour, in the highly improbable event of a verdict of "guilty," would see his way to inflict a merely 113
nominal term of imprisonment, which, he undertook to say, would act as an effective caution for the future.'

His Honour proceeded to sum up. 'In this case, the prisoners were charged with committing a certain act, distinctly a criminal offence, punishable by a term of imprisonment. He would not dilate upon the collateral results, but impress upon the jury that all they had to consider was the evidence which they had heard. Did the evidence point conclusively to the fact that the prisoners had committed the crime of arson—the burning of the steamer *Dundonald*—then and there, on the 28th of August last, on the waters of the Darling River? With the conflicting interests of the pastoral employers, and the rate of wages, or the propriety of strikes, or otherwise, they had nothing whatever to do. He would repeat, *nothing whatever to do*.

'Did they believe the evidence for the prosecution? He would take that evidence, *seriatim*, from his notes.

'First there was that of the officer of Volunteers, which was direct and circumstantial. He deposes to having seen the steamer *Dundonald* floating down the river, burning fiercely then, with apparently no one on board. He saw a large camp of armed men, who shouted out that they had burnt the steamer, and would roast the captain and crew, for bringing up blacklegs. This last expression, he was informed, meant non-Union labourers. He caused the arrest of several men with arms in their hands, pointed out to him as having fired at the crew of the vessel, or having set fire to her. Among them was the prisoner Hardwick, who had a gun in his hand.

'The next witness was the sergeant of Volunteers. He saw the burning vessel, the crowd of armed men, and also men firing in the direction of a barge containing the crew presumably. He arrested by the colonel's order the six prisoners now before the Court, as well as others. They had arms in their hands.

'Captain Dannaker of the *Dundonald* deposed to a very serious state of matters. He had as passengers forty-five free labourers. Before daylight, a band of armed, disguised men boarded the vessel—of which they took full possession. Their action was not far removed from that of pirates. They threatened with death the captain, the crew, the agent of the Employers' Union, several of 114
whom were assaulted, and ill-used. They "looted" the steamer, to use an Indian term—smashing cabins and appropriating private property. These unlawful acts they completed by forcing the free labourers to land, compelling the crew to go into the barge, setting the steamer on fire and casting her away, after which she was observed to sink. He also saw men on the river-bank firing at the crew and passengers. He identifies Abershaw, the prisoner in irons, as the man who assaulted and threatened him. He did not notice prisoner Hardwick.

'Mr. Davidson, the agent of the Employers' Union, corroborates the foregoing evidence in all particulars. He himself was assaulted, as were the free labourers. He saw the rioters throw some of the free labourers overboard. He saw them unloosing the steamer and preparing it for burning. His clothes and money were taken out of his cabin. He identifies Abershaw, but not prisoner Hardwick. He identifies Dawker, the man with the large beard, as the "President," so called.

'The witness for the Crown, Janus Stoate, gave, in his (the Judge's) opinion, unsatisfactory evidence after the adjournment. He described himself as a shearer; also a delegate appointed by the Shearers' Union. Though present at the scene of outrage, he apparently saw no one conduct himself indiscreetly, with the exception of his friend and fellow-shearer, William Hardwick. He swears that

he saw *him* load and fire a gun in the direction of the steamer. He did not see the two prisoners Abershaw and Dawker, identified by the other witnesses, say or do anything illegal. He heard the report of firearms, but could not say who used them, except in the case of Hardwick. In several respects his evidence differed from that given before the Bench of Magistrates at Dilga Court of Petty Sessions, when the prisoners were committed for trial. He admitted in cross-examination having had a quarrel with Hardwick at Tandara woolshed, and to having arrived here in custody.

'Sergeant Kennedy, of the New South Wales Police, deposes to the arrest of this witness at Tandara station, on a charge of maliciously setting fire to the grass on the run, and to finding in his pocket, when searched, a cheque drawn in favour of William Hardwick for £55: 17s., said prisoner having previously testified as to its being lost or stolen.

'He would tell the jury here that he had no confidence whatever in the evidence of the witness Stoate. He appeared to have prevaricated, and also to have been actuated by a revengeful feeling in the case of William Hardwick, though, strange to say, he was apparently without eyes or ears in the case of the other prisoners, all of whom had been positively identified as having been seen in the commission of unlawful acts. In conclusion, he would entreat the jury to examine carefully, to weigh well, the evidence in this very serious and important case, and with close adherence to the obligation of their oaths, to bring in their verdict accordingly. The Court now stands adjourned till two o'clock.'

The jury were absent more than an hour, and during that time Mr. Biddulph persuaded Jenny to have a cup of tea, and otherwise refresh herself and the children, who had outstayed their usual meal-time.

She, with difficulty, was induced to touch anything: dead to all ordinary feelings, as she described herself, until Bill's fate was decided. 'How can I think of anything else?' she exclaimed passionately to Dick Donahue, who, with unfailing optimism, tried to convince her that Bill must be let off, and next day would be with her and the children on the way to Chidowla.

'How can we tell?' said she. 'Wasn't there Jack Woodman, and the lawyers told him he must be let off on a point of law, instead of which he got three years, and he's in gaol now.'

'Ah! but that was for cattle-stealing,' replied Mr. Donahue; 'and Jack had been run in before, for duffing fats off Mount Banda—tried too, and got off by the skin of his teeth. This time he shook a selector's poddies, and the jury couldn't stand that. But Bill's innocent, as everybody knows. See what the Judge said about Stoate's evidence! I'll bet you a hat to a new bonnet that Bill's out a free man this afternoon, and that Stoate's in the dock for settin' fire to Tandara, with a six to one on chance of seem' the inside of Berrima Gaol, and those four other chaps to keep him company.'

Jenny couldn't help relaxing into a wintry smile at this reassuring prophecy. But her face assumed its wonted seriousness as she said, 'Well, Dick Donahue, you've been a staunch friend all through this trouble, and I'll never forget you and Biddy for it as long as I live, and Bill won't neither.'

'Don't be troubling yourself about that, Mrs. Hardwick,' said Donahue. 'You were a good friend to her and her children before all this racket—they would have wanted many a meal only for you. But I'm a changed man. I've some hope before me, thanks to Mr. Calthorpe; and if Bill will go partners with me, we'll be Hardwick and Donahue, with a tidy cattle-station one day yet.'

'The Court's sitting,' called out some one, 'and the jury's agreed.' A rush was made by all interested persons and the spectators generally. Not a seat was vacant as the Court official demanded silence, and the Judge's Associate proceeded to read out the names of the jurors, who, headed by their foreman, stood in line on the floor of the Court.

'Are you agreed, Mr. Foreman, on your verdict?'

'We are.'

'How do you find?'

'We find William Stokes, Daniel Lynch, Hector O'Halloran, Samson Dawker, and Jeremiah Abershaw guilty of arson, and we find William Hardwick *not guilty*.'

The verdict of guilty was received in silence. A number of the spectators were Unionists, and though the more sensible members of the association had always been opposed to lawless proceedings, yet from a mistaken sense of comradeship they felt bound not to repudiate the acts of any of their confraternity. No doubt at the next ballot the voting would have been almost unanimous against injury to property, and such outrages as the law's slow but sure retribution has never yet failed to overtake.

But when the verdict of 'Not Guilty' was announced, there was a cheer which it tasked the stern mandate of the Deputy-Sheriff and the vigorous efforts of the police to suppress. Jenny did not hear much of it, as the fateful words had barely been pronounced when she fell as if dead. She was promptly carried out into the witnesses' room, and measures taken for her recovery. When she came to herself, Bill was bending over her, and the children, smiling amidst their tears, were holding fast to one of his hands.

Anxious as both husband and wife were to shake the Wagga dust from their feet and get away up the river to their half-deserted home, Bill's Court work was not yet concluded. He was constrained to appear again in the memorable cases of Regina *versus* Stoate, charged with arson, and the same Gracious Lady (who impersonates Nemesis on so many occasions over such a wide area of the earth's surface) *versus* Stoate, charged with 'larceny from the person.'

No sooner had the jury been dismissed, and, with the witnesses, were wending their way to the office of the Clerk of the Bench, expectant of expenses, than the Crown Prosecutor addressed his Honour, representing that only at luncheon had he received the depositions in a fresh case—he referred to that of Regina *versus* Stoate. He was aware that the cases just disposed of had been supposed to conclude the sitting, and that his Honour was expected at Narrabri the day after to-morrow; but under the peculiar circumstances, as several of the witnesses and two members of the legal profession who were concerned in the last case were to be briefed in this, he trusted that his Honour would overlook his personal discomfort, and consent to deal with this case at the present sitting of the Court.

His Honour feared that the jurors and witnesses in the heavy cases at Narrabri might suffer inconvenience by the postponement of his departure; but, as the adjourning of this case to the next Assize Court—nearly five months—would more seriously affect all concerned, and as he was opposed on principle to prisoners on committal being detained in gaol, or defendants delayed one week longer than was actually necessary, he would accede to counsel's very reasonable request.

'Let another jury be impanelled, Mr. Associate, and then adjourn the Court until ten o'clock to-morrow morning. I shall consider the evidence taken in the previous cases, and deliver the sentences at the opening of the Court. The prisoners may be removed.'

On the following morning the five prisoners were again placed in the dock, looking anxious, and more or less despondent, with the exception of Abershaw, the man in irons. He was a hardened offender, and reckless as to what might befall him in the shape of punishment. He had served terms 118
of imprisonment in another colony. Like many criminals, he had unfortunately not taken warning by previous penalties, as it was less than a year since he had been released. He looked around with an affected contempt for his surroundings, and smiled at an occasional sympathiser in Court with unabashed defiance.

But, as the Judge commenced to address the prisoners before announcing the sentences, the look of tension on the other men's faces was painful to witness, and even *he* appeared to feel the seriousness of the situation.

'William Stokes, Daniel Lynch, Hector O'Halloran, Samson Dawker, Jeremiah Abershaw, you have been found guilty, on the clearest evidence, of a dangerous and concerted attack on society. If organisations of this kind were permitted—if lawless bodies of men, organising themselves with the discipline of a military force, were permitted to go about the country interfering with honest men—there could be no safety for any one in the community. I am gratified to find that the jury have arrived at the only conclusion rational men could arrive at in such a case, and with no more time spent in deliberation than was necessary to consider the case of each man separately. I do not suppose that, excepting the residents of the neighbourhood of Poliah and the Lower Darling region generally, people are fully aware of what has been going on there.

'I have had a tolerable knowledge of the country, but I had no idea, until I came to try this case, what a state of things existed in the locality mentioned in depositions—a state of things probably unparalleled in the history of New South Wales.

'I should not have thought it possible that six or seven hundred men could camp on a main stock route, by a navigable river, for the purpose of preventing honest men going to work, much less could capture, bind them as prisoners, and hold them as such.

'Let any one contemplate what may follow if this kind of thing is permitted. There would be an end of liberty and safety; but the law exists for the protection of all, whether high or low, in the community, and those who take part in proceedings of this kind must expect to have every man's heart hardened against them. If a man's liberty were interfered with, if his life were threatened by overwhelming numbers, he and every other honest man is entitled to protect himself by taking the 119
lives of those who come upon him. This, in law, is termed justifiable homicide; on the other hand, if lawless persons take life, they are guilty of murder.

'Having explained the law on intimidation, I will pass on to the circumstances more immediately surrounding the case. It is proved beyond doubt that the *Dundonald* steamer was deliberately and wilfully set on fire by the prisoners and others. If any person had perished in the flames by their act, or if, when shooting at the vessel, any of the crew or passengers had been killed, they would now be on their trial for murder.

'As it is, they have, most properly, been found guilty of arson by the jury, a crime punishable, under Victoria No. 89, section 6, with imprisonment with hard labour, and solitary confinement.

'I accordingly sentence Samson Dawker, who has been referred to as the "President," and Jeremiah Abershaw, to three years' imprisonment with hard labour, and periods of solitary confinement, both to be served in Berrima Gaol. The other prisoners do not appear to have been so actively employed in these unlawful, demoralising acts. They are therefore sentenced to two years' imprisonment only, with hard labour. I cannot conclude my remarks without stating that I fully agree with the verdict of acquittal by the jury in the case of William Hardwick, who might have been deprived of his liberty by a conspiracy of unprincipled persons, had not the jury rightly discriminated as to the manifest unreliability of the evidence against him. He therefore is enabled to leave the Court, I have pleasure in stating, without a stain upon his character.'

REGINA *v.* STOATE.

Charged with Arson.

'May it please your Honour,' said the Crown Prosecutor, 'the prisoner before the Court is charged with wilfully and maliciously setting fire to the grass of the Tandara Run. I purpose calling the arresting constable and the manager, Mr. Macdonald; also the aboriginal Daroolman, who is exceptionally intelligent. The case will not be a lengthy one. Call Senior Sergeant Kennedy.' 120

'My name is John Kennedy, Senior Sergeant of the New South Wales Police Force, stationed at Dilga, on the Darling. I called at Tandara station on duty. I there saw Mr. Macdonald, the manager. He remarked that there had been no rain for a month, and the grass was very dry. He requested me to accompany him a few miles on the up-river road. He mentioned that a man named Stoate had left shortly before, having been refused rations, threatening "to get square with him." He considered him a likely person to set fire to the Run, and was just going to track him up.

'I agreed, and put my black boy on the trail. After riding two or three miles, the boy pointed to the tracks leaving the road and making towards a sandhill. We rode fast, as we saw smoke rising. The aboriginal said "that one swaggie makum fire longa grass, me seeum lightem match." We saw a man kneeling down, and galloped towards him. Apparently he did not hear us coming; as he looked up he seemed surprised. The grass around him had just ignited and was burning fiercely. There was no wood near. Mr. Macdonald seized him by the arm, saying, "You scoundrel! You're a pretty sort of delegate! I thought you were up to some mischief." Prisoner seemed confused and unable to say anything. The black boy picked up a brass match-box, half full of wax matches; also a half-burned wax match. The match-box (which I produce) had J. S. scratched on one side. Prisoner declined to say anything, except that he was going to boil his billy. There was no wood, nor any trace of roadway in the vicinity. I arrested him on the charge of setting fire to the Tandara Run. He made no reply. On searching him I found the cheque referred to in my former depositions, it was drawn in favour of William Hardwick for £55: 17s., also a knife, two sovereigns, and some small articles. I conveyed him to the lock-up at Curbin, where he appeared before the Bench of Magistrates, and was committed to take his trial at the next ensuing Assize Court. We put out the fire with difficulty; if it had beat us it might have destroyed half the grass on the Run.'

John Macdonald, being sworn, states:

'I am the manager of Tandara station. I have known the prisoner, off and on, for some years, as a shearer and bush labourer. He came to me on December 20th and asked for rations. He was on foot. I said, "You had better ask the Shearers' Union to feed you, I have nothing for agitators; you tried to spoil our shearing, and now you come whining for rations." I threatened to kick him off the place. 121

'He went away muttering, "I'll get square with you yet." Being uneasy, I mounted my horse, and shortly afterwards the last witness and a black boy came up, and at my request accompanied me. The boy followed his track till it turned off the main road in the direction of a sandhill. As we rode nearer, a small column of smoke rose up. We found prisoner standing by the fire, which had just started. I saw the black boy pick up the box of matches (produced in Court) from under prisoner's feet. It was marked J. S., and was nearly full of wax matches. The black boy pointed to a half-burnt match, close to the tuft of grass from which the fire had started. I said, "You scoundrel! You're a pretty sort of delegate!" I saw the sergeant take the cheque (produced) for £55: 17s., payable to William Hardwick, out of his pocket. If we had been five minutes later, all the men in the country couldn't have put the fire out; it would have swept the Run.'

'What would have been the effect of that?' asked the Judge.

'We might have had to travel 100,000 sheep, which alone would have needed fifty shepherds, besides the expense of cooks and ration-carriers, with tents, provisions, and loss of sheep. Altogether it would have meant an expenditure of several thousand pounds at the very least—besides injury to the sheep.'

'Have you any questions to ask, prisoner?' said the Judge.

'None,' said Mr. Stoate. 'These witnesses are at the beck of the capitalistic class, and will swear anything.'

Richard Donahue and the black boy corroborated the previous evidence, the latter saying, 'Me seeum light when piccaninny match-box tumble down alonga that one fella tarouser.'

Being asked if he had anything to say in his defence, Mr. Stoate elected to be sworn, taking the oath with great solemnity, and making a long-winded, rambling defence, in which he abused the capitalists, the police, the bankers, and the selectors, who, he said, were all in a league with the 'plutercrats' to crush the Union workers, and grind down the faces of the poor. With regard to the cheque, he had picked it up, and intended to restore it to Hardwick. If that man swore that he never gave him or any other man authority to take care of his money, he swore what was false. It was a common custom among mates. If the jury convicted him on this trumped-up charge, which any one could see was manufactured, he would willingly suffer in the cause of his fellow-workers. But let the oppressor beware—a day of reckoning would come! 122

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CHAPTER IX

The Court was not very full. The 'fellow-workers' to whom Stoate so often referred had made up their minds about him. Open warfare, rioting, plunder, even arson or bloodshed, in a moderate degree they would have condoned. But to be *caught in the act* of setting fire to a Run, and detected with a stolen cheque in your pocket—that cheque, too, belonging to a shearer—these were offences of mingled meanness and malignity which no Union Caucus could palliate. 'He's a disgrace to the Order; the Associated Workers disown him. The Judge'll straighten him, and it's hoped he'll give him a good "stretch" while he's about it.'

This was the prejudicial sentence. And having made up their minds that their over-cunning ex-delegate by dishonourable imprudence had played into the hands of the enemy, few of the Unionists took the trouble to attend, for the melancholy pleasure of hearing sentence passed on their late comrade and 'officer.'

So, the evidence being overwhelming, the jury found Mr. Stoate guilty, and the Judge, having drawn attention to the recklessness and revengeful feeling shown by the prisoner—not halting at the probable consequences of a crime against society, by which human life might have been endangered, if not sacrificed—sentenced him to five years' imprisonment with hard labour. He was immediately afterwards arraigned on the charge of 'stealing from the person,' and the sergeant's evidence, as well as that of Hardwick, was shortly taken. Being again found guilty, he was sentenced to two years' imprisonment—which, however, the Judge decreed to be concurrent, trusting that the longer term of incarceration might suffice for reformation. In conclusion, he again congratulated William Hardwick on the recovery of his money and his character, both of which he had so nearly lost through association with men who had banded themselves together to defy the law of the land, and to attempt illegal coercion of workmen who differed from their opinions.

Such associations often led to consequences not foreseen at the time. Many a man had cause to blame them for loss of liberty, if not life. He trusted that this lesson would be received in the way of warning, and that he and all honest working-men who had witnessed the proceedings in this Court would go home resolved to do their duty in their own station of life, not following blindly the lead of agitators, however glib of speech, who might prove as unprincipled and dangerous guides as the prisoner who had just received sentence.

No time was lost, it may be imagined, by Bill and Jenny in 'clearing,' as they expressed it, for Chidowla. The coach for Tumut held a very cheerful load when he and she, in company with Dick Donahue, who had covered himself with glory, and had a satisfactory outing as well, took their seats. Bill wished to cash his newly-found cheque, but Jenny—practical as usual—persuaded him to give it to her for transmission to Mr. Calthorpe.

'I brought down a pound or two that I'd got stowed away, and there'll be just enough to take us back without breaking the cheque. Mr. Calthorpe's stood by us, and we must do our level best to get square again, and show the bank as he knows the right people to back. I'll go bail we'll do it inside a year, if we don't have any more delegate and Union business, eh, Bill?'

'No fear!' replied Bill with emphasis. 'I'm another man now, though I won't get the feel of them handcuffs off me for a month o' Sundays. I'm goin' to be a free labour cove, to the last day of my life. And Janus Stoate's where he wanted to put me, d—n him! I hope he feels comfortable. But I'll never give the clever chaps as lives on us fools of shearers a chance to work such a sell again. Dick, old man, you stood to me like a trump. We must see if we can't go in for a partnership, when we're turned round a bit. What do you say, Jenny?'

'I say yes,' said Jenny, 'with all my heart. Biddy's milkin' those cows of ours now, or I don't know what I'd 'a done. I believe if we put both our selections into a dairy farm we could make money hand over fist. But we must have more cows; this cheque of Bill's—and Jenny slapped her pocket triumphantly—now we've got it, will buy near a dozen, and we'll soon make a show.'

Dick Donahue, for the first time in his life, found hardly anything to say. He gripped both their hands, but brought out little more than 'Thank ye, thank you both! You've given me a new lease of life, and I'll—I'll keep my side up—now I've something ahead of me, or my name's not Dick Donahue. Thank God, it's a grand season, and that gives us a clear start, anyhow.'

When they arrived at Tumut—some time after dark, but all well and happy—they found Biddy awaiting them with the spring cart, which she had driven over. There were a few stumps on the road, but Bill's eyes were good, so that they got home safely and with a superior appetite for the supper which Biddy had set out for them. This they discussed with their friends, who had much to hear and tell; after which the Donahues drove away and left them to the enjoyment of their home, which looked like a palace to Bill, after his misfortunes and adventures.

They were both up, however, before sunrise next morning, and at the milking-yard, where they found everything just as it should be. In the dairy, moreover, there was a keg of butter three-parts full, which Biddy had made during their absence. Bill was thinking of going into Talmorah after breakfast, when a boy galloped up with a letter from Mr. Calthorpe, requesting him not to come in till Saturday (the day after next), as a few friends and fellow-townsmen wished to meet him at two o'clock at the Teamster's Arms to show their regret at his undeserved persecution, and to present him with an Address, expressive of the same.

'Bother it all,' said Bill, 'I wish they'd let a fellow alone. I suppose I shall have to make a speech.'

'Oh, you *must* go,' said Jenny. 'Mr. Calthorpe wants you, and we mustn't be ungrateful after all he's done for us. Besides, didn't you make one at Tandara, when the shed had cut out, after "long Jim

Stanford" euchred the Head Centre at Wagga? My word, you were coming on then; next thing you'd 'a stood for Parliament, or been elected delegate, any way.'

'See here, Jenny,' replied Bill. 'I suppose I'll have to say something when they give me this Address, as they call it; but after that's over, if any one but you says a word about our "feller-workers" or "criminal capital," or any bally Union rot of that kind, I'll knock him over, as sure as my name is Bill Hardwick.' 126

Bill and Jenny went into Talmorah a little before twelve o'clock on Saturday morning, the former to meet his friends, and the latter to pay in the celebrated cheque to their account, and have a few words with the banker; also, to make quite sure that Bill didn't have more than a whisky or two on the auspicious occasion. When the meeting was assembled in the big room at the Teamster's Arms, they were astonished at the number of townspeople that turned up. Some, too, of the neighbouring squatters appeared, whom they only knew by name, and that Bill had never worked for. The clergyman, the priest, the opposition banker, the storekeepers, great and small, were there—in fact, everybody.

Saturday afternoon in country places is a recognised holiday, except for shop assistants; and as they have on other days of the week much leisure time on their hands, they do not object. It is a change, an excitement, and as such to be made the most of.

A long table had been laid on trestles in the 'hall' of the principal hotel, a room which had been used indifferently in the earlier days of Talmorah, when it was a struggling hamlet, for holding Divine service, police courts, and 'socials,' which included dancing, singing, recitations, and other expedients subversive of monotony.

Couples had been married there by the monthly arriving minister; prisoners sentenced to terms of imprisonment, even hanged, after depositions duly taken there and the verdict of a coroner's jury. Political meetings had been held, and on the election of a member for the district it had been used for a polling booth, so that it was well and favourably known to the inhabitants of the town and district, and no one had any difficulty in finding it. It was now more crowded than on any occasion recalled by the oldest inhabitant.

Mr. Thornhill, the principal landowner in the district, holding the position by reason of his wealth, power, and popularity, which is generally yielded to the squire in the old country, was unanimously elected chairman, and opened the proceedings. 127

'Ladies and gentlemen,' he commenced—'for I am pleased to see so many of the former present, as also my good friends and neighbours in the district, who have worked with me in peace and harmony for so many years—(murmur of applause)—we are met together this day to do an act of simple justice, as well as of neighbourly kindness, by welcoming back to his home and friends a man whom we have all known personally or by report as an honest, straightforward, industrious settler. A man of small means, but a son of the soil, and the head of a family. (Interjection—"No; Jenny's the boss.") (Laughter.) My friend who corrected me, doubtless with the best intentions, is aware, as I am, that a good wife is the very sheet-anchor of success in life—(cheers)—and that probably, if our friend Hardwick had taken her counsel rather than that of agitators and false friends, he would not have suffered the pecuniary loss, anxiety, and—er—inconvenience which we so deeply regret this day. (Great cheering.) However, that is past and gone; we have now a pleasurable aspect of the case to dwell upon. We congratulate our friend, Mr. William Hardwick, and his good and true wife, upon their return to their home and their neighbours, by whom they are so deservedly respected. (Immense cheering.) In this connection it should not be overlooked that the high character, the result of years of honest industry, neighbourly kindness, and upright dealing, was of signal advantage in the time of need. By it they had gained staunch friends, who stood by them in the day of adversity. Mr. Calthorpe, the manager of the Bank of Barataria, had done his best for them, and they knew what a power for good a gentleman in that position could be in a country place. (Loud cheering.) Their neighbour, Mr. Donahue, had mustered important witnesses for the defence in a manner which only a good bushman, as well as a good friend, could have accomplished, while Mrs. Donahue had personally managed the farm and the dairy in Mrs. Hardwick's absence. (Repeated bursts of cheering.) Other friends and neighbours, among whom he was proud to number himself, had helped in the matter of expense, which, as everybody knew who had anything to do with law and lawyers, was unavoidable. (Cheers and laughter.) Though here he must admit that his friend Mr. Biddulph's professional services were invaluable, and if ever he or any of his hearers got into a tight place—well, he would say no more. (Great cheering and laughter.) He would now read the Address. Mr. William Hardwick, please to stand forward.' 128

Here Bill advanced, looking far from confident. However, as he confronted the chairman, he held up his head and manfully faced the inevitable, while the following Address was read:—

'To Mr. William Hardwick of Chidowla Creek.

'DEAR SIR—We, the undersigned residents of Talmorah, desire to congratulate you and Mrs. Hardwick upon your return to your home and this neighbourhood, during your long residence in which you have been deservedly respected for industrious, straightforward conduct. We have sympathised with you sincerely, while regretting deeply the unmerited persecution by which you have suffered. We feel proud to think that residents of this district were chiefly instrumental in establishing your innocence, their evidence having caused his Honour, Judge Warrington, to discharge you "without a stain upon your character." We beg to tender you this address, signed by the principal inhabitants of this town and district, and to beg your acceptance of the purse of sovereigns which I now hand to you.'

Bill's self-possession failed him under this ordeal, and he nearly dropped the purse, which contained fifty sovereigns. Jenny had put her head down between her hands. This seemed to suggest to Bill that somebody was wanted to represent the family. So turning, so as to have a view of the assembled neighbours, as well as the Chairman, he managed to get out with:

'Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen,—I'm no hand at a speech, as perhaps most of you know. I did make a try in the woolshed at Tandara just before the Shearers' War bust upon us. I don't deny as I might have come on a bit, with practice; might have been promoted as high as to be a Union Delegate—(laughter)—but bein' among the prisoners of war, when the naval battle of the Darling River took place, I was "blocked in my career," as the sayin' is. I found myself in gaol pretty soon after, when it was explained to me, for the first (and, I hope, the last) time, what steel bracelets were like. The next place where I had to talk was in the dock, when I made a speech with only two 129
words in it. They was "Not Guilty." (Cheers.) I'm in for a longer one now, and then I'll shut up for good, and never want to hear another sham-shearer talk rot, or hear the gag about Unionism again, as long as I live. *I* don't join another one, no fear! (Cheers.) And now, I just want you to believe, all my old friends as have turned up to stand by us in this handsome way, and Mr. Thornhill, the Chairman (and if all squatters were like him there'd never have been a strike, or the thought of one), I hope you'll believe that Jenny and I feel your kindness to the very bottom of our hearts, and that we shall remember it to our dying day.' Here the cheering burst forth; stopped and began again, until one would have thought it never would have ended.

By this time, however, tables had been covered with an array of bottles of wine and beer, and certain viands in the shape of sandwiches, tongues, hams, rounds of beef, biscuits, and cakes of various hue and shape—all things necessary for a cold but generous collation. The corks being drawn, the sound wine and beer of the country was set flowing, when Bill's health and Jenny's were drunk with great heartiness and fervour.

The Chairman then proposed—'His friend Mr. Calthorpe, in fact, the friend of all present, as the gentleman who, by equipping Richard Donahue and sending him to find and notice witnesses for the defence, had done yeoman's service for the worthy pair they had met to honour that day.'

In the course of an effective speech in return for the toast of his health, which was enthusiastically honoured, Mr. Calthorpe stated that the directors of the bank which he had the honour to serve always supported their officers in any extra-commercial action—as he might call it—in favour of honourable constituents, such as William Hardwick and his wife. He might take this opportunity to inform them that a partnership was in train, and would probably be arranged under the style of 'Hardwick and Donahue,' as these worthy yeomen had decided to join their selections, indeed to take up additional, conditional leases and devote themselves to dairy-farming on a large scale. They hoped to secure a share of the profits of butter-making which were attracting so much attention in 130
their district of Talmorah, for which the soil, climate, and pasture were so eminently adapted. He might inform them that he had applications in the names of each of the partners, for nine hundred and sixty acres of conditional leasehold. This, with the original selections, would form an area of two thousand five hundred and sixty acres. They would agree with him, a tidy grazing-farm on which to commence the dairying business! Furthermore, he would take this opportunity of stating that there was every prospect of a butter-factory being established in Talmorah within twelve months. He trusted that the new firm's enterprise would inaugurate, in that method, one of the most profitable labour-employing industries, by which our graziers, big and little, have ever benefited themselves and advanced the interests of the town and district at large.' (Tremendous cheering.)

When the applause had subsided, the prospective partners lost no time in getting off, Jenny being aware that all conversation after such proceedings was liable to conclude with the 'What'll you have?' query—one of the wiles of the 'insidious foe.' Bill confessed to two or three 'long-sleevers,' the day being warm and the lager beer cool; but Dick Donahue, who had 'sworn off' before the priest for two years, before he went down the Darling, had touched nothing stronger than tea. Upon reaching their homes, the whole four resumed their working clothes and busied themselves about the farms until sundown. 'We'll sleep better to-night, anyhow,' said Jenny as, after putting the children to bed, she sat by Bill while he had his after-supper smoke in the verandah. 'But we must be up at daylight; it will give us all we know to get the cows milked and breakfast over and clean things on, for church in the township. For we'll go *there*, Bill, as we've good right to do, after all that's come and gone—won't we?'

'Right you are, Jenny; seems as if we'd been took care of, somehow.'

So the old mare missed *her* Sunday holiday, and had to trot into Talmorah between the shafts of the light American waggon—the capital all-round vehicle, that in the bush answers so many different purposes; and the Donahues went to their chapel, where, no doubt, Father Flanagan congratulated them on their improved prospects, while admonishing Dick to be more regular in his 'duty' for the future.

From this time forward the fortunes of the firm of Hardwick and Donahue steadily improved and 131
prospered. The wives and husbands were eminently suited for co-operative farm management.

Biddy could milk a third more cows in the morning than any other woman in the district, and had won more than one prize for butter at the Agricultural and Pastoral Show. Jenny was not far behind her in these industries, but in the curing of bacon and hams had rather the best of it, by the popular vote. Dick was the smarter man of the two, having, moreover, a gift of persuasive eloquence, which served the firm well in buying and selling stock; this department having been allotted to him. He was thus able to get the change and adventure which his soul loved, and as he stuck manfully to his pledge, he wasted no time, as formerly, in his attendance upon shows and auction sales.

He began to be looked up to as a solid, thriving grazier, and with hope before him, and increased comfort in his home and family, pressed forward with energy to the goal of success which he saw awaiting him. His children were well fed, well clothed, and well schooled, holding up their heads with the best of the other yeoman families.

Bill worked away with his old steadiness and perseverance, not envying the change and occasional recreation which Mr. R. Donahue came in for. 'He had had enough of that sort of thing to last him for the rest of his life. His home, with Jenny and the children [now an increasing flock], was good enough for him,' he was heard to say.

There was also a run of good seasons, which in Australia is summed up and may be exhaustively described in one word *Rain*, with a large R by all means. The grass was good; so were the crops; so were the prices of butter, cheese, and milk.

The factory at Talmorah was a substantial, well-equipped, scientific institution, the monthly cash payments from which caused the hearts of the storekeeper and the tradesmen of that rising township to sing for joy. The only persons who discussed the change from 'the good old times' with scant approval were the publicans, who observed that the farmers sent the monthly cheque for milk to their account at the Banks of Barataria or New Holland, and their orders by post to the tradespeople, instead of 'going into town like men and stopping at the hotel for a day,' whenever they sold a ton of potatoes or a load of wheat.

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From such modest commencements many of the most prosperous families in New South Wales and Victoria have made their start in life. Such families not infrequently hold the title-deeds of thousands of acres of freehold land. Contented to live economically and to re-invest their annual profits, they acquire large landed estates. As magistrates and employers of labour their position year by year becomes one of greater provincial importance and legislative influence. In physique, energy, and intelligence their sons are an honour to their respective colonies, and a valued addition to the loyal subjects of the British Empire—that Empire, in whose cause they are, even as I write, sending the flower of their youthful manhood to a far-off battlefield, holding it their proudest privilege to fight shoulder to shoulder with the 'Soldiers of the Queen.'

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MORGAN THE BUSHRANGER

AND OTHER STORIES

MORGAN THE BUSHRANGER

For several years the announcement 'I'm Morgan,' uttered in the drawling monotone which characterises one section of Australian-born natives, sufficed to ensure panic among ordinary travellers, and if it did not cause 'the stoutest heart to quail' in the words of the old romancers, was seldom heard without accelerated cardiac action. For the hearer then became aware, if he had not earlier realised the fact, that he was in the power of a merciless enemy of his kind—blood-stained, malignant, capricious withal, desperate too, with the knowledge that the avenger of blood was ever on his trail, that if taken alive the gallows was his doom, beyond doubt or argument. A convicted felon, who had served his sentence, he bore himself as one who had suffered wrongs and injustice from society, which he repaid with usury. Patient and wary as the Red Indian, he was ruthless in his hour of triumph as the 'wolf Apache' or the cannibal Navajo exulting with a foe, helpless at the stake.

An attempt has lately been made to rehabilitate the memory of this arch-criminal, so long the scourge and terror of the great pastoral districts lying between the Upper Murray and the Murrumbidgee rivers. We are not disposed to deny that there were individuals not wholly abandoned among the misguided outlaws who ravaged New South Wales in the 'sixties.' There was usually some rude generosity in their dealings with victims. They encountered in fair fight, and bore no ill-will to the police, who were paid to entrap and exterminate them. They were lenient to the poorer travellers, and exhibited a kind of Robin Hood gallantry on occasion. Among them were men who would have done honour to their native land under happier auspices. For, with few exceptions, they were sons of the soil. But Daniel Morgan differed from Gardiner, Hall, and Gilbert, from the Clarkes and the Peisleys, from O'Malley and Vane, from Bourke and Dunn. He differed as the wolf differs from the hound, the carrion vulture from the eagle. His cunning on all occasions equalled his malignity, his brutal cruelty, his lust for wanton bloodshed. Rarely was it, after one of his carefully-planned surprises, when he swooped down upon a defenceless station, that he abstained from injury to person or property.

He was skilful and persevering in discovering his 'enemies,' as he called them,—a not too difficult task,—for he had abettors and sympathisers, scoundrels who harboured and spied for him, as well as those who, fearing the vengeance of an unscrupulous ruffian, dared not refuse food or assistance. Those whom he suspected of giving information to the police or providing them with horses when on his trail he never forgave, often wreaking cruel vengeance on them when the opportunity came. He would reconnoitre from the hill or thicket for days beforehand. When the men of the household were absent or otherwise employed, he would suddenly appear upon the scene, to revel in the terror he created; certain to destroy valuable property, if indeed he did not imbrue his hands in blood before he quitted the spot.

It was, for the most part, his habit to 'work' as a solitary robber; he rarely had a companion, although in the encounter with Mr. Baylis, the Police Magistrate of Wagga Wagga, when that gentleman showed a noble example by bravely attacking him in his lair, it is supposed that his then companion was badly wounded. Mr. Baylis was shot through the body, but that man was never seen alive again. The popular impression was that Morgan killed him, so that he might not impede his flight or give information. The tale may not be true, but it shows the quality of his reputation.

It seems wonderful that Morgan should have been so long permitted to run the gauntlet of the police of two colonies. It may be doubted whether, in the present efficient state of the New South Wales force, any notorious outlaw would enjoy so protracted a 'reign,' as the provincial phrase goes. He had great odds in his favour. A consummate horseman like most of his class, a practical bushman and stock-rider, with a command of scouts who knew every inch of the country, and could thread at midnight every range and thicket between Marackat and the Billabong, Piney Range and Narandera, it was no ordinary task to capture the wild rider, who was met one day on the Upper Murray and the next morning among the pine forests of Walbundree. Horses, of course, cost him nothing. He had the pick of a score of studs, the surest information as to pace and endurance. In a horse-breeding district every animal showing more than ordinary speed or stoutness is known and watched by the 'duffing' fraternity, fellows who would cheerfully take to the road but for fear of Jack Ketch. It may be imagined how easily the hackney question is settled for a bushranger of name and fame, and what advantages he has over ordinary police troopers in eluding pursuit.

I was living on the Murrumbidgee during a portion of his career, in the years 1864 to 1869. He was seen several times within twenty miles of my station, and I have had more than one description from temporary captives, of his appearance and demeanour. There is not an instance on record of his having been taken by surprise, or viewed before he had been employed in reconnoitring his antagonist.

Some of his adventures were not wholly without an element of humour—although the victim well knew that the turn of a straw might change the intent, from robbery to murder. The late Mr. Alexander Burt, manager of Tubbo and Yarrabee, was riding on the plains, at a distance of ten or twelve miles from the head station, when a horseman emerged from a belt of pines. He wore a poncho, but differed in no respect from ordinary travellers. Without suspicion he rode towards the stranger. As he approached and, bushman-like, scrutinised horse and man, he observed the JP brand, and recognised the animal as one stolen from the station. A tall, powerful Scot, Mr. Burt ranged alongside of the individual in the poncho and reached over to collar him. At that moment a revolver appeared from under the poncho, and a drawling voice uttered the words 'Keep back!'

It was unsafe to try a rush, and the snake-like eye of the robber told clearly that the least motion

would be the signal for pulling the trigger.

'What's yer name?' queried the stranger.

'My name is Burt.'

'Then Burt—you get off—that—horse.'

Being unarmed, he had no option but to dismount. 138

'Give—me—the—bridle. So—you—tried—to—take—my—horse—did—yer? I've—a—dashed—good—mind—to—shoot—yer. Now—yer—can—walk—home. I'd—advise—yer—to—make—a—straight—track.'

And with this parting injunction he rode slowly away, leading Mr. Burt's horse, while that gentleman, cursing his hard fate, had to tramp a dozen miles before relating the foregoing adventure.

At another time he surprised the Yarrabee Station, 'bailing' Mr. Waugh the overseer, Mr. Apps, and others of the employés of Mr. John Peter, but beyond placing the JP brand in the fire, and swearing he would put it on one of them, as a suitable memento, he did nothing dreadful.

At Mr. Cochran's of Widgiewa, as also at Mr. M'Laurin's of Yarra Yarra, preparations were openly made for his reception; yet, though he made various threats of vengeance, he never appeared at either place.

At Round Hill Station, near Germanton, he enacted one of his murderous pranks. Suddenly appearing in the shed at shearing time, he terrorised the assembled men, fired on, wounded and threatened the life of the manager. After calling for spirits and compelling all to drink with him, he turned to ride away, when, incensed by a careless remark, he wheeled his horse and fired his revolver at the crowd. A bullet took effect in the ankle of a young gentleman gaining shearing experience, breaking the bone, and producing intense agony. Appearing to regret the occurrence, Morgan suggested to another man to go for the doctor. Having started, Morgan followed at a gallop, and overtaking him, said with an oath, 'You're not going for the doctor—you're going for the police.' With that he shot the unfortunate young man through the body, who fell from his horse mortally wounded.

About the same time he was seen by Police Sergeant M'Ginnerty riding near the Wagga Wagga road. Having no suspicion, he galloped alongside, merely to see who he was. Without a moment's hesitation Morgan fired *through his poncho*. The bullet was but too sure—it may be noted that he rarely missed his aim—and the ill-fated officer fell to the ground in the death agony. He coolly propped up the dying man in a sitting posture, and there left him.

When it is considered that he killed two police officers, besides civilians, Chinamen, and others, and 139
that he shot a police magistrate through the body (inflicting a wound nearly fatal, the consequences of which were suffered for years after), it will be admitted that he was one of the most formidable outlaws that ever roamed the Australian wilds.

He is said to have encountered a pastoral tenant, of large possession, whom he thus accosted—

'I—hear—you've—been—pounding—the—Piney—boys'—horses—haven't—you?'

The witness was understood to deny, or, at any rate, shade off the unpopular act.

'Piney Range,' near Walbundree, was understood to be at one time the robber's headquarters. Here he was harboured in secret, and more comfortably lodged than was guessed at by the public or the police. The 'boys' were a horse-and cattle-stealing band of rascals—now fortunately dispersed—who generally made themselves useful by misleading the police, as well as by giving him notice of hostile movements. Towards subsidising them the spoils of honest men were partially devoted.

But this did by no means satisfy the 'terrible cross-examiner.'

'You look here now! If yer don't drop it, the—very—next—time—I—come—over—I'll—shoot—yer. For—the—matter—of—that—I—don't—know—whether—I—*won't—shoot—yer—now*.'

And as the dull eyes fastened with deadly gaze upon the captive's face—he looking meanwhile at the mouth of the levelled weapon, held in the blood-stained hand of one who at any time would rather kill a man than not—be sure Mr. Blank's feelings were far from enviable.

To one of his victims he is reported to have said—

'I—hear—you're—a—dashed—good—step-dancer. Now—let's—have—a—sample—and—do—yer—bloomin'—best—or—yer—won't—never—shake—a—leg—no—more.'

Fancy performing on the light fantastic before such a critic!

A cheerful squatter (who told me the tale) was riding through his paddocks one fine afternoon, in company with his family and a couple of young friends of the 'colonial experience' persuasion. They 140
were driving—he riding a handsome blood filly. In advance of the buggy, he was quietly pacing through the woodland—probably thinking how well the filly was coming on in her walking, or that fat stock had touched their highest quotation—when he was aware of a man sitting motionless on his horse, under a tree.

The tree was slightly off his line, and as he approached it the strange horseman quietly rode towards him. He noted that he was haggard, and dark-complexioned, with an immense bushy beard. His long, black hair hung on his shoulders. His eyes, intensely black, were small and beady; his air sullen and forbidding. He rode closely up to the pastoralist without word or sign. Their knees had nearly touched when he drew a revolver and pointed it at his breast, so quickly that there was

hardly time to realise the situation.

'Which—way—are—yer—goin'?'

'Only across the paddock,' was the answer.

'You—come—back—with—me—to—that—buggy.'

By making a slight detour, they came in front of the vehicle, the occupants of which were perfectly unsuspicious of the strange company into which the head of the house had fallen.

Then he suddenly accosted them, levelling the revolver, commanding them to stand, and directing the young gentleman who was driving to jump to the ground. He was famed for his activity, it is said, but the spring made on that occasion, at the bidding of Morgan, beat all former records. The other young gentleman, though of limited colonial experience, was not 'devoid of sense,' as he dropped two five-pound notes from his pocket into a tussock of grass, whence they were afterwards recovered.

After relieving all of their watches and loose cash, the bushranger asked the proprietor whether he had seen any police lately.

'Yes, two had passed.'

'And—you—fed—'em, I expect? I'm half—a—mind—to blow—the bloomin'—wind—through—yer.'

'What am I to do?' queried the perplexed landholder. 'I should feed you if you came by. I can't deny them what I give to every one that passes.'

'D'ye—know—who—I—am?'

'I never met you before, but I can pretty well guess. I've never done you any harm that I know of.' 141

'It's—a—dashed—good—thing—yer—haven't. What's—that—comin'—along the road?'

'The mail coach.'

'How—d'ye—know—that?'

'Well, it comes by every day about this time, and of course I know it.'

'Well—I'm—just—goin'—to—stick—it—up. Don't—yer—tell—no—one—yer—saw—me—to-day—or—it'll—be—a—blamed—sight—worse—for—yer.'

And with this precept and admonition the robber departed, to the infinite relief of all concerned. In a few minutes they heard the pistol shot with which he 'brought-to' the mail-coach.

'Blest if I seen a speck of him till he fired the revolver just over my head,' said the driver afterwards. 'I was that startled I wonder I didn't fall off the box.'

No harm was done on that occasion, save to Her Majesty's mails, and the correspondence of the lieges. My informant gathered up the strewed parcels and torn sheets into a large sack next morning, and forwarded them to the nearest post-office.

In Morgan's whole career there is not recorded one instance of even the spurious generosity which, if it did not redeem, relieved the darkness of other criminal careers. He had apparently not even the craving for companionship, which makes it a necessity with the ordinary brigand to have a 'mate' towards whom, at any rate, he is popularly supposed to exhibit that fidelity which he has forsworn towards his kind. Rarely is it known that Morgan pursued his depredations in concert with any one. He may have had confederates, harbourers he must have had, but not comrades.

He was never known to show mercy or kindness towards women. When they were present at any of his raids, he seems either to have refrained from noticing them or to have derided their fears. There is no record of his having suffered their entreaties to prevail, or to have ceased from violence and outrage at their bidding.

Subtle, savage, and solitary as those beasts of prey which have learned to prefer human flesh, and once having tasted to renounce all other, Morgan lurked amid the wilds, which he had made his home, ever ready for ruffianism or bloodshed—a fiend incarnate—permitted to carry terror and outrage into peaceful homes, until his appointed hour of doom. This was the manner of it. 142

Morgan's Death, told by the Manager.

Peechelbah Station, on the Murray, was a big scattered place, a regular small town. There was the owner's house—a comfortable bungalow, with a verandah all round. He and his family had just come up from town. My cottage was half a mile away. I was the Manager, and could ride or drive from daylight to midnight, or indeed fight, on a pinch, with any man on that side of the country. I was to have gone up to the 'big house' to have spent the evening. But it came on to rain, so I did not go, which was just as well, as matters turned out.

I was writing in my dining-room about nine o'clock when a servant girl from the house came rushing in. 'What's the matter, Mary?' I said, as soon as I saw her face. 'Morgan's stuck up the place,' she half whispered, 'and he's in the house now. He won't let any one leave the room; swore he'd shoot them if they did. But I thought I'd creep out and let you know.'

'You're a good lass,' I said, 'and have done a good night's work, if you never did another. Now, you get back and don't let on you've been away from your cups and saucers. How does he shape?'

'Oh, pretty quiet. Says he won't harm nobody. They're all sitting on the sofa, and he's got his pistols on the table before him.' And back she went.

Here was a pretty kettle of fish! Many things had to be done, so I pulled myself together, and set about to study the proper place for the battle. It was no use trying to rush the house. There were a lot of hands at work on the place and in the men's huts. But in those days you couldn't be sure of half of them. I had a few confidential chaps about, and I intended to trust entirely to them and myself. I was a good man in those days, as I said before.

But here was Morgan in possession—one of the most desperate, bloodthirsty bushrangers that had ever 'turned out' in New South Wales or Victoria. Nothing was surer than, if we made an attempt to besiege the house, he would at once shoot Mr. M'Pherson, and his partner Mr. Telford, who happened to be there with him. 143

So I had to be politic or all would go wrong.

I first thought of the money. For a wonder I had four hundred pounds, in notes, in my desk. I had got them from the bank to buy land, which was to be sold that week. I didn't often do anything so foolish, you may believe, as to keep forty ten-pound notes in a desk.

The next thing, of course, was to 'plant' it. I made it into a parcel, and taking it over to the creek, hid it under the overhanging root of a tree, in a place that Mr. Morgan, unless he was a thought-reader, like the man we had staying here the other night, would not be likely to find.

This done, I sent my body-servant down to the men's hut, to tell them all to come up to my place—that I wanted to give them a glass of grog. Grog, of course, is never allowed to be kept on a station by any one but the proprietor or manager. But I used to give them a treat now and then, so they didn't think it unusual.

I mustered them in my big room and saw they were all there. Every man had his glass of whisky, as I had promised. Then I said: 'Men! There's a d—d fellow here to-night that you've often heard of—perhaps seen. His name's *Morgan*! He's stuck up the big house, with Mr. and Mrs. M'Pherson and the family. Now, listen to me. The police will be up directly. I intend to surround the house. But I don't want any of you fellows to run into danger, d'ye see? It's my order—mind that—that you all stop in here, till you have the word to come out. Antonio!' I said—he had been with me for ten years and was a determined fellow; a sailor from the Spanish main, half-Spanish, half-English, and afraid of nothing in the world—'Antonio, you stand near the door. My orders are that *no one* leaves this room to-night till I tell him. The first man that tries to do so, shoot him, and ask no questions.'

'By ——! I will,' says Antonio, showing his white teeth and a navy revolver.

The men looked queer at this; but they knew Antonio, and they knew me. They had had a glass of grog, besides, and I promised them another by and by. This pacified them; so they brought out some cards and set to at euchre and all-fours. They were safe. I had made up my mind what to do. I never intended Morgan to leave the place alive. I had sent off for the police, and among the men I could trust was a smart fellow named Quinlan, a dead shot and a steady, determined man. He had several times said what a shame it was that a fellow like Morgan should go about terrorising the whole country, and what fools and cowards people were to suffer it. He had his own gun and ammunition, and, when I told him, said he wanted nothing better than to have a slap at him. 144

We weren't so well off for firearms as we might have been, for I had hid a lot of loaded guns in an empty hut, ready to get hold of in case of sudden need. Confound it, if some of the boys hadn't taken them out the day before to go duck-shooting with. However, we rummaged up enough to arm the picked men, and kept watch.

It was a long, long night, but we were so excited and anxious that no one felt weary, much less inclined to sleep. Mr. Telford was in the house with Mr. M'Pherson, and he chaffed Morgan (they told me afterwards) about having his revolvers out in the presence of ladies. However, he couldn't get him to put them away. He was always most suspicious. Never gave a man a chance to close with him. He was well-behaved and civil enough in the house, and, I believe, only wished one of the young ladies to play him a tune or two on the piano. He drank spirits sparingly, and always used to call for an unopened bottle. He was afraid of being poisoned or drugged. Some of his *friends* wouldn't have minded much about that even, as there was a thousand pounds reward for his capture, alive or dead. I have good reason for thinking, however, that one or two of the 'knockabouts' would have given him 'the office,' if we hadn't got them all under hatches, as it were.

Daylight came at last. I've had many a night watching cattle in cold and wet, but none that I was so anxious to end as that. Of course I knew our man wouldn't stop till sunrise. He was too careful, and never took any risks that he could help.

And at last, by George! out he came, and walked down towards the yard where his horse was. I had pretty well considered the line he was likely to take, and was lying down, the men on each side of me, as it happened. But, cunning to the last, he made M'Pherson and Telford come out with him, one on each side, not above a yard away from him. As he passed by us we couldn't have fired without a good chance of shooting one of the other two. So we let him pass—pretty close too. However, when he'd passed Quinlan, the track turned at an angle, which brought him broadside on; it wasn't to say a very long shot, nor yet a very close one. It was a risk, too, for of course if he had been missed, the first thing he'd have done would have been to have shot M'Pherson and Telford before any one could have stopped him. But Quinlan had a fair show as he thought, and let drive, without bothering about too many things at once. That shot settled the business for good and all. His bullet struck Morgan between the shoulders and passed out near his chin. He fell, mortally wounded. In an instant he was rushed and his revolvers taken from him. He lay helpless; the spine had been touched, and he was writhing in his death agony, as better men had done before from his pistol.

The first thing he said was, 'You might have sent a fellow a challenge.' One of the men called out, 'When did you ever do it, you murdering dog?' He never spoke after that, and lived less than two hours.

The police didn't come up in time to do anything; no doubt they would have been ready to help in preventing his escape. But I was only too glad the thing had ended as it did. The news soon got abroad that this man—who had kept the border stations of two colonies in fear and trembling, so to speak, for years—was lying dead at Peechelbah. Before night there were best part of two hundred people on the place. I can't say exactly how much whisky they drank, but the station supply ran out before dark, and it was no foolish one either. 'All's well that ends well,' they say. We've had nobody since who's been such a 'terror' to settlers and travellers. But I don't want to go through such a time again as the night of Morgan's death.

HOW I BECAME A BUTCHER

I was wending my way to Melbourne with a draft of fat cattle in the spring of 1851, when the public-house talk took the unwonted flavour of gold. Gold had 'broken out,' as it was expressed, at a creek a few miles from Buninyong. Gold in lumps! Gold in bushels! All the world was there, except those who were on the road or packing up. A couple of hundred head of fat cattle were not, perhaps, the exact sort of impedimenta to go exploring with on a goldfield, but it was hard to stem the tidal wave, now rolling in unbroken line towards Ballarat. Men agreed that this was the strange new name of the strange new treasure-hold. I incontinently pined for Ballarat. I sold one-half of my drove by the way, purchased a few articles suitable for certain contingencies, and joined the procession; for it was a procession, a caravan, almost a crusade.

The weather had been wet. The roads were deep. Heavy showers, fierce gales, driving sleet made the spring days gloomy, and multiplied delays and disasters. None of these obstacles stayed the ardent pilgrims, whose faith in their golden goal was daily confirmed, stimulated ever by wild reports of luck. The variety of the wayfarers who thronged that highway, broad as the path to destruction, was striking. Sun-tanned bushmen, inured to toil, practised in emergencies, alternated with groups of townspeople, whose fresh complexions and awkward dealings with their new experience stamped them as recruits. Passengers, who had left shipboard but a week since, armed to the teeth, expectant of evil. Mercantile Jack, whose rolling gait and careless energy displayed his calling as clearly as if the name of his ship had been tattooed on his forehead. Other persons whose 147
erect appearance and regular step hinted at pipe-clay. Carts with horses, ponies, mules, donkeys, even men and women, in their shafts. Bullock drays, heavily laden, in which the long teams at fullest stretch of strength were fairly cursed through the slough, to which the army column ahead and around had reduced the road. Bells! bells! bells! everywhere and of every note and inflexion, dog-trucks, wheel-barrows, horsemen, footmen, lent their aid to the extraordinary *mélange* of sights and sounds, mobilised *en route* for Ballarat.

Slowly, 'with painful patience,' as became experienced drovers, we skirted or traversed the pilgrim host. We drove far into the night, until we reached a sequestered camp. A few days of uneventful travelling brought us to the Buninyong Inn. This modest hostelry, amply sufficient for the ordinary traffic of the road, was now filled and overflowed by the roaring flood of wayfarers. The hostess, in daily receipt of profits which a month had not formerly accumulated, was civil but indifferent. 'I *might* get supper,' she dared say, 'but could not guarantee that meal. Her servants were worked off their legs. She wished indeed that there was another inn; she was tired to death of having to provide for such a mob.'

When I heard a licensed victualler giving vent to this unnatural wish, as I could not but regard it, I recognised the case as desperate, and capitulated. I managed to procure a meal in due time, and mingled with the crowd in hope of gaining the information of which I stood in need. My assistants were a white man and a black boy. The former was a small, wiry Englishman, formerly connected with a training stable. He called himself Ben Brace, after a famous steeplechaser which he had trained or strapped. Hard-bitten, hard-reared, mostly on straw and ashplant, as goes the nature of English stable-lads, to Ben early hours or late, foul weather or fair, fasting or feasting were much alike. Of course he drank, but he had enough of the results of the old stable discipline left to restrain himself until after the race was run. I had therefore no feeling of apprehension about his fidelity.

For the time was an exciting one, and had not been without its effects upon all hired labour, though 148
things had not developed in that respect as fully as when a year's success had made gold as common as shells on the seashore. Then, indeed, by no rate of wages could you ensure the effective discharge of the indispensable duties of the road. When every passing traveller who spoke to your stock-riders, or requested a light for a pipe, had nuggets of gold in his pocket, 'or knowed a party as bottomed last week to the tune of £1200 a man,' it was small wonder that, valuable as their services were conceded to be, they should themselves deem them to be invaluable. Independent, insolent, and ridiculously sensitive as drovers became, it became an undertaking perilous and uncertain in the extreme to drive stock to market.

I have seen the only man (beside the proprietor) in charge of three hundred head of fat cattle confronting that sorely-tried squatter, with vinous gravity and sarcastic defiance, as thus—'You s'pose I'm a-goin' to stay out and watch these —— cattle while you're a-sittin' in the public-house eatin' your arrowroot? No. I ain't the cattle dorg. I'm a man! as good as ever you was, and you can go and drive your bloomin' cattle yerself.'

This fellow was in receipt of one pound per diem; his allegations were totally unfounded, as his master had done nearly all the work, and would have done the remainder had the instincts of a large drove of wild cattle permitted. I saw my friend's grey eyes glitter dangerously for a moment as he looked the provoking ruffian full in the face, and advanced a step; then the helplessness of his position smote him, and he made a degradingly civil answer.

I was fortunate in not being likely to be reduced to such destitution. Besides Ben, the black boy Charley Bamber was at exactly the right age to be useful. Of him I felt secure. He was a small imp whom I had once brought away from his tribe in a distant part of the country and essayed to educate and civilise. The education had progressed as far as tolerable reading and writing, a perfect mastery of that 'vulgar tongue' so extensively heard in the waste places of the earth, joined with a ready acquaintance with the Bible and the Church Catechism. He would have taken honours in any Sunday School in Britain. The civilisation, I am bound to admit, was imperfect and

problematical.

But the son of the forest was quick of eye, a sure tracker, and the possessor of a kind of mariner's 149
compass instinct which enabled him to find his way through any country, known or unknown, with ease and precision. He was a first-rate hand with all manner of cattle and horses, when freed from that unexorcised demon, his temper. It was simply fiendish. Bread and butter, shoes and stockings, the language of England and the language of kindness, had left that inheritance untouched. In his paroxysms he would throw himself upon the earth and saw away at his throat with his knife. This instrument being generally blunt, he never succeeded in severing the carotid artery. But he often looked with glaring eyes and distorted features, as if he would have liked in this manner to have settled the vexed question of his creation. Strange as it may appear, the incongruity of his knowledge with his tendencies was to him a matter of wrathful regret. Being reproached one day for bad conduct by the lady to whose untiring lessons he owed his knowledge, he exclaimed, 'I wish you'd never taught me at all. Once, I didn't know I was wicked; now I do, and I'm miserable.' The pony which he always rode, a clever, self-willed scamp like himself, once took him under the branches of a low-growing tree, scratching his face in the process. Lifting the tomahawk which he generally carried, he drove it into the withers of the poor animal. On reaching home he confessed frankly enough, as was his custom, and appeared grieved and penitent. He was sorry enough afterwards, for the fistula which supervened necessitated a tedious washing every morning with soap and water for twelve months. This attention fell to his lot with strict retributive justice, and before a cure was effected he had ample leisure to deplore his rashness. With all his faults he could be most useful when he liked. He was so clever that I could not help feeling a deep interest in him, and during the expedition which I describe he was unusually well-behaved.

Having put the cattle into a secure yard, and seen my retainers comfortably fed and housed, I betook myself to the coffee-room. This apartment was crowded with persons just about to visit, or on their return from visiting, the Wonder of the Age. The conversation was general and unreserved. I was amused at the usual conflict of opinion with regard to the duration, demerits, and destiny of 150
the Australian goldfields.

The elderly and conservative colonists took a depressing view of this new-born irruption of bullion. 'It tended to the confusion of social ranks, to the termination of existing relations between shepherds and squatters, to democracy, demoralisation, and decay. Had other nations, the Spaniards notably, not found the possession of gold-mines in their American colonies a curse rather than a blessing? Would not the standard value of gold coin be reduced? Would not landed property be depreciated, agriculture perish, labour become a tradition, and this fair land be left a prey to ruffianly gold-seekers and unprincipled adventurers? The opposition, composed of the younger men, the 'party of progress,' with a few democrats *enragés*, scoffed at the words of wary commerce or timid capital. 'This was an Anglo-Saxon community. Capacity for self-government had ever been the proud heritage of the race. We had that sober reasoning power, energy, and innate reverence for law which enabled us to successfully administer republics, goldfields, and other complications fatal to weaker families of men. With such a people abundance of gold was not more undesirable than abundance of wheat. Glut of gold! Well, there were many ways of disposing of it. Civilisation developed the need for coin nearly as fast as it was supplied. A sovereign would be a sovereign most likely for our time. Land! The land of course would be sold, cut up into farms for industrious yeomen, and high time too.'

The destiny of our infant nation was not finally settled when I slipped out. I had mastered two facts, however, which were to me at that time more immediately interesting than the rise of nations and the fall of gold. These were the increasing yields at Ballarat, and that, as yet, the diggers were living wholly on mutton, of which they were excessively tired.

Long before daylight we were feeding our horses and taking a meal, so precautionary in its nature that (more especially in Charley's case) the question of dinner might safely be entrusted to the future. With just light enough to distinguish the white-stemmed gums which stood ghostly in the chill dawn, we left the sleeping herd of prospectors and politicians and prepared for a day of doubt and adventure.

Silent and cold, we stumbled and jogged along, something after the fashion of Lord Scamperdale 151
going to meet the hounds in the next county, for an hour or two. Then the sun began to cheer the sodden landscape, the birds chirped, the cattle put their heads down, life's mercury rose.

We had reached the historic Yuille's Creek, upon the bank of which the great gold city now stands. Then it was like any other 'wash-up creek'—a mimic river in winter, a chain of muddy water-holes in summer. As I looked at the eager waters, yellow with the clay in solution, as if the great metal had lent the wave its own hue, I felt like Sinbad approaching the valley of diamonds, and almost expected to break my shins against lumps of gold and silver. I determined to advance and reconnoitre; so, leaving Ben and Charley to feed and cherish the cattle until my return, I put spurs to old Hope, and headed up the water at a more cheerful pace than we had known since daylight. I turned the spur of a ridge which came low upon the meadows of the streamlet. I heard a confused murmuring sound, the subdued 'voice of a vast congregation,' combined with a noise as of a multitude of steam mills. I rounded the cape, and, pulling up my horse, stared in wonder and excitement upon the strange scene which burst in suddenness upon me.

On a small meadow, and upon the slopes which rose gently from it, were massed nearly twenty thousand men. They were, with few exceptions, working more earnestly, more absorbingly, more silently than any body of labourers I had ever seen. They were delving, carrying heavy loads, filling and emptying buckets, washing the ore in thousands of cradles, which occupied every yard and foot of the creek, in which men stood waist-deep. Long streets and alleys of tents and shanties

constituted a kind of township, where flaunting flags of all colours denoted stores and shops, and St. George's banner, hanging proudly unfurled, told that the majesty of the law, order, and the government was administered by Commissioners and supported by policemen.

I rode among the toilers, amid whom I soon found friends and acquaintances. On every side was evidence of the magical richness of the deposit. Nuggets were handed about with a careless confidence which denoted the easy circumstances of the owners. The famous 'Jeweller's Point' was 152
just yielding its 'untold gold,' and one sanguine individual did not overstate the case when he assured me they were 'turning it up like potatoes.' I ascertained that, with the exception of an occasional quarter from an adjoining station, the grand army was ignorant of the taste of beef, that mutton was beginning to be accounted monotonous fare, and that he who reintroduced the diggers to steaks and sirloins would be hailed as a benefactor and paid like a governor-general.

Having ascertained that this society, in which no trade was unrepresented, contained several butchers, I presented myself to these distributors, my natural enemies. I found that the abnormal conditions among which we moved had by no means lessened our antagonism. We did battle as of old. They decried the quality of my cattle, and affected to ignore the popular necessity for beef. Thinking that I was compelled to accept their ruling, they declined to buy except at a low price. I retired full of wrath and resolve.

Had I come these many leagues to be a prey to shallow greed and cunning? Not so, by St. Hubert! Sooner than take so miserable a price for my weary days and watchful nights, I would turn butcher myself. Ha! happy thought! Why not? There was no moral declension in becoming a butcher, at least temporarily; all one's morale here was *bouleversé*. 'Tis done. 'I will turn the flank of these knaves. Henceforth I also am a butcher. Chops and steaks! No! steaks only! Families supplied. Ha! ha!'

I returned to the cattle, which I found much refreshed by the creek side. We drove them to the bank of the great Wendouree Lake, then a shallow, reedy marsh, made a brush yard, established ourselves in the lee of a huge fallen gum, and passed cheerfully enough our first night at Ballarat.

Next morning I commenced the campaign of competition with decision. I gave Charley a lecture of considerable length upon his general deportment, and the particular duties which had now devolved upon him. He was to look after or 'tail' the cattle daily by the side of the lake; to abstain from opossum hunts and other snares of the evil one; to look out that wicked men, of whom this place was choke-full, did not steal the cattle; to rest his pony, Jackdaw, whenever he could safely; and always to bring his cattle home at sundown. If he did all these things, and was generally a good 153
boy, I would give him a cow, from the profit of whose progeny he would very likely become a rich man, when we got back to Squattlesea Mere. He promised to abandon all his sins on the spot. As the cattle stood patiently expectant by the rails, I sent a bullet into the 'curl' of the forehead of a big rough bullock. The rest of the drove moved out with small excitement, and the first act was over.

We flayed and quartered our bullock 'upon the hide,' a 'gallows' being a luxury to which, like uncivilised nations, we had not attained.

I chose a location for a shop in a central position among the tented streets, being chiefly attracted thereto by a large stump, which was a—ahem—butcher's block ready made, divided our animal into more available portions, and with modest confidence awaited 'a share of the public patronage.'

At first trade was slack—the sun became powerful—the flies arrived in myriads—a slight reactionary despondency set in—when lo! a customer, a bronzed and bearded digger. I think I see his jolly face now. 'Hullo, mate! got some beef? Blowed if I didn't think all the cattle was dead! We're that tired of mutton—well, I ain't got much time to stand yarnin'. Give us a bit now, though. Thirty pound—that'll do. Here's a sov'ring. Good-bye.'

Myself.—'Tell the other fellows, will you?'

'All right. Won't want much tellin',' shouted my friend, far on his way.

My soul was comforted. It was the turn of the tide. Another and another came who lusted for the muscle-forming food. Towards evening the news was general that there was 'beef in Ballarat.' The tide flowed and rose until the last ounce of the brindled bullock had vanished, and I was left the owner of a bag of coin weighty and imposing as the purse of a Cadi.

'My word, sir, we'll have to kill two to-morrow,' quoth Ben, 'if this goes on; and however shall we manage to cut 'em up and sell too?'

'Well, we'll see,' said I confidently; 'something will turn up.'

As we returned to our depôt by Wendouree, we met by the wayside a middle-aged man sitting on a log in a despondent mood. He was the only man I had yet seen at Ballarat who was not full of hope 154
and energy. I was curious enough to disturb his reverie.

'What's the matter?' said I. 'Have you lost your horse, or your wife, or has the bottom of your claim tumbled out, that you look so down on your luck?'

'Well, master, it ain't quite so bad as all that, but it isn't so easy to get on here without money or work, and I was just a-thinkin' about going back to Geelong.'

'I should have thought every one could have got work here, by the look of things.'

'Well, a many do, but I am not much with pick and shovel. I'm gettin' old now, and I can't a-bear cookin'. Now, I was as comfortable as could be in Geelong, a-workin' steady at my trade. I was just a-thinkin' what a fool I was to come away, surelye!'

'What is your trade?'

'Well, master, I'm a butcher!'

There *must* be good angels. One doubts sometimes. But how otherwise could this man, an unimaginative Englishman, lately arrived, not easy of adaptation to strange surroundings, have been conveyed to this precise spot, *planté là*, that I might stumble against him in my need? I could have clasped him in my arms.

But I said, with assumed indifference, 'Well, I want a man for a week or two to do slaughtering. You can have five shillings a day, and come home with us now, if you like.'

'Thank ye, master, that I'll do, and main thankful I be.'

When we reached the fallen tree, which, like a South Sea cocoa-palm, supplied nearly all our wants (being fuel, fireplace, house, furniture, and one side of our stock-yard), the cattle were in, the camp kettle was boiling, and Charley, standing proudly by the fire, received my congratulations. Our professional comforted himself internally. We regarded the past with satisfaction and the future with hope, and were soon restoring our taxed energies with unbroken slumber.

Next day we slew two kine, ably assisted by our new man, who, however, looked rather blank at the absence of so many trade accessories. Our bough-constructed 'shop' on the flat became a place of fashionable resort, and the conversion of cows into coin became easy and methodical. Having real work to do, I donned suitable garments, and as I stood forth in blue serge and jack-boots, wielding 155
my blood-stained axe or gory knife, few of the busy diggers doubted my having been bred to the craft. One or two jokes sprang from this slight misapprehension.

'Ah! if you was at 'ome now, and 'ad yer big cleaver, yer'd knock it off smarter, wouldn't yer now?' This was a criticism upon my repeated attempts to sever an obstinate bone with a gapped American axe.

On the first day of my butcherhood I had bethought me of the cuisine of my old friend the Commissioner, which I essayed to improve by the gift of a sirloin. Placing the exotic in a gunny-bag, I rode up to the camp, and said to the blue-coated warder, 'Take this joint of beef to Mr. Sturt with my compliments.' I had no sooner completed the sentence than I saw an expression upon the face of the man-at-arms which reminded me of my condition in life. Gazing at me with supercilious surprise, he called languidly to a brother gendarme, 'Jones, take this here to the Commissioner with the *butcher's* compliments!' For one moment I looked 'cells and contempt of court' at the obtuse myrmidon who failed to recognize the disguised magistrate; but the humour of the incident presenting itself, I burst into a fit of laughter which further mystified him, and departed.

I was now settled in business. I diverted a large share of the trade previously monopolised by my rivals, who now bitterly regretted not having disposed of me by purchase. Every night I went up to the Government camp with my bag of coin, which I delivered over for safe keeping. As many friends were located there, with them I generally spent my evenings, which were of a joyous and sociable character. The conditions were favourable. Most of us were young; we were all making money tolerably fast, with the agreeable probability, for some time to come, of making it even faster.

The exodus from Melbourne was exhaustive. There, daily to be seen in red shirt and thick but very neat boots, stood the handsome doctor of 'our street' by the cradle, for which he had abandoned patients and practice. Next to him, with constant care lowering the ever-recurring shaft-bucket, was a rising barrister. Hotel servants, tradespeople, farmers, market-gardeners, civilians, cab-drivers, barbers, even the tragic and the comic muse, had enrolled themselves among the players at 156
this theatre, where the popular drama of 'Golden Hazard' was having a run till further notice. The ranks of the 50th Regiment were thinned by desertions in spite of the utmost vigilance; while the ships in the bay were likely to be reduced to the condition of the world's fleet in Campbell's *Last Man*.

Pitiable the while was the position of the squatters, especially of those who held sheep. On a cattle station the proprietor or manager, with the assistance of a boy or two, can do much. It is not so with sheep. Particularly was it not so in those pre-fencing days. In vain the sheep-owner doubles his men's wages and removes apparent discontent. He tries to think that matters will go on pretty well till shearing. One night comes a traveller, a wretch with a bag of gold. Next morning a shepherd is missing, and so on.

We gave a little *festa* one evening in honour of a friend who had sold his share in the claim and wisely gone back to follow his profession in town. The conversation had a philosophical turn, and it was debated whether or no the country would come well out of the ordeal to which, particularly on account of its uneducated classes, it was being subjected. Some one expressed an opinion adverse to the result upon national morality and progress.

'I hold a directly opposite conviction,' said Jack Freshland. 'So do all the men who, like me, have seen order produced from chaos in California. "Scum of the universe" was a complimentary description of her population. "Hell upon earth" was a weak metaphor explanatory of her social state. Look at her now—self-regenerate, orderly, honestly progressive in every phase of industry. I don't say that you run no chance of being shot; accidents will happen when fellows' belts and coat pockets are full of loaded revolvers, whisky being cheap. But you run far less chance of being robbed than in London or Paris. When I came away you might leave your valuables scattered about your tent for days. No one dared to touch them. I don't know whether we shall come to ear-marking pilferers and hanging horse-stealers, but this is an Anglo-Saxon population, and in some way, I will stake my existence, order will be preserved.'

'Talking of horse-stealers, I found Fred Charbett's "Grey Surrey" the other day,' said Moore 157
O'Donnell, 'in rather queer company.'

'That's the horse he won the Ladies' Bag at the Port Western Races with,' I cried out eagerly, 'a tremendous mile horse, but no stayer. Had he a large D brand?'

'He had then; and a large S—if that stands for sore back—that ye could see a mile off.'

'He is a flat-ribbed horse,' I explained, 'and any one with a bad saddle might give him a back in a day that a week couldn't cure. How glad old Fred will be to see him again! Who is the ruffian that has him now?'

'One Moore O'Donnell. Maybe ye wouldn't mind putting your interrogation in another form, Mr. Boldrewood, if it's agreeable to ye?'

'A thousand pardons, really—but I didn't understand that you had taken possession of him.'

We all laughed at this, and Jack Freshland said, 'Come, Moore, you old humbug, tell us how you stole the poor fellow's horse. It's all very well for Boldrewood to back you up with his alphabetical evidence. I don't believe half of it. You'll be up before the beak if you don't mind.'

'Give me the laste drop of that whisky,' said O'Donnell, stretching his long legs, 'and I'll tell you all how I compounded a felony, for there is the laste flavour of *that* about the transaction. I was mooning about looking for old "Paleface," when, after a great walk, I came upon the villain in company with a strange grey, also in hobbles. You know what a hot brute mine is: the stranger was about the same. Neither would dream of allowing me to catch him. So, after a long chase, I arrived at home, exhausted and demoralised, with just sufficient strength left to put them into the bullock yard. I refreshed myself from the whisky-jar, and after lunch and a smoke, feeling better, I strolled out to look at the grey. I thought we had been introduced. Of course, there he was, the great Surrey, no less. The last time we met, I had seen a sheet pulled off with pride by a neat groom, just before Fred took him down to the races. Here he was, dog-poor, rough-coated, and with a back fit to make one sick; D on the shoulder, 2B under the mane. Identification complete. "Such is life," thought I. "Just as one's in fine hard condition, with all the world before you, and lots of money and friends, you get stolen, or come to grief, grass-feeding, and an incurable sore back!"' 158

'Rather a mixed metaphor, if I may be allowed a friendly criticism,' said a dark-haired, quiet youngster named Weston, who had been reading for the bar 'before the gold,' as people distinguished the former and the latter days. 'I don't quite follow who lost the money, or did you or the horse suffer from the sore back?'

'Go to blazes with your special pleading,' shouted O'Donnell. 'Can't a man make the smallest moral reflection among ye, a lot of profligate divils, but he must be fixed to logical exactness, as if he was up for his "little go"? Ye've no poetry in ye, Weston, divil a bit. It's a fatal defect at the bar. Take my advice in time, or I wash my hands of your future prospects. And now hear me out, or I'll stop, and the secret will be buried with me.'

'Go on, Moore; you won't be the last of your line, will you?'

'How do you know, sir? None of your Saxon sneers. The O'Donnell! Ha! ye villain, I'm up to you this time. Next day, as big a ruffian as ever ye seen came up to the tent and asked me "what I meant by stealin' a poor man's 'oss." "See here now," says I, "the stealing's all the other way, it strikes me. He belongs to a friend of mine, who would never have sold him. He may have strayed and got into pound, and you may have bought him out, or you may—pardon me—have stolen him yourself."

'"I bought him off Jem Baggs, as got him out of Burnbank Pound," replied he doggedly.

'"That may be true. I think not, myself. This is what I am going to do. The horse is in my possession, and there he will remain. You can either take him, if you are man enough (and I pointed this remark with the butt of my revolver), or you can summon me before the Bench, or take this £5 note for your claim. Which will you do?" He held out his dirty paw for the fiver with a grin, as he said, "All right, you can 'ave 'im for the fiver. He ain't much in a cart, anyhow."'

'Hurrah!' sung out half-a-dozen voices together. 'How glad old Fred will be to see him again. What did you do with him? Hasn't Bill Sikes re-stolen him yet?'

'I sent him back by a stock-rider next day. He is safe at "The Gums" by this time. I'm dry, though. 159
You wouldn't think it, now! Pass the whisky.'

'I say,' said Maxwell, 'there's a feller which is a poet in this company. Wasn't that a ballad, Aubrey, that you pulled out of your pocket just now, among all those tailors' bills, or licences, or whatever they were? Let's have it.'

This was addressed to a fair-haired youngster who was arguing with great interest and eagerness the relative fattening merits of shorthorns and Herefords.

'Well, it's something in the scribbling line. If you want it, you must read it though; I'll be hanged if I will. Writing it has been quite bother enough.'

'Well,' said Maxwell, 'it's not every fellow who can read, or spell either, for the matter of that. I'll read it myself, sir; perhaps you may find the effect heightened. Now listen, you fellows; a little sentiment won't do none of us any harm. What's it called? H—m!

A VISION OF GOLD

'I see a lone stream rolling down
Through valleys green, by ridges brown,
Of hills that bear no name;
The dawn's full blush in crimson flakes
Is traced on palest blue, as breaks
The morn in orient flame.

'I see—whence comes that eager gaze?
Why rein the steed in wild amaze?
The water's hue is gold;
Golden its wavelets foam and glide
Through tenderest green—to ocean-tide
The fairy streamlet rolled.

'Forward, Hope, forward! truest steed,
Of tireless hoof and desert speed,
Up the weird water bound,
Till echoing far and sounding deep,
I hear old Ocean's hoarse voice sweep
O'er this enchanted ground.

'The sea! Wild fancy! Many a mile
Of changeful Nature's frown and smile,
Ere stand we on the shore;
And yet that murmur, hoarse and deep,
None save the ocean surges keep—
It is the cradles' roar!

'Onward! I pass the grassy hill
Around whose base the waters still
Shimmer in golden foam,
Oh! wanderer of the voiceless wild,
Of this far southern land the child,
How changed thy quiet home!

'For, close as bees in countless hive,
Like emmet-hosts that tireless strive,
Swarmed, toiled, a vast strange crowd;
Haggard each face's features seem,
Bright, fever-bright, each eye's wild gleam;
Nor cry, nor accent loud.

'But each man delved, or rocked, or bore
As if salvation with the ore
Of the mine-monarch lay;
Gold strung each arm to giant might,
Gold flashed before the aching sight,
Gold turned the night to day.

'Where Eblis reigns o'er boundless gloom,
And in his halls of endless doom
Lost souls for ever roam,
They wander (says the Eastern tale),
Nor ever startles moan or wail
Despair's eternal home.

'Less silent scarce than that pale host,
They toiled as if each moment lost
Were the red life-drop spilt;
While heavy, rough, and darkly bright,
In every shape rolled to the light
Man's hope, and pride, and guilt.

'All ranks, all ages, every land
Had sent her conscripts forth to stand
In the gold-seekers' rank;
The bushman, bronzed, with sinewy limb,
The pale-faced son of trade, e'en him
Who knew the fetters' clank.

* * * * *

'Tis night; her jewelled mantle fills
The busy valley, the dun hills,
'Tis a battle-host's repose;

'Tis a battle-host's repose,
A thousand watch-fires redly gleam,
Where ceaseless fusillades would seem
To warn approaching foes.

'The night is older. On the sward
Stretched, I behold the heavens broad
When, a Shape rises dim;
Then clearer, fuller, I descry
By the swart brow, the star-bright eye,
The gnome king's presence grim.

'He stands upon a time-worn block; 161
His dark form shrouds the snowy rock,
As cypress marble tomb;
Nor fierce, yet wild and sad his mien,
His cloud-black tresses wave and stream,
His deep tones break the gloom.

'"Son of a tribe accurst, of those
Whose greed has broken our repose
Of the long ages dead;
Think not for naught our ancient race
Quit olden haunts, the sacred place
Of toils for ever fled.

'"List while I tell of days to come,
When men shall wish the hammers dumb
That ring so ceaseless now—
That every arm were palsy-tied,
Nor ever wet on grey hillside
Was the gold-seeker's brow.

'"I see the old world's human tide
Set southward on the Ocean wide,
I see a wood of masts;
While crime and want, disease and death,
By rolling wave and storm-wind's breath
Are on these fair shores cast.

'"I see the murderer's barrel gleam,
I hear the victim's hopeless scream
Ring through these sylvan wastes:
While each base son of elder lands,
Each witless dastard, in vast bands,
To the gold city hastes.

'"Disease shall claim her ready toll,
Flushed vice and brutal crime the dole
Of life shall ne'er deny;
Disease and death shall walk your streets,
While staggering idiocy greets
The horror-stricken eye!

'"All men shall roll in the gold mire,
The height, the depth, of man's desire,
Till come the famine years;
Then all the land shall curse the day
When first they rifled the dull clay,
With deep remorseful tears.

'"Fell want shall wake to fearful life
The fettered demons; civil strife
Rears high a gory hand;
I see a blood-splashed barricade,
While dimly lights the twilight glade
The soldier's flashing brand.

'"But thou, son of the forest free! 162
Thou art not, wert not foe to me,
Frank tamer of the wild!
Thou hast not sought the sunless home
Where darkly delves the toiling gnome,
The mid-earth's swarthy child.

'"Then be thou ever, as of yore,
A dweller in the woods and o'er
Fresh plains thy herds shall roam;

Fresh plains thy herds shall roam;
Join not the vain and reckless crowd,
Who swell the city's pageant proud,
But prize thy forest home."

'He said; and with an eldritch scream
The gnome king vanished, and my dream—
Day's waking hour returned.
Yet still the wild tones echoed clear,
Half chimed with truth in reason's ear,
And my heart inly burned!'

'Well done, Maxwell, old fellow; didn't think you could read so well! I haven't been asleep above two or three times. I enjoyed it awfully. Particular down on us. Your underground friend, though, prophesies war, famine, and mixed immigration! Cheerful cuss!'

'Mr. Aubrey, will ye oblige me by coming before the curtain. It's proud I am to know ye. I have seen worse, sir, let me tell ye, in the pages of the *Dublin University Magazine*, where the name of Moore O'Donnell is not entirely unknown. I would like to repate to ye a short ode of my own on——'

'Rush oh! at Cockfighter's Flat,' burst in a new man—Markham—impetuously. 'That's all the talk now, my boys! They say the gold's thicker than the wash, shallow sinking, and lots of water. Jackson just told me; he's off there to-morrow to buy gold and go to Melbourne with it. I'm away, then. Any of you chaps join me?'

'I don't mind taking a look,' said Maxwell. 'I've half a mind to turn gold-buyer myself. It's a paying game.'

'It's an awfully risky one,' said Freshland. 'A man takes his life in his hand once he's known to carry gold. I know a fellow who started from here for Melbourne a fortnight since, and has never turned up.'

'Perhaps he's bolted,' suggested a cynic.

'Perhaps so,' answered Freshland carelessly; 'but if so, his wife, from her looks, they tell me, is not in the secret. I'm afraid it's the old story,' continued he, gazing mournfully into space. 'I know well how it's done. I can see it all as I sit here. A fellow goes stepping along the road through the Black Forest, whistling cheerfully and thinking of the ounces he has in his belt, or of what has gone down by the escort, of a piano for his wife, of the children who will have grown so, of the pleasant Christmas they will spend together, when, just where the creek crosses the road, One-eyed Dick and Derwent Bill step suddenly out.' 163

'"Morning, mates," says he, "fine weather after the rain."

'"Thundering fine," growls the one-eyed ruffian. "This yere's a fine day for *us*, anyhow. Done well at the Point, young chap?" As they talk they attempt grim jocularity, but their eyes, cold, sinister, watchful, betray their intent as they close upon him.

'"For the love of God, for my wife and children's sake, spare my life!" gasps the poor fellow; "you shall have every shilling I have in the world."

'"We ain't a-going to hurt ye. Just come off the road a bit, will yer?" says the crafty brute. Pah! I can't bear to think of it. Next summer some bullock-driver finds a skeleton lashed to a tree, in the thickest part of the scrub.'

'I say, Freshland,' I pleaded, 'don't. I've got a couple of miles to walk in the dark to-night. I think I'd rather hear that kind of story by daylight. But I must be off now. We tradesmen, you know! Good-bye.'

I walked back through scattered tents and darksome trees, moaning in the midnight, as the breeze swept through them. I was unable to banish Freshland's horrible tale from my mind, and was decidedly relieved when the yard of our encampment loomed into view. The cattle were lying down, Ben was smoking his pipe on guard, all was safe. Murderers and burglars were exercising their talents elsewhere. I was soon in a land where the mystery of permitted evil troubled me not.

My career at Ballarat was, however, drawing to a close. While we were transacting our *al fresco* breakfast, a 'real butcher' made his appearance with proposals for the purchase of my remaining cattle, and the collateral advantages of stock-in-trade, plant, and goodwill. 'Why had I not come to him in the first instance?' he asked with good-humoured surprise. Some accident had prevented me hearing of him. Mr. Garth laughed, and said he was in a small way compared to the others, with whom I had disagreed. I may say here, that it would be hard to pass through the populous, wealthy, energetic city of Ballarat now, without hearing much about Mr. Garth, owner of farms, mills, hotels, mining companies, what not. 164

I was pleased with his frank, liberal way of dealing, and augured favourably of his future career. He was the ideal purchaser, at any rate. He adopted, without a word of dissent, my prices, terms, and conditions.

With the conclusion of breakfast the whole affair was arranged. The cattle-edifices, tools of trade, and journeyman butcher were delivered as per agreement; Charley was sent for the horses, Ben was ordered to pack, the route was given, and in an hour we had turned our backs upon Ballarat.

I sent Ben and Charley back to the station, presenting the former with a coveted brown filly, and the latter with a white cow, as good-conduct badges. They reached home safely, after a journey of a

couple of hundred miles, a 'big drink' indulged in by Master Ben on the road notwithstanding.

For myself, I went to Melbourne, having business in that deserted village. I had much difficulty in getting my hair cut, by the only surviving barber. The site of my shanty and block now trembles under the traffic of a busy street. The 'lost camp' at Wendouree Lake is valuable suburban property. Steamers run there. Why did I not buy it? If I had taken that, and one or two other trifling long shots, I might have been living in London like Maxwell, or in Paris like Freshland, if a stray Prussian bullet has not interfered with his matchless digestion. However, why regret these or any seeming errors of the past? They are but a few more added to the roll of opportunities, gone with our heedless youth, and with the hours of that 'distant Paradise,' lost for evermore.

MOONLIGHTING ON THE MACQUARIE

There are different kinds of work connected with the management of cattle-stations in the far bush of New South Wales. Some of them strike the stranger as being curious. At any rate, most people have not heard of them before, or if they have, don't know much. Something depends upon *finding* the cattle which you are required to manage. Didn't Mrs. Glass say, before yarning about hare soup, 'First catch your hare'? Right she was! If you'll come with me to the Wilgah brakes, 'Hell's Cages,' and 'Devil's Snuff-boxes' of the Lower Macquarie, you will see the pull of the 'first catch' arrangement. Don't suppose for a moment that ours is a neglected herd. If you were to see the stud animals—chiefly Devons and Herefords, for we found that the 'active reds' could pace out many a mile from the frontage in a dry season, and be back at their watering-place while a soft shorthorn would be thinking about it, and, of course, losing flesh. As I was saying, if you saw our 'Whitefaces' and 'Devon Dumplings,' you wouldn't think that. But those M'Warrigals, that we bought the place from long ago, were careless beggars; thought more of their neighbours' calves—some people say—than minding their own business and doing their proper station work. Now the back of the run is scrubby in parts, and the cattle there are 'outlaws' that increase and multiply. They get joined by other refugees and breakaways—brutes with no principle whatever. We seldom see them, as they have got a nasty habit of feeding at night, like tigers and lions and other wild animals. When we do see them—by day—they break away, scatter, and charge. All the horses and dogs in the country wouldn't get them.

What are we to do? There are some famous bullocks among them—rather coarse, perhaps, but rolling fat—ugly with fat, as the stock-riders say. And as cattle are a first-class price just now, and the feed grand all the way to market, there's no use talking; we must have a shy at them. It won't do for me, a native-born Australian, and manager of my father's best cattle-station, to be beaten by anything that ever wore a hide. Have 'em we must. The new paddock is just finished. We are going to muster the other side of the run—the quiet side—the day after to-morrow, and if we can make a good haul out of these 'scrub danglers' we shall have together as fine a lot of fat cattle as ever left the Macquarie.

And how are we going to do it? There are half-a-dozen as good hands on this Milgai Run, including the black boys Johnny Smoker and Gundai, as ever rode stock-horse or followed a beast. And yet, if we rode after this lot for a month we shouldn't get more than a couple of dozen, tear our clothes to rags, stake our horses, and get knocked off in the Wilgah scrubs—after all get next to no cattle—that's what I look at. Still, there is a way—and only one way—that we may fetch 'em by, and perhaps in one night. I'm going to tell you about it. We must *moonlight* 'em.

It is a strange thing—and I've no doubt it was found out by some rascally 'duffer,' some cattle-stealing brute that went poking about after his neighbours' calves (but the amount of cleverness *they* show when it's 'on the cross,' no man would believe, unless he knew it from experience)—it's a strange thing that wild cattle are twice, ten times, as easy to drive by night as they are by day. Whether they are afraid—like children—whether they can't see so well, or what it is, I don't know. But every old stock-rider will tell you that all cattle, particularly wild ones, are much easier to handle by night than by day. Another reason is, they go out a long way into the open plains to feed at night. Whereas by day they lie in their scrubs like rabbits near a hole, and directly they hear a whip, or a voice, or a stick crack almost, they're off like a lot of deer. Not that I ever saw any; but one thinks about the red deer listening and then popping into fern-brakes and heather-glens. Perhaps I shall see *them* some day, who knows, if cattle keep up?

Well, we had to wait for a day or two, till the moon rose, about ten o'clock. When the moon rises soon after dusk, they keep about the edge of the timber, and are ready to dash back directly they see or hear any one. But when it's dark for some hours before the moon rises, they'll go out far into the plains and feed as steadily as milkers.

Well, we sent word to our neighbours and mustered up about twenty men. We went into the timber at sundown, near a point where we thought they wouldn't come out, and hobbled our horses. We had brought something to eat with us, and made a billy of tea; and after we lit our pipes, it was jolly enough. My stock-rider, Joe Barker, was one of the smartest riders and best hands with cattle on the river, but, as is sometimes the case with good men and good horses, he had a queer temper. I wanted him to bring his old favourite, Yass Paddy, as good and sure a stock-horse as ever heard a whip. But no, he must bring a new mount that he'd run out of the wild mob!—a good one to go and to look at, but the biggest tiger I ever saw saddled. Joe was put out about something, and I didn't like to cross him. A stock-rider is a bad servant to quarrel with, unless all your run is fenced, or very open. Besides, with his riding, a donkey would have been 'there or thereabouts.'

So we sat and talked, and smoked, and looked about for an hour or two. At last the time came. We pouched our pipes, saddled up, and headed for the plains, making a point for a few trees a good way out, near where the lot we were after often fed. We didn't talk much, but rode far from one another, so as to have a better chance of seeing them. At last Gundai rode up alongside me, and pointed ahead. I looked and saw something dark, which seemed to change line. There were no Indians, no wolves, no buffaloes, in our part of the world. It might have been horses, of course, but we were soon near enough to see tails—not horses'—and a big mob too. Cattle, by Jove! and the heaviest lot we have seen together since the general muster, many years since, just after we bought the station. 'All right, boys! we're in for a good thing.' They were, of course, scattered, feeding about, looking as quiet as store cattle. The regular thing to do was, of course, known to most of us. A couple of the smartest riders must start to 'wheel' them, one on each side. Charley Dickson and the black boy, Gundai, were told off. You couldn't lick Charley, and Gundai was the most reckless

young devil to ride that ever broke down a stock-horse. But just at this pinch we want 'em to be pretty quick. Never mind about horses' legs, we look to them afterwards. Off they go like mad Arabs. You can see the dust and dry grass sent up by Gundai's horse's hoofs, like a small steam-engine. We hear the rolling gallop of the heavy bullocks, as the big mob of cattle all raise their heads and make off in a long trailing string—like a lot of buffaloes—directly they hear the first horse. We ride steadily up in line, so as to intercept them in the rush they will be sure to make back towards the scrub. In the meanwhile Charley and Gundai have raced to the two ends of the string, and are ringing and wheeling, and doubling them up together, till the mob is regularly bothered.

Then we go at them, still in well-kept line, and at whichever point a beast tries to 'break' he finds a horseman ready to 'block' him. There is no shouting, whip-cracking, or flash work generally. The great thing is to ride like ten men and be always ready to head or stop a breaking beast, which can be done at night by only showing yourself. No row or nonsense; it only makes the cattle worse. Always be in your own place, and do your work without crossing any one else's line; that's the only way with cattle. Of course we don't mind their running a little wide as long as they are heading out into the plains, and not back towards their scrub forts and hiding-places. So we let them trot a bit, keeping one man ahead to stop them if they get too fast, as they might get winded, and then charge and have to be left on the plains. We keep steadily behind them, while they are streaming out well towards the middle of the plain, and in a direction that by a little judicious 'edging' will land them at the Milgai stock-yard.

Of course there are well-known incorrigibles that have escaped many a muster, and will be sure to try it on now. 'There goes the grey-faced bullock. Look out! Look out!' shouts a stock-rider, as an enormous red bullock, with a speckled Hereford face, turns deliberately round, and, breaking through the line of horsemen, makes straight for 'Hell's Cage.'

I am riding Wallaroo, the best stock-horse on the river—at least that is my belief and opinion. I race at him, and we go neck and neck together for a hundred yards, at a pace that would win the Hack Stakes at a country meeting. Wallaroo's shoulder is jammed against the bullock, his head just behind the brute's great horns. At the batt Greyface is going, of course, he is occasionally on the balance. As I rush the game little horse against him, again and again, I can feel his huge bulk tremble and shake. I am too near for him to horn me, unless he had time to stop and turn, which, of course, I take care that he has not. After a while he edges round a bit, then a little more, then he sees the cattle and makes straight for them as they are moving past in the original direction in front of him. I slacken pace for an instant, and as I do so, drop the twelve foot stockwhip on to him with a right and left, which sends him right up among the tail cattle. He breaks no more for a while, and we are getting on pretty well. We know our direction now. Some of the cattle have got rather blown, and their tongues are out. We round them up, and let them stand for a bit to recover breath. 169

Off we go again. Can't stay here all night. They can run for miles in the scrub, and why not now? Much more steady this time. Begin to give it up. 'Hullo, what's that?' 'The brindled leader has doubled on us this time.' This was another regular outlaw. He was called 'Leader' because he was never far from the two or three foremost cattle wherever he was. Many a camp had he been on. Many a man had had a turn at him. But the inside of a yard he hadn't seen for years. He generally waited till the mob had gone some distance; when he did turn there was no stopping him. Joe Barker to-day must have a try at him. Away he went. His horse had not been behaving quite the fair thing, and Master Joe was in a great rage accordingly. Away he went, as I said, driving his spurs into the horse, and nearly jumping on to the brindled bullock's back, when he caught him up. He flogged for a bit without trying to turn him, and no man in these parts could use a whip with Joe Barker; he always had it in great order, oiled and lissom, with first-rate hide fall, and the exact thing in crackers. As the whip rose and fell, every cut marking itself in blood on the brindle's quarters, we all knew that he hadn't had such a scarifying for years, if he ever had. This was only to let him taste what the whip, in Joe's hands, was like. He knew, bless you, that it was no good to try and turn 'Leader' at first. After he'd smarted him enough, he went broadside on, and let him have it about the near side of his face. He could sit on his horse at a hard gallop and flay a beast alive. After a bit the brindle began to feel it hot. He turned and made a dangerous rush at Joe. It wasn't so easy to get away as you'd think, because the horse was partly sulky, and had it taken out of him a good deal. We had stopped the cattle, and were looking at the fun. He did get away, however, and flogged that bullock over the face and eyes until he was more than half blinded. Then he turned again and made for the scrub. At him, broadside on, went Joe, still flogging to the inch—forward, backward, every way, all on the near side, till the brindle could stand it no longer. He sidled and sidled away; lastly, he turned right round, and, as soon as he saw the cattle again, made for them like a milker's calf, Joe following up and warming him all the way in. 170

The fight wasn't over though, for Joe had been punishing his horse for being awkward, and the horse's sides and the bullock's back must have been all of one colour if we could have seen. I mentioned that Joe Barker had the devil's own temper; it carried him too far this time. The horse was a sour, peculiar animal, partly nervous, partly determined, as all the worst buck-jumpers, and what people call vicious horses, are. There are very few really vicious horses. Half of it is ignorance or stupidity on the part of the horse or his rider—generally the last, sometimes both. In this case I think there *was* vice. At the last few strides, as Mr. Leader, regularly blown and bullied, was dashing into the tail cattle, with the intention of working up to the front as usual, Joe gave his horse two or three tremendous drives with the spurs, standing up and letting him have them right. He then brought the double of the whip down over his head, swearing at him for the sulkiest brute he had ever crossed. It wasn't proper treatment for any horse, but he was beside himself with rage; and I made up my mind to speak to him in the morning about it after we had the cattle all safe. The horse took the law into his own hands, or feet, or fingers, or whatever they are. The geological

fellows tell you once upon a time horses had three toes, and all but the middle one became unfashionable, and finally hooked it. I know country where a three-toed horse would come in very handy. But Joe's horse showed now he hadn't mistaken his character. He gave a snort as if he had just seen a man for the first time, propped dead, and in a couple of seconds was bucking away, as you may swear he did the very first time he was crossed. I thought it served Joe right, and nobody was uneasy, as he could sit anything with a horse's skin on. But this one kept bucking sideways, front ways, every way, rearing and kicking, and what I never saw any horse but a wild one do, biting and snapping like a dog at Joe's foot every time he turned his head round. Joe, of course, kicked him in the mouth when he got a chance, and the horse was just done when he caught his jaw accidentally in the stirrup-iron—his under jaw. Here he was fixed. He swung round and round with his head all on one side till he got giddy, and fell with a crash before any one could get to him. It was a hard bare place, as luck would have it. Joe was underneath him. We lifted him with his thigh smashed, and a couple of ribs broken. Here was a pretty thing—ten miles from home, and our best man with his leg in two. However, there was no help for it. We let go his horse, put the saddle under his head for a pillow (and, except that this one was rather hot, it isn't such a bad one), left a black boy with him till we could send a cart from the station, and started on. 171

After this none of the cattle gave any trouble till we were quite within sight of the yards. There was a large receiving paddock outside of these again, into which I intended to put the mob for the night, as I fancied we could get them into the drafting yards better by daylight. But anything of the nature of post and rails is very terrifying to the uneducated 'Mickies' and 'clear-skins.' They are always likely to bolt directly they see a fence. The bullocks might follow them, and if much confusion arose and there was a little timber there, we might lose the lot. So our troubles were not over yet.

But for the wild young bulls and the unbranded heifers born and bred in the thick covert of the 'Cage' and the 'Snuff-box,' both belonging to the infernal regions, I had a different kind of help. As the mob now moved slowly on, the old cows roaring, the calves chiming in, the bullocks occasionally giving a deep low bellow, making, like all cattle off their bounds, noise enough for four times the number, I knew that assistance was not far off. So it turned out, for about two miles from home we were met by two black dogs, walking slowly to meet us. A brace of very powerful and determined, not to say ferocious-looking animals they were. Half bulldog, half greyhound, they took about equally after both sides of the house. They were moderately fast and immoderately fierce, most difficult to keep back from bloodshed. They had required an immense amount of training, which in their case meant unmerciful licking, before they could be brought to obey orders. In their own line they couldn't be beat. They were too slow to follow horses all day, but, as they were fond of cattle work, they always came out a mile or two to meet us, when they heard the whips and the well-known sounds. Danger and Death, as I had christened the brothers, were known all up and down the Macquarie. 172

Now I felt quite safe for the first time since we had started, and as we closed up a little round the cattle, I looked anxiously for a 'break.' It was not long in coming. A three-year-old bull and a splendid red heifer charged back, and broke in regular fancy scrub style. Danger luckily took the heifer; she was clearing out like a flying doe. Danger was a good deal the quickest on his feet. Death was as sure as his namesake. He had his customer by the muzzle before he had gone any distance, and a loud roar, half of rage, half of pain, told us he was brought to bay. It was not a bad fight. The bull raised him from the ground more than once, and dashed him down with such force as would have satisfied any ordinary dog. But his mother's blood was strong in him, and, after an unavailing resistance, the dog having shifted his hold, and taken to the ear in preference, Micky was half dragged, half driven into the mob, among which, for security, he immediately rushed. Meanwhile the red heifer, rather 'on the leg' and not too fat, forced the pace, so that I really thought she was going to run away from old Danger. But he lay alongside of her shoulder doing his best, and every now and then making a spring at her head. At last he nailed her, and as he stopped and threw all his weight against her, with his terrible grip on her nostrils, her head went right under, and she fell over on her back with such force that she lay stunned. I thought she had broken her neck. When she got up she staggered, stared piteously all round, and finally trotted after the cattle like an old milker. We had only one more break, just as they were going through the paddock rails. Then we had a wing—fine thing a wing, saves men and horses, too—and the whole lot were in and the rails up before they knew where they were going. 173

Next day we put them in the strong yard, without much trouble, and after drafting the cows, calves, strangers, and rubbish, we had over a hundred of as good fat cattle as ever left our district. We picked out a few of the out-and-outers, including the grey-faced bullock and Leader, and 'blinded' them, after which they travelled splendidly, fed well, and gave us no trouble on the road down. Isn't it cruel? Not particularly. We don't put their eyes out. We run them into the 'bot.' The bot is a 'trevis' or pen, high, strong, and so near the size of a beast that they can't turn round after they've been inveigled into it. Then we can do what we like with them. They may roar and knock their horns about, or kick if they're horses—they can't hurt you. For 'blinding' we cut a broad flap of greenhide, and hang it over the face of any bullock that has bad manners. It is secured above and below. It works wonders. He can't see in front of him, only out of the corners of his eyes. Sometimes he runs against trees and things. This makes him take greater care of himself. He mostly follows the other cattle then, and in a week feeds like an old milker. We were nearly selling Greyface and Leader for a pair of working bullocks before we got down.

Poor Joe was a long time before he got round. He was never the same man again. We dropped in for a first-rate market in town, and so were handsomely paid for a night's 'moonlighting on the Macquarie.'

AN AUSTRALIAN ROUGHRIDING CONTEST

In June 1891, at Wodonga, on the Murray River, in the colony of Victoria—on the opposite bank to Albury, a town of New South Wales—was arranged an exhibition for testing the horsemanship of all comers, which I venture to assert had but few parallels.

Prizes were to be allotted, by the award of three judges of acknowledged experience, amounting in all to about £20. Much interested in matters equine, 'nihil equitatum alienum me puto,' I traversed the three miles which separate the border towns in a cab of the period, and arrived in time for the excitement.

The manner of the entertainment was after this wise. An area of several acres of level greensward was enclosed within a fence, perhaps eight or ten feet high, formed of sawn battens, on which was stretched the coarse sacking known to drapers as 'osnaberg.' This answered the double purpose of keeping the non-paying public out and the performing horses in.

I had heard of the way in which the selected horses were saddled and mounted; I was therefore partly prepared. But, tolerably versed in the lore of the wilderness, I had never before seen such primitive equitation.

About thirty unbroken horses were moving uneasily within a high, well-constructed stock-yard—the regulation 'four rails' and a 'cap'—amounting to a solid unyielding fence, over seven feet in height.

That the steeds were really unbroken, 'by spur and snaffle undefiled,' might be gathered from their long manes, tails sweeping the ground, and general air of terror or defiance. As each animal was wanted, it was driven or cajoled by means of a quiet horse into a close yard ending in a 'crush' or lane so narrow that turning round was impossible. A strong, high gate in front was well fastened. Before the captive could decide upon a retrograde movement, long, strong saplings were thrust between his quarters and the posts of the crush. He was therefore trapped, unable to advance or retire. If he threatened to lie down, a sapling underneath prevented that refuge of sullenness.

Mostly the imprisoned animal preserved an expression of stupid amazement or harmless terror, occasionally of fierce wrath or reckless despair. Then he kicked, plunged, reared—in every way known to the wild steed of the desert expressed his untameable defiance of man, occasionally even neighing loudly and fiercely. 'Twas all in vain. The prison was too high, too strong, too narrow, too everything; nothing but submission remained—'not even suicide,' as Mr. Stevenson declares concerning matrimony, 'nothing but to be good.'

This, of course, with variations, as happens perchance in the married state irreverently referred to.

Before the colt has done thinking what unprincipled wretches these bush bipeds are, a 'blind' (ingeniously improvised from a gentleman's waistcoat) is placed over his eyes, a snaffle bridle is put on, a bit is forced into his mouth; at the same time two active young men are thrusting a crupper under his reluctant tail, have put a saddle on his back, and are buckling leather girths and surcingle (this latter run through slits in the lower portion of the saddle flaps) as if they meant to cut him in two.

This preparatory process being completed in marvellous short time, the manager calls out 'First horse, Mr. St. Aure,' and a well-proportioned young man from the Upper Murray ascends the fence, standing with either leg on the rails, immediately over the angry, terrified animal.

What would you or I take, O grey-besprinkled reader, to undertake the mount Mr. St. Aure surveys with calmest confidence? (We are not so young as we were, let us say in confidence.)

Deftly he drops into the saddle, his legs just grazing the sides of the crush. 'Open the gate!' roars the manager. 'Look out, you boys!' and, with a mad rush, out flies the colt through the open gate like a shell from a howitzer.

For ten yards he races at full speed, then 'propping' as if galvanised, shoots upwards with the true deer's leap, all four feet in the air at once (from which the vice takes its name), to come down with his head between his forelegs and his nose (this I narrowly watched) touching the girths.

The horseman has swayed back with instinctive ease, and is quite prepared for a succession of lightning bounds, sideways, upwards, downwards, backwards, as he appears to turn in the air occasionally and to come down with his head in the place where his tail was when he rose.

For an instant he stops: perhaps the long-necked spurs are sent in, to accentuate the next performance. The crowd meanwhile of 600 or 700 people, mostly young or in the prime of life, follow, cheering and clapping with every fresh attempt on the part of the frenzied steed to dispose of his matchless rider. Five minutes of this exercise commences to exhaust and steady the wildest colt. It is a variation of 'monkeying,' a device of the bush-breaker, who ties a bag on to the saddle of a timid colt, and he, frightened out of his life, as *by a monkey* perched there, tires himself out, permitting the breaker to mount and ride away with but little resistance.

Sometimes indeed the colt turns in his tracks, and being unmanageable as to guiding in his paroxysms, charges the crowd, whom he scatters with great screaming and laughing as they fall over each other or climb the stock-yard fence. But shortly, with lowered head and trembling frame, he allows himself to be ridden to the gate of egress. There he is halted, and the rider, taking hold of his left ear with his bridle-hand, swings lightly to the ground, closely alongside of the shoulder. Did he not so alight, the agile mustang was capable of a lightning wheel and a dangerous kick. Indeed, one rider, dismounting carelessly, discovered this to his cost after riding a most unconscionable performer.

A middle-aged, wiry, old-time-looking stock-rider from Gippsland next came flying out on a frantic steed *without a bridle*, from choice. For some time it seemed a drawn battle between horse and man, but towards the end of the fight the horse managed to 'get from under.'

One horse slipped on the short greensward and came over backwards, his rider permitting himself to slide off. The next animal was described as an 'outlaw,' a bush term for a horse which has been 177
backed but never successfully ridden. She, a powerful half-bred, fully sustained it by a persevering exhibition of every kind of contortion calculated to dissolve partnership. At one time it looked as if the betting was in favour of the man, but the mare had evidently resolved on a last appeal. Setting to with redoubled fury, she smashed the crupper, tore out one of the girth straps, and then performed the rare, well-nigh incredible feat of sending the saddle over her head *without breaking the surcingle*. This is the second time, during a longish acquaintance with every kind of horse accomplishment, that I have witnessed this performance. It is not always believed, but can be vouched for by the writer and about five or six hundred people on the ground. I *felt* the girth, and saw that the buckle was still unslacked.

The rider, Mortimer, came over the mare's head, sitting square with the saddle between his legs, and received an ovation in consequence.

The last colt had been driven into the crush 'fiercely snorting, but in vain, and struggling with erected mane,' and enlarged 'in the full foam of wrath and dread,' when another form of excitement was announced. A dangerous-looking four-year-old bullock was now yarded in the outer enclosure, light of flesh but exceeding fierce, which he proceeded to demonstrate by clearing the place of all spectators in the shortest time on record.

Climbing hurriedly to the 'cap' of the stock-yard fence, they looked on in secure elevation, while the *toreadors* cunningly edged him into the crush, and there confined him like the colts. Here he began to paw the ground and bellow in ungovernable rage. At this stage the manager thus delivered himself: 'It's Mr. Smith's turn, by the list, to ride this bullock, but he says he don't care. Is there any gentleman here as'll ride him?'

With Mr. Smith's natural disinclination for the mount the crowd apparently sympathised. The bullock meanwhile was pawing the earth and roaring in a hollow and blood-curdling manner, as who should say, 'Let me at him; only let me have one turn with hoof and horn.' To the unprejudiced observer the mount seemed one that no gentleman would court or even accept.

However, the Gippslander, removing his pipe from his mouth, calmly remarked, 'I'll ride him,' 178
whereupon the crowd burst out with a cheer, evidently looking upon the offer as one of exceptional merit.

There was no bridle or saddle in this case. A rope was fastened around the animal's body, and with this slender accoutrement only, the stock-rider deposited himself upon the ridge of the red bullock's back. Then the gate was opened, and out he came in all his glory.

No one that has merely observed the clumsy gambols of the meadow-fed ox can have an idea of the speed and agility of the bush-bred steer, reared amid mountain ranges and accustomed to spurts up hill and down, with a smart stock-horse rattling by the side of the drove, always making excellent time, and not infrequently distancing their pursuers amid the forests and morasses of their native runs.

This one had a shoulder like a blood horse, great propelling power, and stood well off the ground, with muscular arms and hocks to match.

He reared, bucked, and plunged almost with the virulence and variety of the colts, and when, after a prolonged and persevering contest, he gradually managed to shift his rider on to his *croupe*, and thence by a complicated and original twist of his quarters dislodged him, it was felt by the spectators that he had worthily sustained the honour of the stock-riding fraternity. Cheers resounded from all sides, as the crowd returning to a centre surrounded the fallen but not disgraced combatant. I think the boys were privately disappointed that the bullock did not turn to gore his antagonist, but he was too much excited for such an attack. He made a bee-line for the fence, which, all-ignorant of its flimsy nature, he did not attempt to jump or overthrow, contenting himself with running by the side of it until he came to the corner, where a gate was cunningly left open for his departure. After a respectable 'cap' had been collected for the veteran, who was more than twice the age of the other competitors, the prizes were distributed, and the entertainment concluded.

As an Australian I may be slightly prejudiced, but I must confess to holding the opinion that our bush-riders in certain departments are unrivalled. The South American 'gaucho' and the 'cow-boy' of the Western States are, doubtless, wonderful horsemen, but they ride under conditions more favourable than those of our bushmen. The saddle of the Americans is the old-fashioned Spanish 179
one—heavy, cumbrous, and, besides the high pommel and cantle, provided with a horn-like fixture in front, to which the lasso is attached generally, but which serves as a belaying-pin and a secure holdfast for the rider in case of need. The tremendous severity of the heavy curb-bit must also tend to moderate the gambades of all but the most vicious or untamed animals. Besides all this, the horses ridden by them are mere ponies compared to the big, powerful Australian colts, and as such easier to control.

But let the stranger, when minded to try his horsemanship, find himself upon a 'touchy' three-year-old, and how insecure does his position appear! He is a good way off the ground, which said ground is mostly extremely hard. The colt is nearly sixteen hands high, and feels strong enough in the loins, if fully agitated, to throw him into a gum-tree. The single-reined snaffle, to which he trusts his life, is of the plainest, cheapest description of leather and iron. The saddle is the ordinary English

saddle, fuller in the flap and pads, but otherwise giving the impression of being hard, slippery, and affording but little hope of recovery when once the seat is shaken.

When, with nothing but this simple accoutrement, or perhaps a rolled bag, strapped in front of the pommel, our bushmen ride, as I have described, it must be conceded that no horsemen could be less indebted to adventitious aid.

In the peculiar, strictly Australian department, known as 'scrub riding,' no one not 'to the manner born' can be said to hold a candle to them.

The home of the half-wild herds of cattle and horses is frequently mountainous, thickly-wooded, and rocky. Amid these declivitous fastnesses in which they are reared, the outliers of the herd acquire speed, wind, and activity, which must be known to be believed. Through these interlaced and thick-growing woodlands, down the rocky ridge, across the treacherous morass, away go the cattle or the wild horses at a pace apt to take them out of sight and hearing in remarkably short time. The ordinary horseman, able to hold his own fairly well on road or turf, even in the hunting field, here finds himself hopelessly at fault. Not wanting in pluck, he does his best for a mile or more. But he knocks his knee against one tree, his shoulder against another, and narrowly escapes dashing his 180
brains out by reason of a low-lying branch, which knocks off his hat, and might easily—he reflects—have performed the same office for the head which it covered. He realises the disability under which he labours by reason of not being able to calculate his distance from the unyielding timber in front, beside, around; at the same time to distinguish the route of the fast-vanishing 'mob' (*Anglice*, drove), while all his skill and strength are required to control a stock-horse, if such a mount has been provided for him, which clambers along hillsides and tears down the same with the sure-footedness of a mule, while he leaves the full responsibility of directing his headlong career to his rider. When at the end of several miles the visitor pulls up, he is entirely out of the hunt. Neither men, horses, dogs, nor cattle are within sight and hearing. He is not accustomed to tracking, nor perhaps is the ground favourable to such practice. Nothing is left for him but to follow on as nearly as may be in the direction of the riders, fortunate if, some hours after, he is hunted up by a man sent in search of him, or, more fortunate still, has left all path-finding to his horse, and joyfully recognises the homestead, which comes into sight much sooner than he expected.

In contrast to this exploit, behold the sons of the waste under the same circumstances. Riding along with apparent carelessness, several pairs of sharp eyes are piercing the forest glades in every part of the foreground. One man has descried the outline of a group of slowly-moving forms, or it may be but a single beast, high up a hillside in the gorge of a mountain-range, the depths of a narrow brook, traversed ravine—it matters not. It is the herd they are seeking, or a section of it. The quick-eyed scout gives a low whistle, perhaps holds up his hand; the signal is understood. Bridle-reins are gathered up. No word is spoken, but each man has his horse in hand as they move slowly towards the grazing or stationary outliers. A few minutes bring them nearer, within perhaps good wheeling distance, when a sentinel gets view or winds them, and the whole troop is off like a shot. Each horse, but a minute since stumbling along at a 'stockman's jog' or a go-as-you-please walk, starts into top speed as if for a mile heat. The men, taking a 'bee-line,' ride straight for the fast-vanishing cattle, as if there was not a tree or a rock within miles. How they do it is a never-ending marvel to the uninitiated. But they will not only keep with the outlaws, but out-pace and out-general them; 181
wheeling them at critical places, racing ahead and rounding them up; eventually, with mingled force and diplomacy, hustling them across a country without track, road, or apparently natural features, till dead-beat and defeated they are landed in the high, secure stock-yard, from which some of their number at least will never emerge alive.

THE MAILMAN'S YARN
AN OWER TRUE TALE

'Rum things happen in the bush, you take my word for it,' suddenly broke out Dan M'Elroy as we were sitting smoking round a camp fire, far back in the 'Never Never' one night. The whole tract of country west of the Barcoo was under water that summer. We were all stuck hard and fast, about fifty miles from Sandringham, waiting for the creeks and cowalls to go down. They weren't small ones either—twenty feet deep in some places and half a mile wide. There were a dozen teamsters with wool-waggons, Jim and me and two black boys with four hundred head of fat cattle from Marndoo. A police trooper bringing down a horse-stealer for trial, committed by the Bench there, made up the party. The prisoner was made comfortable—only chained to a log for safety. Here we were, waiting, waiting, and had to make the best of it. We walked about in the daylight, and did a bit of shooting. We'd put up a bough yard for the cattle, more for the exercise than anything else; and to make the time pass we'd taken to telling yarns. Some of them were that curious I wish I hadn't forgotten 'em. But this one that Dan told that night I shall remember to my dying day. He was the mail contractor between St. George and Bolivar Run, a weather-beaten Bathurst native, as hard as iron-bark, who'd have contracted to run the mail from the Red Sea to Jordan in spite of all the Arabs if they'd made it worth his while. He was afraid of nothing and nobody. In his time he had been speared by blacks, shot at by bushrangers, fished for dead out of flooded creeks, besides being 'given up' in fever, ague, and sunstroke in exploring of mail routes through the 'Never Never' country. Hairbreadth escapes were daily bread to him. He seemed to thrive on 'em, but this one must have been out of the common way.

He looked round over the great plain, where we could see the glimmer of water on every side by the light of the low moon, just showing, red and goblin-like. A murmuring wind began to whisper and sob among the stunted myall, swaying the long streamers as if they were mourning for the dead. It felt colder, though we'd piled up the logs on the fire lately, when he filled his pipe and said: 'We'll turn in after this, but you may as well take it to sleep on. It was nigh twenty year ago it happened, yet it comes back to me now as fresh as I saw it that cursed night. You chaps remember,' he said, taking a good steady draw at his pipe, by way of starting it and the yarn at the same time,—'you remember, as I told you, I was running a horse mail between Marlborough Point and Waranah, somewhere about '68. A different season from this, I tell you. No rain for about eighteen months, and when the autumn came in dry, with the nights long and cold, the sheep began to die faster than you could count 'em. I had a fairish contract, and though the mail was a heavy one, I was able to manage it by riding one horse and leading a packer. A terrible long day's ride it was—three times a week—eighty-five mile. Of course I had a change of horses, but I didn't get in till eleven or twelve at night to Waranah. The frosty nights had set in, and sometimes, between being half-frozen and dead-tired, I could hardly sit on my horse. It was getting on in June, and still no rain, only the frosts getting sharper and sharper, when I came along to a sandhill by the side of a billabong of the Murrumbidgee, about ten miles from Waranah. There was a big water-hole there; it was a favourite camping place between the township and Baranco station. I was later than usual, and it was about midnight when I got to this point. Through a weak horse as had knocked up I'd had to walk five miles. I was nigh perished with the cold; hungry too, for I'd had no time to stop and get a feed; and as I'd been in the saddle since long before daylight, you may guess I was pretty well tuckered out. A particular spot, too, when you come to think of it. The sand-ridge ran back from the water-hole a good way (there was a big kurrajong-tree beside it, I remember), and spread out near upon a mile till you got into a fair-sized plain. The ridge—that's the way of 'em in dry country—was covered as thick as they could stand with pine-scrub. An old cattle-track ran right through to the plain, where they used to come to water in the old days when Baranco was a cattle-run. I was dozing on my horse, dog-tired and stiff with the cold, when I came to the water-hole at the foot of this sandhill. I always used to pull up there and have a smoke; so I stopped and looked round about, in a half-sleepy, dazed kind of way. I felt for my box of matches, and I'm dashed if they weren't gone—shot out, I expect—for I'd been working my passage and been jumbled about more than enough. That put the cap on. I felt as if I'd drop off the horse there and then. I never was one for drinking, and I didn't carry a flask. How I'd get on the next couple of hours I couldn't think.

'All of a sudden a streak of light came through the darkness of the pine-scrub to the left of me. It got broader and broader. It wasn't the moon, I knew, for that wouldn't show till nigh-hand daylight. It must be a fire. Somebody camping, of course; but why they didn't stop by the water, the regular place, with good feed and open ground all round them, I couldn't make out. I was off like a shot, and hung up my horses to the kurrajong tree, which stood handy. It was too thick to ride through the pine saplings, and I thought the walk would freshen me up. I started off quite jolly with the notion of the grand warm I should have at the fire, and the pipeful of baccy I'd be able to borrow. It was a big fire I saw as I stumbled along, getting nearer and nearer the head of an old-man pine, the branches as dry as timber, and would burn like matchwood. I could see three men standing round it. As I got nearer I was just going to halloo out, partly for fun and partly for devilment, when the wind blew the flame round, and made one of the men, who was poking a pole into the fire, shift and turn his face towards me. Mind! I was in the dark shadow of the pines. The glare of the fire lit up his face and those of the two other men as clear as day.

'The man's face, as it turned towards where I was standing, had such a hellish expression, that I stopped dead and drew behind an overhanging "balah" that grew among the pines. He seemed to be listening. Another man with an axe in his hand said something to him, when he walked a few steps down the track towards me and stopped. My God, what a face it was! No devil out of hell could have looked more fiendish than he did. It was like no human face I'd ever seen. I began to think I was

asleep, and dreaming of a story in a book.

'They were not more than twenty yards from where I stood. My heart beat that loud I was afraid they'd hear it. My hair stood on end, if any one's ever did, while as the tall, dark man began to poke the fire again, and pushed something further into it that was *not a log of wood*, I deuced near fainted, and beads of perspiration rolled down my forehead and face. What did I see that caused every drop of blood in my veins to turn to ice? What the strange man stirred in the fire, making the sparks to fly all round among the red glowing embers, was a *corpse*! There was no mistaking the dreadful shape. One arm stuck out. The legs were there, the skull blackened and featureless, and, Heavenly Father! beyond and in the middle of the heap of glowing embers lay another shape huddled together, and showing no angle of limb or bone. The other man, with a broom of boughs tied together, was busy sweeping in all the pieces of charcoal, so as to prevent the flame from spreading through the tall, dry grass. At a short distance I could make out a tilted cart, such as hawkers use in the bush. "By——!" said the man with the pole, "I'll swear I heard a stick crack. Any traveller as come to the water-hole and followed the track up, 'll have to be rubbed out, and no two ways about it. It will be our lives against his!"

'"Haven't we had blood enough for one day?" says the other man. "By George! when I think of these two poor chaps' faces, just afore you dropped 'em with the axe, I'd give all we've made ten times over to have 'em alive again."

'"You always was a snivelling beggar," says the tall man. "If you'd had your back scratched at Port Arthur half as often as me, you'd think no more of a man's life than a wild dog's. I believe it must 'a been one or a wallaby as made the stir."

'I've faced a trifle of danger, and seen some "close calls" in my time, but nothing came near that half-hour I spent there till I could make myself steady enough to stir. I couldn't sit; I was too done to 186
stand; so there I had to crouch down and wait till I got the chance to go back on my tracks.

'All the time they kept pushing the bodies into the centre of the fire, without stopping, as they got smaller and smaller. Two of the men were at this dreadful work, while the third was sweeping round every edge of the fire. At last the two men I first saw, sat down on a log close handy and began to smoke. Now was my chance. I crawled from my tree and crept along the cattle-track till I come to where my horses were standing. I mounted one, somehow, and took the other's bridle. I rode steady enough for a while, and then, hustling the poor brutes into a hand-gallop, kept along the road to Waranah till I reached the gate at the boundary of the run. Even then I felt as if I was hardly safe. I looked round and could almost see witches and devils following me through the air, and waving ghosts' arms in every bough of the stunted trees through which the road wound.

'When I saw the lights of the little township, I was that glad that I shouted and sang all the way up to the hotel where the mail was delivered. I had a strange sort of feeling in my head as I rode up to the door. Then I reeled in my saddle; everything was dark. I remembered no more till at the end of a week I found myself in bed recovering from fever.

'I suppose I'd been sickening for it before. What with hot days, cold nights, and drinking water out of swamps and dry holes that were half mud and half—pah! something you don't like to think of—the wonder is we bushmen don't get it oftener. Anyhow I was down that time, and next morning it seems they had the doctor to me. He was a clever man and a gentleman, too, my word! He fetched me round after a month, but I was off my head the first week, and kept raving (so they told me afterwards) about men being knocked on the head and burned, hawkers' carts, and Derwenters, and the big water-hole by Budgell Creek.

'They thought it was all madness and nonsense at first, and took no notice, till one afternoon Mr. Belton, the overseer of Baranco, comes riding into town, all of a flurry, wanting to see the police and the magistrate, Mr. Waterton. This was what he had to say:—

'There had been some heavy lots of travelling sheep passing through the station, and he was keeping along with them for fear they might miss the road and not find it again till they'd ate off a 187
mile or two of his best grass. All of a sudden a mob of the Baranco weaners ran across a plain and nearly boxed with 'em. Mr. Belton gallops for his life—I expect he swore a bit, too—and was just in time to head 'em off into the pine-scrub by the sandhill. They took the old cattle-track over towards the water-hole, he following them up, till all of a sudden he comes plump on a hawker's cart!

'This pulled him up short. He let the sheep run on to the frontage and got off his horse. He knew the Colemans' cart. They always stayed a night at Baranco. When they passed, *a week since*, they were to make Waranah that night. What the deuce were they doing here? Hang the fellows! were they spelling their horses? Feed was scarce. No! they were not the men to do that. Honest, straight-going chaps they'd always been.

'He walked over to the cart. Something wrong surely! The big slop-chest was open. The cash-box, with lock smashed, was empty. Boots, clothes, tobacco, which they always had of the best, lying scattered about. Where were the poor fellows themselves? If they had been robbed, why hadn't they gone to the police at Waranah and complained? Whoever had done this must have camped here in the middle of the scrub. Then there'd been a fire over by the big pine-stump—an "old man" fire too. Wonder they hadn't set a light to the dry grass? No rain for the half-year to speak of. No; they had been too jolly careful. Swept in the twigs and ashes all round. Curious fire for bushmen to make too—big enough to roast an ox. He stares at the ashes; then gropes among them with his hand. My God! What are these small pieces of bone? Why, the place is full of them. And this? and this? A metal button, a metal buckle—one, two, three—twelve in all.

'It comes back to him now that three travellers left the Baranco men's hut the same morning as the Colemans—one a tall, dark, grey-haired old hand, with a scar across his face. He gets his horse with

a long sort of half-whistle and half-groan and rides slow, in a study like, toward the township. The next day the magistrate, Mr. Waterton (he's a squatter, but sits most times when the Police Magistrate isn't on hand), goes out with the Sergeant of Police and the best part of the townspeople 188
of Waranah. He holds an Inquiry. The doctor attended and gave evidence that he had no doubt whatever that the bones formed part of human skeletons. The surface of the fire was raked over, and a lot of metal buttons and buckles—as many as would be used for two pairs of trousers—with other remains of clothing, were found. A verdict of "wilful murder against some person or persons unknown" was returned.

'On the second day after the murder three men crossed the Murray River pretty high up, near a public-house. Their ways were suspicious. One of them fired off a revolver. They had on new suits of clothes, new boots with elastic sides, and no end of tobacco of a queer brand—not known in those parts. Large swags too! The boss of the crowd was a tall, dark man, with a scar and grey hair. He was the man who fired the revolver and used wild language. The police from Crowlands picked up the trail so far. If they had followed hard on, like the Avenger of Blood (as the feller says in the play), they might have run down the murderin' dogs. But the publican had a bad memory. *He couldn't remember* seeing any out-of-the-way travellers cross the river that week. So the police turned back, and lost the scent for good and all.

'A queer enough thing about the matter was, that directly after the Inquiry was published, a telegram was sent from the poor fellows' friends to the sergeant at Waranah. He was to look under the lid of the big slop-chest and he'd find a false top that slid back—very neat made, so that people mostly wouldn't notice it. Behind this was a drawer, and in it notes and cheques. They never kept more than a fiver or so in the cash-box, and told the secret to their relatives before leaving town. Sure enough the sergeant finds the secret-drawer, and in it, after being in the open bush nearly a fortnight, £90 odd in notes and good cheques, which of course he sent to their friends. The villains only got £4 and a fit-out of clothes and tobacco. The police never could get wind of these wretches for years after. However, they dropped on the man with the scar, whose name was Campbell. He was sworn to as the man who left Baranco with the other two on the day of the murder, as the man as had new clothes and tobacco (such as nobody but the Colemans sold in the district) two days after. It was proved that they were all hard up and ragged when they left Baranco. The evidence 189
was in dribs and drabs. But they pieced it together, bit by bit. It was good enough to hang him, and hang him they did. I swore to him as the man I saw at the fire that terrible night. And now, mates, I'll turn in. There's no fear of being burned to bits here, is there? Good-night all!'

DEAR DERMOT

Somehow the days of my youth seem to have been inextricably mixed up with horses. How I loved them, to be sure!—thought of them by day, dreamed of them by night. Books and girls might temporarily enter into competition as objects of engrossing interest; but the noble animal must have had possession of my thoughts for a large proportion of the waking hours.

From boyhood the proprietor of studs more or less extensive, I was quick to discern excellence in other people's favourites. My mind was stored, my imagination fired, besides, with tales of equestrian feats, performed chiefly by Arab chiefs and other heroes of old-world romance. In a chronic state of expectancy, I was always ready to do honour to the legendary steed, so rarely encountered, alas! save in the bounteous realm of fiction.

When, therefore, I *did* fall across 'the courser of the poets,' or his simulacrum, I was prepared to secure him at a fancy price; holding that if I could recoup the outlay by selling a pair of average horses of my own breeding, the luxury of possessing a paragon would be cheaply purchased.

And would it not be? Albeit there are multitudes of people to whom one horse, save the mark, is much like another. For them, the highest joy, the transcendent sensation of being carried by 'the sweetest hack in the world,' exists not. But to him who recognises and appreciates the speed, the spirit, the smoothness, and the safety of the 'wonderful' hackney, there are few outdoor pleasures possessing similar flavour.

It is more than half a century, sad to relate, since I first took bridle in hand. During that time I have ridden races on 'the flat,' over 'the sticks,' and have backed for the first time a score or more of wholly-untried colts. I have tested hundreds of saddle-horses, over every variety of road, at all sorts of distances, in all ranges of climate, and after this extended experience I unhesitatingly pronounce Dermot, son of Cornborough, to be in nearly all respects the finest example of the blood hackney which I ever mounted. The 'sweetest,' etc., he certainly was. Almost too good for this wicked world.

The birth of this unrivalled steed was mainly due to one of the magnates of the earlier Victorian era, himself an example of the strangeness of that destiny which shapes our ends in life. A member of a family of financial aristocrats, domiciled in London and Paris, with which capitals our friend was equally familiar, Mr. Adolphus Goldsmith scarcely dreamed in youth of 'colonial experience.'

But something went wrong with the finance arrangements of his near relatives. A crisis culminated, and the necessity arose for Goldsmith (*fils*) applying himself to the stern realities of life. He had previously performed the strictly ornamental duties of a young man about town. But with a cool perception of the situation, characteristic of the man, and a steadfast determination to conquer adverse fate, the whilom *élégant* of the Bois de Boulogne and the Row looked over the map of the world, picked his colony, giving the *pas* to Victoria, the then fashionable El Dorado for younger sons and *vauriens*, converted the remnant of his fortune into letters of credit, and sailed for Port Phillip.

As an Englishman by birth and rearing as well as adoption, Mr. Goldsmith had sported park hacks and ridden to hounds in his day. He possessed the Englishman's love for horses. Visions, therefore, arose of improving the breed in the new country which he was about to patronise, and incidentally devoting himself to agricultural pursuits.

Distrusting, however, his suitability for the necessary purchases and arrangements, he sensibly cast about for a coadjutor, fully instructed in bucolic lore, to whom he might confide details.

He was successful beyond expectation, inasmuch as he induced Mr. Hatsell Garrard, a gentleman farmer from the midland counties (whose love of all genuine sport had, combined with a run of bad seasons, probably rendered rent-paying temporarily arduous), to accompany him as General Manager to Australia. And whoso recalls his fresh-coloured countenance, his pleasant smile, his shrewd blue eye, his neat rig and bridle-hand, reproduces out of memory's storehouse the ideal yeoman from 'Merrie England.'

Mr. Garrard promptly demonstrated a knowledge of his business by purchasing Cornborough, son of Tramp, a grandson of the immortal Whalebone. For this sole achievement he deserves a statue, and in that Pantheon which future Victorians may rear for the founders of their prosperity and glory, the square-built, genuinely English figure of Mr. Garrard should find a place. What a responsibility was cast upon him when you come to think of it! How easily might he have chosen an equally blue-blooded, but leggy, rickety, pernicious weed, such as has so often been foisted upon unwary breeders.

Instead of which, he enriched us with the noble, whole-coloured, brown horse, choke-full of the best blood in England, of medium height, but perfect in symmetry, soundness, faultless in wind and limb, temper and courage, fated to be the long-remembered sire of racers, hacks, and harness horses of the highest class—to be honoured in life, regretted, ay, sincerely mourned, in death. For on his unexpected demise, his disconsolate owner was discovered in such a state of prostration and grief that every one thought his wife must be dead, or, at any rate, some relative near and dear.

Truly, the squatter of the 'forties' was from one reason or another a man *sui generis*, with whom the present pastoral era furnishes few parallels. Mr. Goldsmith, in addition to other accomplishments (did he not challenge Charles Macknight to a bout at single-stick, duly fought out within the precincts of the Melbourne Club?) was a musical connoisseur and no mean performer. When the comfortable cottage at Trawalla was completed, albeit stone-paved and bark-roofed, the drawing-room contained a handsome piano, to which, after dinner, the proprietor mostly betook himself. There, in operatic reminiscences and compositions of impromptu merit, he was wont to wander

from the realms of reality to a dreamworld of sweet sounds and brighter souvenirs. How one envied him the delicious distraction!

So the Trawalla estate had birth and beginning. It was a first-class 'run' in those simpler times; well watered, with picturesque alternations of hill and dale, plain and forest. The 'shepherded' sheep had unfailing pasture and ample range. There were no fences in those days, excepting around the horse-paddock. 193

Temptations to over-stocking were fewer, and chiefly—in default of boundary—took the form of an invasion of some neighbour's territory, a trespass which his shepherds were prompt to resent. Thus, the natural grasses were but moderately fed down, and, with the autumn rains unfailing in *that* district, assumed a richly verdurous garb, scarcely so frequent in the wire-fenced decades. I do not recall the name of the deserving but less fortunate pioneer, the first or second occupant of this desirable holding, from whom Mr. Goldsmith purchased the 'right-of-run,' with probably a mere handful of stock. With cash in hand, he was doubtless enabled to make an advantageous purchase, and thus enter upon his predecessor's labours; once more, as it turned out, to place his foot on fortune's ladder.

Far from London and Paris, Ascot and Goodwood, as he found himself, the erstwhile man about town was not wholly debarred from congenial society. William Gottreaux, another musical enthusiast, was at Lilaree; Hastings Cunningham at Mount Emu; Donald and Hamilton, Philip Russell, and other gentleman pioneers within an easy ride. He became a member of the Melbourne Club, then in Collins Street, upon the site of the Bank of Victoria. The late Sir Redmond Barry was his early and intimate friend. (I took charge of a small package of tobacco, on my homeward voyage, from the Judge, as it seems that particular brand was not procurable in Paris.) When things were settled at Trawalla and the stock manifestly improving, with Cornborough in a snug loose-box, and the sheep increasing fast, the owner of Trawalla found a reasonable amount of recreation, as comprised in frequent sojourns at the Melbourne Club, and the enjoyment of the metropolitan society of the day, quite compatible with the effective supervision of the station.

Thus, on the advancing tide of Victorian prosperity, then steadily sweeping onward, unknown to us all, Trawalla and its owner were floated on to fortune—a gently gliding, agreeable, and satisfactory process. The sheep multiplied, the fleece acquired name and repute—one *couldn't* grow bad wool in that country, however hard you might try. Cornborough became a peer of the Godolphin Arabian in all men's eyes, and the A.G. brand, on beeve-or horse-hide, an accredited symbol of excellence. A purchase of waste land at St. Kilda, made solely, as he informed me, in order to qualify as a legislator, turned out a most profitable investment. 194

Swiftly the golden period arrived when, after the first years of doubt and uncertainty, it became apparent to holders of station property that nothing prevented them from clearing out at a highly satisfactory price, and leaving the conflicting elements of dear labour, high prices, and a heterogeneous population, to settle themselves as best they might. Mr. Goldsmith, now free to return to Europe, seriously considered the claims of the Rue de Bellechasse, Faubourg St. Germain, as contrasted with Collins Street and the Melbourne Club.

It may be that the owner of Trawalla would have decided upon continuous occupation, with a view to founding an estate, if his sons, who visited Victoria in 1851, had exhibited any aptitude for the life of Australian country gentlemen. But Messrs. Edward and Alfred Goldsmith, who had been educated chiefly in Paris, when they visited their father in 1851, did not take kindly to his adopted country. Cultured, polished young men, yet decidedly more French than English, Parisians to their finger-nails in all their tastes and habitudes, they grieved and irritated their Australianised parent.

Chiefly they lacked the adventurous spirit which would have enabled them to behold, mentally, the grand possibilities of a colonial possession. All their sympathies were with their lost Eden, the Paris which they had quitted. In Victoria they beheld nothing but the distasteful privations of a new country, hardly redeemed from primeval *sauvagerie*. The roads were rough, the beds hard, the cookery—'Ah, mon Dieu!—lamentable, indescribable.'

It was a good time to sell, and though the Trawalla estate of to-day represents a considerably larger sum than Mr. Simson gave for the run and stock, perhaps our old friend was not so far out when he decided to let well alone and retire upon a fair competency.

To that end the stud was sentenced to sale and dispersion; many a descendant of the lamented Cornborough went to enrich the paddocks of friends and well-wishers. I think Mr. Hastings Cunningham bought the greater number of the brood mares and young stock, at an average rate per head. 195

Now, Dermot was the old gentleman's hack. (Was he old, or, perhaps, only about forty-five? We were decided then as to the time of life when decay of all the faculties was presumed to set in.) I many a time and oft admired the swell, dark bay, striding along the South Yarra tracks with aristocratic elegance, or, more becomingly arrayed, carrying a lady in the front of a joyous riding-party. His owner was *un galant uomo*, and the gentle yet spirited steed was always at the service of his lady friends.

So when, one day at the club, he suggested to me to buy Dermot—more than one lady's horse being required in our family at that time, and only fifty pounds named as the price—I promptly closed.

Dead and buried is he years agone; but I still recall, with memory's aid, the dark bay horse, blood-like, symmetrical, beauteous in form as aristocratic in bearing. 'Hasn't he the terrifyin' head on him?' queried an Irish sympathiser, somewhat incongruously, as he gazed with rapt air and admiring eyes at the tapering muzzle, large, soft eyes, and Arab frontal.

Delicate, deer-like, strictly Eastern was the head referred to, beautifully set on a perfectly-arched neck, which again joined oblique, truly perfect shoulders. Their mechanism must have been such, inasmuch as never did I know any living horse with such liberty of forehand action.

Walking or cantering down an incline, shut but your eyes, and you were unable to tell by bodily sensation whether you were on level ground or otherwise. He 'pulled up' in a way different from any other horse. Apparently, he put out his legs, and, lo! you were again at a walk. No prop, shake, or jar was perceptible. It was a magical transformation. An invalid recovering from a fever could have ridden him a day's journey. No one could fall off him in fact.

He who had no peer was born

amid the green forest parks of Trawalla, at no great distance from Buninyong, or the historic goldfield of Ballarat.

His sire, Cornborough, than whom no better horse ever left England, was a brown horse, like The Premier and Rory O'More; like them, middle-sized, symmetrical rather than powerful. Among the early cracks that owed their speed and courage to him were Cornet, Bessie Bedlam, Beeswing, Ballarat, The Margravine (dam of Lord Clyde), with many others, now half forgotten. Cornet was, I think, the first of his progeny trained. He ran away with most of the two-year-old stakes of the day, to be ever after known as a fast horse and a good stayer. I remember his beating Macknight's St. George at Port Fairy, in a match for £100, and winning various other stakes and prizes. His half-sister, Mr. Austin's Bessie Bedlam, was one of the most beautiful race-horses ever saddled. I well remember her running in old days, and can see her now, stepping along daintily with her head up, like an antelope. She won many a race, and was successful as a stud matron after turf triumphs were over. Beeswing was also good, but not equal to her. Ballarat was a great raking, handsome chestnut mare, bred by Dick Scott, a stock-rider of Mr. Goldsmith's. She must have had a good turn of speed, inasmuch as she won the All-aged Stakes in Melbourne, as a three-year old. The Cornboroughs, like the Premiers, were remarkable for their temperate dispositions. They had abundance of courage, but no tendency to vice of any kind. 196

On his dam's side Dermot boasted Peter Fin (Imp) as grandsire, and other good running blood. His pedigree was incomplete, thus leaving him open to a suspicion of being not quite thoroughbred. But the stain—the 'blot on the scutcheon,' if such there was—showed neither by outward sign nor inward quality.

Then, as to paces. He walked magnificently, holding up his head in a lofty and dignified manner; his mouth of the lightest—velvet to any touch of bit—but withal firm. He had always been ridden with a double bridle, and showed no provincial distaste to bit and bridoon. If required to quicken his pace from a fast but true walk, he could adopt a rapid amble, so causing any ordinary stepper to trot briskly. And then his canter—how shall I describe it? Springy, long-striding, yet floating, improving his speed at will to a hand-gallop if you merely shook the reins, and as readily, smoothly subsiding at the lightest sustained pull.

With such a horse under you it seemed as if one could go on for ever. Mile after mile fled away, and still there was no abatement in the wonderful living mechanism of which the spring and elasticity seemed exhaustless. The sensation was so exquisite that you dreaded to terminate it. When at length you drew rein, it was, so to speak, with the tears in your eyes. 197

Then the safety of this miraculous performance. You were on a horse that never was known to shy or bolt, and that *could not* fall down. Nature had otherwise provided. With such a balance of forehand, he may have at rare intervals struck his hoof against root or stone, clod or other obstacle, but trip, blunder, fall—these were words and deeds wholly outside of his being. With legs of iron, and hoofs that matched them well, never once did I know Dermot to be lame during all the years of our acquaintance.

Fortunately for me, and for society generally, he was not quite fast enough for promotion to a racing stable. He was thus enabled to elude the turf dangers and so pass his life in a sphere where he was loved and respected as he deserved.

With regard to his stamina. I rode him a distance of seventy miles one day, being anxious to get home, during the last ten miles of which he waltzed along with precisely the same air and manner as in the morning—with thirteen stone up, too. In addition to other qualities, he was an uncommonly good feeder: would clear his rack conscientiously, and eat all the oats you would give him. I never knew him to be tired, or met any one that had heard of his being seen in that condition.

His graceful, high-bred air, his large, mild eye and intelligent expression, warranted one in crediting him with the perfect temper which indeed he possessed. So temperate was he, that the lady whose palfrey he habitually was (as such, beyond all earthly competition) was in the habit of sending him along occasionally at top speed in company, confident in her ability to stop him whenever she had the inclination.

He was utterly free from vice, either in the stable or out of it. But, if uniformly gentle, he was always gay and free—that most difficult combination to secure in a lady's horse. An angel enclosed in horse-hide, such was 'Dear Dermot.' The doctrine of metempsychosis alone can account for such a consensus of virtues—an equine prodigy, a wonder and a miracle. Generations may roll by before such another hackney treads Australian turf. We are not of the school which decries the horses, the men also, of the present day. There are, there must be now, as good horses, as gallant youths, as ever new or old lands produced. But Dermot—may he rest in peace!—was a *very* exceptional composition. And I must be pardoned for doubting whether, as a high-caste saddle-horse, I shall ever again see his equal. 198

THE STORY OF AN OLD LOG-BOOK

Notwithstanding our share in New Guinea and the debateable land of the New Hebrides, besides the proposed cession of Santa Cruz, the Sydney of 'the thirties' wore the look of being more in touch with the South Sea Islands and the Oceanic realm generally, than at present. The wharves were redolent of the wild life of The Islands and the mysterious land of the Maori. Weather-beaten sailing-vessels showed a sprinkling of swarthy recruits, whose dark faces, half strange, half fierce, were mingled with those of their British crews. Hull and rigging bore silent testimony to the wrath of wind and wave. There were whale-ships returning in twelve months with a full cargo of sperm oil, or half empty after a three years' cruise, as the adventure turned out.

Schoolboys were fond of loitering about among them, wondering at the harpoons, lances, and keen-edged 'whale spades,' at the masses of whalebone and spermaceti, or the carved and ornamental whales' teeth, of which Jack always had a store.

In the forecastle of one ship might be seen the tattooed lineaments and grim visage of a Maori; from another would peer forth the mild, wondering gaze of a Fijian. Bows and arrows (the latter presumably poisoned), spears, clubs, and wondrous carved idols were the principal curios, nearly always procurable.

The whale fishery was at that time a leading industry. Sperm oil figured noticeably among the first items of our export trade. Merchants made advances for the outfit and all necessaries of the adventure, trusting in many instances for repayment to the skill, courage, and good faith of the commander. No doubt losses were incurred, but the lottery was tempting. The profits must have 200
been considerable. Sperm oil, before the discovery of gas or petroleum, was worth eighty or ninety pounds per ton. A large 'right whale' was good for eighty barrels, eight barrels going to the tun. He was a fish worth landing. To get back to the ship, even after hours of hard pulling and the chance of a stove boat, towing a monster worth nearly £1000, was exciting enough.

The crew, like shearers of the present day, were proverbially hard to manage. They did not receive wages, but a share in the net profits—a 'lay,' as it was called. The ship was, in fact, a floating co-operative society. This did not prevent them—for human nature is weak—from committing acts distinctly opposed to the spirit as well as the letter of the agreement. They got drunk when they had the chance. They occasionally mutinied. They resisted the mate and defied the captain. They proposed to take savage maidens for their dusky brides, and to live lives devoid of care in The Islands. It strikes landsmen as a curiously dangerous and anxious position for a captain, who had to confront a score or two of reckless seamen with the aid only of the officers of the ship. Yet it was done. The peril dared, the ship saved, and order restored time after time, by the resolute exercise of one strong will and the half-instinctive yielding of the seamen to the mysterious power of legal authority.

Before me as I write are the well-kept and regularly-entered pages of a whale-ship's log-book, the record of a voyage from Sydney harbour over the Southern main, which bears date as far back as April 1833. In that year again sailed the stout barque, which had done so well her part in bringing us safely to this far new land. Her course lay through the coral reefs and Eden-seeming islands of the Great South Sea; along the storm-swept coast of New Zealand; among the cannibals of New Ireland and New Britain; among the as yet half-unknown region of the Solomon Islands and Bougainville Group. As to the dangers of such a voyage, one incident of the strange races that people these isles of Eden is sufficiently dramatic. A boat's crew had pulled over to an inviting looking beach within the coral ring for the purpose of watering. As the boat touched the beach, stem on, one of the crew sprang ashore with the painter in his hand. A cry escaped him and the 201
crew simultaneously, as he sank to his neck in a concealed pit, a veritable *trou-de-loup*. He hung on to the rope fortunately, and so pulled himself up and into the boat again.

Not a native was in sight. But the treacherous pitfalls being probed and laid bare, the intention was manifest. A line of holes was discovered in the sands, nine or ten feet in depth, cone-shaped and sloping to a narrow point, where were placed sharp-pointed, hard-wood stakes, the ends having been charred and scraped. Sharp as lance-heads, they would have disabled any seaman luckless enough to fall in, especially in latitudes where Jack prefers to go barefooted. Forewarned, walking warily, and 'prospecting' any dangerous-looking spot, they succeeded in unmasking all or nearly all of these man-traps, into which the ambushed natives expected them to fall. They were ingeniously constructed: the top covered with a light frame of twigs and grass, sand being sprinkled over all. Any ordinary crew would have been deceived.

When they reached the village they found the property of a boat's crew, who had been surprised or betrayed. One piece of evidence after another came to light. Last of all, the oars, on the blades of which were marks of blood-stained fingers closed in the last grasp which the ill-fated mariner was to give.

Righteous indignation succeeded this gruesome discovery. A wholesale burning of the town and canoes was ordered. A shower of arrows was sent after the departing boat, as the murder isle was quitted with a distinct sense of relief. It is not improbable that similar experiences have been repeated during the last few years. In those days the 'labour trade' did not exist, and to 'black-birding' was no scale of profit attached.

There is a pathetic simplicity about this unvarnished record of perilous adventure, after the close of half a century. One looks reverently upon the yellow pages which photograph so minutely the daily life of the floating microcosm. The course, the winds, the storms, the calms, the days of failure and good fortune! The huge sea-beast harpooned and half slain, yet cunning to 'sound' deeply enough to

pay out all the line, or, the iron 'drawing,' finally to elude capture altogether. Then again what a day of triumph when the hieroglyph show six whales killed and 'got safely alongside.' Midnight saw the boilers still bubbling and hissing; the tired crew with four-and-twenty hours' severe work before them, after, perhaps, half a day's hard pulling in the exciting chase. 202

Then out of the endless waste of waters rises the lovely shape of the fairy isle. 'Mountain, and valley, and woodland'—a paradisal climate; a friendly, graceful, simple race, reverencing the stranger whites, with their big canoe and loud reverberating fire-weapons; or, on the other hand, sullen and ferocious cannibals, sending flights of poisoned arrows from their thickets, or surrounding the ship with a swarm of canoes, full of hostile savages, eager to climb her deck to slay and plunder unchecked.

It is characteristic, perhaps, of the greater simplicity of manners, and steadfast inculcation of the religious observances of that era, that on board the ship referred to, Divine service was regularly performed on each recurring Sunday. If whales were sighted, however, the boats were lowered; and on one Sunday afternoon two whales were killed. It was obviously a part of the unwritten code of salt-water law that whales were not to be allowed to escape under *any* circumstances, upon whatever days they were sighted by the look-out man. As it was tolerably certain that the ship would be more than once in jeopardy from hostile attacks, a few guns and carronades were mounted; boarding-nettings were not, I presume, overlooked. The old Ironsides' maxim, 'Trust in Providence and keep your powder dry,' was in effect a strictly observed precaution.

How strange it seems to think of the altered conditions made by the passing away of a generation or two! Cold is now the hand which traced the lines I view; stilled the hot blood and eager soul of him who commanded the ship—a born leader of men if such there ever was.

Of the crew that toiled early and late at sea, through sun and storm,—that drank and caroused and fought and gambled on shore when occasion served,—how small the chance that any one now survives!

With reference to the Solomon Group, which has been visited by many a vessel since the barque safely steered her course through shoal and reef, insidious currents and treacherous calm, matters seem to have been much about the same as at present. At some islands the natives were simple and friendly; at others, sullen and treacherous, ready at all times for an attack if feasible; merciless and unsparing when the hour came. 203

To refer to the Log-book.

'*Monday, July 22, 1833.*—At Bougainville; several canoes came off, trading for cocoa-nuts and tortoise-shell.

'*Monday, July 29.*—Beating along the coast of New Georgia. Canoes came off; traded for cocoa-nuts and tortoise-shell. Shipped Henry Spratt, who left the *Cadmus* last season. [A bad bargain, as future events showed.]

'*August 8.*—Sent the boats ashore at Sir Charles Hardy's island. At 7 P.M. boats returned, having purchased from the natives, who were very friendly, a quantity of cocoa-nuts and a pig. Discovered an extensive harbour on the west side.

'*September 4.*—Sent boats ashore at New Ireland; natives particularly friendly.

'*Saturday, October 5.*—Bore away for the harbour of Santa Cruz. At 2 P.M. cast anchor in thirty fathoms, one mile from shore. There an adventure befell which altered existing relations.

'*Sunday, October 6.*—Sent casks on shore and got them filled with water. Next day got two rafts of water off, and some wood. Purchased a quantity of yams from the natives.

'*Tuesday, October 8.*—Hands employed in wooding, watering, and stowing away the holds. The natives made an attack on the men while watering, and wounded one man with an arrow. Brought off natives' canoes, and made an attack on their town, which was vigorously contested. Another of the ship's company severely wounded. All hands employed getting ready for sea.

'*Wednesday, October 9.*—At 4 A.M. began to get under weigh. Discharged the guns at hostile village. Men in canoes shot their arrows at the ship. Volley returned.

'*October 19*, 1 P.M.—Henry Stephens, seaman, died of tetanus, in consequence of a wound inflicted by a native of Santa Cruz with an arrow. The burial-service read over him before the ship's company. Strong winds and high seas at midnight.

> His midnight requiem, mariner's fitting dirge,
> Sung by wild winds and wilder ocean surge.

The author of *The Western Pacific and New Guinea* (Mr. H. H. Romilly) states in that most interesting work, that in September 1883 a Commission was appointed by M. Pallu de la Barrière, then Governor of New Caledonia, to inquire into the nature of the arrows, commonly reported to be poisoned, so much in use among the natives of the surrounding islands. 204

The conclusions arrived at (Mr. Romilly states) by the Commission are only what were to be expected. 'It has long been known to me, and to many other men in the Pacific who have studied the question, that the so-called poison was, if not exactly a harmless composition, certainly not a deadly one. Of course, ninety per cent of the white men trading in the Pacific believe, and will continue to believe, in the fatal effects of poisoned arrows. The Santa Cruz arrow, usually considered the most deadly, is very small, commonly about two feet in length, while the New Hebrides arrows are much heavier, capable of inflicting a mortal wound on the spot. Carteret, more than a hundred years ago,

was attacked by the natives of Santa Cruz. Of the ten men hit, three died from the severe nature of their wounds. No mention is made of tetanus. If any of his men had died from so remarkable and terrible a disease, Carteret could hardly have failed to mention the fact.'

With all due respect and deference to Mr. Romilly, we must take the liberty of siding in opinion with the 'ninety per cent of white men trading in the Pacific,' and believe that the arrows *are* poisoned—are deadly and fatal, even when only a scratch is produced. The deaths of the unknown sailor, Henry Stephens, sixty-seven years ago, and of the late lamented Commodore Goodenough recently, *both from tetanus*, surely constitute a marvellous coincidence. It is hard to believe that nervous predisposition was the proximate cause of tetanus in two persons so widely dissimilar in mind, station, and education. Carteret's three seamen possibly died from the same seizure; though, having many other things to attend to, the ancient mariner failed to record the fact.

In addition to the excitement of killing and losing their whales, being wrecked on a coral reef or hit with poisoned arrows, our mariners were fated not to run short of dramatic action in the shape of mutiny.

This was how it arose and how it was quelled:— 205

'*Thursday, September 1883, off New Ireland.*—At 4 P.M. calm, the ship being close under the land and driving rapidly, with a strong current, farther inshore. The captain ordered the starboard bow boat to be lowered for the purpose of towing the vessel's head round in such a position that the current might take her on the starboard bow, and cause her to drift off shore. The boat was consequently lowered, and the mate ordered Henry Spratt to take the place of one of the boat's crew, who was at that moment on the foretop-gallant masthead looking out for whales. Spratt refused to do so, saying that he didn't belong to any boat, and that it was his watch below. He continued to disobey the repeated orders of the mate till the matter was noticed by the captain, who called out, "Make that man go in the boat," when he at length did so, but in an unwilling manner and muttering something which was not distinctly heard.

'On the boat being hoisted up, the captain addressed Spratt in the most temperate manner on the subject of his insubordination, and warned him as to his future conduct.

'Spratt became insulting in his manner and remarks, and ended by defying his superior officers and forcibly resisting the mate's attempt to bring him from the poop to the main deck for the purpose of being put in irons. While the irons were preparing, he bolted forward, and evading every attempt to secure him, stowed himself below in the forecastle. The crew evincing a strong disposition to support this outrageous conduct, the captain armed himself and his officers, and ordered the chief mate to bring Spratt from below. He refused peremptorily, and struck the mate several blows, attempting to overpower him and gain possession of his sword. After receiving two or three blows with the flat of the sword, he was, with the assistance of the third mate, conveyed on deck and made fast to the main-rigging.

'While the prisoner was being made fast, the greater part of the crew came aft in the most mutinous and tumultuous manner, exclaiming against his being flogged, and questioning the captain's right to do so.

'They were ordered forward, and some of them (Murray in particular) showing a disposition to disobey and force themselves aft, the captain found it necessary to strike them with the flat of his 206
sword, and to draw a rope across the deck parallel with the mainmast, warning the crew to pass it at their peril.

'The captain then, calling his officers around him, instituted a trial, and the whole of Spratt's conduct being calmly considered, he was unanimously sentenced to three dozen lashes.

'One dozen was immediately inflicted, and the prisoner was then asked if he repented of his misconduct, and would faithfully promise obedience for the remainder of the period that he should be permitted to remain on board. This promise being given, and the greatest contrition being expressed, he was unbound, and the remainder of his sentence commuted. As, however, he was considered a dangerous character, orders were issued that he should be treated as a prisoner (having the liberty of the deck abaft the mainmast) till he could be landed at New Georgia (the island from which he shipped), or elsewhere, if he thought fit.'

This *émeute*, which might have ended easily enough in a second Mutiny of the *Bounty*,—or as *did* happen when the crew of a whale-ship threw the captain overboard on the coast of New Zealand,—having been quelled by the use of strong measures promptly applied, the ordinary course of events went on uninterruptedly. On September 8 (Sunday, as it happened) two whales were killed. The canoes came off and hailed as usual. A violent gale seems to have come on directly the boiling was finished. They were alternately running under close-reefed topsails, wearing ship every four hours, being at 5 P.M. close under the high land under Cape St. Mary. Pumps going every watch, sea very high, ship labouring heavily—then close to Ford's Group. The gale lasted from Monday to the following Friday at midnight. One fancies that from the 'captain bold' downwards, they must have had 'quite a picnic of it.'

Spratt was what is known to South Sea mariners as a 'beach-comber'—one of a proverbially troublesome class of seamen. He had, probably, left the *Cadmus* for no good reason. However, the treatment seems to have cured him, as on September 1 we find the entry:—'Returned Spratt to his duty at his own request, he having promised the utmost civility, attention, and obedience. Fresh breeze and head sea till midnight,' etc.

On Saturday, April 27, 1833, the good teak-built barque cleared the Sydney Heads, outward bound, 207
and on Saturday, May 10, 1834, at 4 P.M., saw the heads of Port Jackson, and at midnight entered,

with light winds from north-east.

'*Sunday, May 11, 1834.*—Calm; the boats towing the ship up harbour. Pilot came on board. [They had come in without one—such a trifling bit of navigation, after scraping coral reefs by the score and being close inshore, with strong current setting in, not being worth considering.] At 5 P.M. came to anchor abreast of batteries. Most of the hands went ashore.'

And here, as 'Our Jack's come home again,' let us conclude this story of an old Log-book.

A KANGAROO SHOOT

Another month has passed. The calendar shows that the midwinter is over, and still the much-dreaded New England cold season has not asserted itself. Such weather as we have had in this last week of June has been mild and reassuring. Certes, there have been days when the western blast bit shrewdly keen, and ordinary garments afforded scant protection. In the coming spring there may be wrathful gales, sleet and hail—snow, even. We must not 'hollo till we are out of the wood.'

In the meantime it is not displeasing to see a trifle of mud again—marshes filling with their complement of water; to hear the bittern boom and the wild drake quack in the reed-bordered pool,—sights and sounds to which I have been a stranger for years and years.

The showers have refreshed the long-dry fallows, and a goodly breadth of wheat is now looking green and well-coloured. But to-day I marked three ploughs in one field, availing of the favourable state of tilth. The ordinary processes of a country neighbourhood are in full swing. Loads of hay, top-heavy and fragrant, meet you from time to time upon the metalled highway. A pony-carriage passes, much as it might do in the narrow lanes of Hertfordshire or Essex. The straggling briar and hawthorn hedges have been trimmed lately. All things savour strongly of the old land, from which the district takes its name. As in England, the guns are now in use and request; and amid my peregrinations it chances that I fall upon a custom of the country, which is partly of the nature of work and partly of play.

Yes, it is a kangaroo drive or battue—a measure rendered necessary by the persistent multiplication of these primeval forms, and their tendency to eat and destroy grass, out of all proportion to the value of their skins.

To this gathering I am bidden, and gratefully promise to keep tryst, divining that certain of the neighbours and notables will attend, with wives and daughters in sufficient abundance to warrant a dance after the sterner duties of the day.

And while on the subject of sport and recreation, how little is there worthy of the name in the country districts of Australia. Fishing is there none, or bait fishing at the best; hunting is a tradition of our forefathers; shooting, an infrequent pleasure. Since the introduction of the railway many of the ordinary travelling roads have been practically deserted. The well-tried friend or the agreeable stranger no longer halts before the hospitable homestead; months may pass before any social recreation takes place in the sequestered country homes which were wont to be so joyous. But just at the exact period when such resources were strained, the too prolific marsupial has come to the rescue. He it is who now poses as the rescuer of distressed damsels, and *ennuyées châtelaines*, wearying of solitary sweetness as of old; and yet he is classed by reckless utilitarians and prosaic legislators as a noxious animal! Behold us, then, a score of horsemen gaily sallying forth from a station of the olden time,—one of those happy, hospitable dwellings, where, whatever might be the concourse of guests, there was always room for one more,—well mounted, and mostly well armed with the deadly chokebore of the period. The day is cloudy and overcast; but no particular inconvenience is apprehended. The majority of the party are of an age lightly to regard wind or weather. The conversation is free and sportive. Compliments, more or less equivocal, are exchanged as to shooting or horsemanship, and a good deal of schoolboy frolic obtains. Dark hints are thrown out as to enthusiastic sportsmen who blaze away regardless of their 'duty to their neighbour,' and harrowing details given of the last victim at a former 'shoot.'

As we listen to these 'tales for the marines,' uncomfortable thoughts will suggest themselves. We recall the grisly incident in *The Interpreter*; when at a 'wild-schutz' the Prince de Vochsal's bullet glides off a tree-stem and finds a home in Victor De Rohan's gallant breast. Might such a *contretemps* occur to-day? Such things are always on the cards. May not even the rightful possessor of this susceptible heart be widowed ere this very eve, and the callow Boldrewoods be rendered nestless? No matter! One can but die once. It won't be quite so hot as Tel-el-kebir. Even there survivors returned. So we shake up our well-tried steed, shoulder the double-barrel, and ruffle it with the rest, serene in confidence as to the doctrine of chances.

And now after three or four miles' brisk riding o'er hill and dale—the country in these parts may certainly be described as undulating—we come upon a line of recently 'blazed' trees. These are half-way between a ravine or gully, and the crest of a range, to which it runs parallel. As the first man reaches a marked tree, he takes his station, the next in line halting as he comes to the succeeding one. The distances between are perhaps seventy or eighty yards, and each man stands sheltered on one side of his tree-trunk. The number of guns may be some ten or fifteen. The beaters, horsemen also, have gone forward some time since, and our present attitude is one of expectation.

In about ten minutes a sound as of galloping hoofs is heard upon the western side, of ringing stockwhips, shouts and yells, then nearer still the measured 'thud, thud' which tells of the full-grown marsupial. Bang goes a gun at the end of the line; the battle has begun. A curious excitement commences to stir the blood. It is not so much unlike the real thing. And a line of skirmishers in close quarters with an enemy's vedette would be posted like us, and perhaps similarly affected by the first crackling fire of musketry. Two more shots right and left nearer to our position; then half-a-dozen. A volley in our immediate neighbourhood raises expectation and excitement to the highest pitch. 'May Allah protect us! There is but one Prophet,' we have but time to ejaculate, and lo! the marsupial tyrant of our flocks and herds is upon us in force. Here they come, straight for our tree, seven or eight of all sizes, from the innocent 'joey' to the grim ancient, 'the old man,' in the irreverent vernacular of the colonists.

Now is our time. We step bravely from behind our tree and bang into the patriarch's head and

shoulders, as for one moment he arrests his mad career in wild astonishment at our sudden apparition.

He staggers, but does not fall. *Habet*, doubtless; but the half-instinctive muscular system enables 211
him to carry off the balance of a cartridge of double B.

As the affrighted flock dashes by, we wheel and accommodate the next largest with a broadside. It is more effective; a smashed hind-leg brings down the fur-bearing 'noxious animal,' which lies helpless and wistful, with large, deer-like eyes. A smart fusilade to the left reveals that the fugitives have fallen among foes in that direction.

The small arms being silent, we quit our trees, each man scalps his victims, giving the *coup-de-grâce* to such of the wounded as need a quietus. No quarter is given—neither age nor sex is spared. Even the infants, those tender weaklings the 'joeys,' are not saved. It is the horrible necessity of war —a war for existence. As thus: If the kangaroo are allowed to live and multiply, our sheep will starve. We can't live if they don't. Ergo, it is our life and welfare against Marsupial Bill's, and he, being of the inferior race, must go under.

One wonders whether this doctrine will be applied in the future to inferior races of men. As the good country of the world gets taken up, I fear me pressure will be brought to bear by the all-absorbing Anglo-Saxons, Teutons, and Slavs upon the weaker races. Wars of extermination have been waged ere now in the history of the world. They may be yet revived, for all we can predicate from existing facts.

As we go down the line the scalps are collected in a bag. We are thus enabled to compare notes as to success. One gentleman has five kangaroos lying around him; he is not certain either whether an active neighbour has not done him out of a scalp. The collecting business having been completed, a move is made for the horses, hung up out of danger, and another paddock is 'driven' with approximate results.

A good morning's work has been done, and a sufficiency of bodily exercise taken by one o'clock, at which time a move is made towards a creek flat, where on the site of a deserted sheep-station, with yards proper, of the olden time, a substantial picnic lunch is spread. Appetites of a superior description seem to be universal, and a season of hearty enjoyment succeeds to that of action.

The spot itself might well have stood for the locality sketched in Lindsay Gordon's unpublished 212
poem. Strange that the poetic gift should enable the possessor to invest with ideal grace a subject so apparently prosaic and homely as a deserted shepherd's hut.

Can this be where the hovel stood?
  Of old I knew the spot right well;
One post is left of all the wood,
  Three stones lie where the chimney fell.

Rank growth of ferns has well-nigh shut
From sight the ruin of the hut;
There stands the tree where once I cut
  The M that interlaced the L.
  What more is left to tell?

As we were converging towards this spot before lunch, the smart shot of the gathering was made. A forester kangaroo, demoralised by the abnormal events of the day, came dashing up towards the party. He wheeled and fled as we met, and a snap shot but staggered him. Then one of the party dropped the reins on his horse's neck, and with a long shot rolled him over, dead as a rabbit.

A succession of 'drives' make a partial clearance of each paddock, all being taken in turn. The short winter day, accented by heavy showers in the afternoon, begins to darken as we ride homewards, damp but hilarious. The day had been successful on the whole. Plenty of fun, reasonable sport, manly exercise, and a fair bag. Nearly a hundred legal 'raisings' of 'h'ar' prove that the average has been over ten head per gun. Dry clothes, blazing fires, a warm welcome and sympathetic greetings, await us on arrival. The advantage of bearing trifling discomfort, to be compensated by unwonted luxury, presents itself to every logical mind. The dinner was a high festival, where mirth reigned supreme; while the ball in the evening—for had not all dames and demoiselles within twenty miles been impressed for the occasion?—fitly concluded the day's work with a revel of exceptional joyousness.

If there be a moral connected with this 'study in Black and White' it must be that while most people (excepting the advocates for the abolition of capital punishment) admit that it is a good and lawful deed to clear the 'noxious' marsupial off the face of the earth, we trust that the process will not be 213
so swift as to bring speedily to an end such enjoyable gatherings,—these sociable murder parties, wherein business and pleasure are happily conjoined, as in the battue at which I had the happiness to be present.

FIVE MEN'S LIVES FOR ONE HORSE

'Yes; it does seem a goodish price to pay for a half-bred mare—worth ten pound at the outside,' said old Bill, the cook for the rouseabouts at Jergoolah Station, one wet evening, as the men gathered round the fire after supper, with their pipes in their mouths. It had been wet for three days, so there was no shearing. Very little work for the other men either—half a hundred strong—as the wet-fleeced sheep were best left alone. The shearers were sulky of course. They were eating (and paying for) their own rations. But the ordinary 'pound-a-week men,' whose board, with lodging, was provided for them gratis, were philosophically indifferent to the state of the weather.

'I don't care if it rains till Christmas,' remarked a dissipated-looking youth, who had successfully finished a game of euchre with a dirty pack of cards and an equally unclean companion. 'It's no odds to us, so long's the creeks don't rise and block us goin' to the big smoke to blue our cheques. I don't hold with too much fine weather at shearin' time.'

'Why not?' asked his late antagonist, staring gloomily at the cards, as if he held them responsible for his losses.

'Why not?' repeated the first speaker; ''cause there's no fun in watchin' of bloomin' shearers makin' their pound and thirty bob a day while we can't raise a mag over three-and-six—at it all hours like so many workin' bullocks, and turned out the minute shearin's over, like a lot of unclaimed strangers after a cattle muster.'

'Why did ye come here at all?' asked a tall, broad-shouldered 'corn-stalk' from the neighbourhood of Penrith; 'nobody asked yer. There was plenty for the work afore you struck in. It's you town larrikins that spoil the sheds—blackguardin' and gamblin' and growlin' from daylight till dark. If I was the boss I'd set bait for ye, same's the dingoes.'

'You shut up and go home to yer pumpkin patch,' retorted the card-player, with sudden animation. 'You Sydney-siders think no one can work stock but yourselves. You've no right this side of the Murrumbidgee, if it comes to that; and I'd make one of a crowd to start you back where you come from, and all your blackleg lot.'

'Put up your hands, you spieler!' said the New South Wales man, making one long stride towards the light-weight, who, standing easily on guard, appeared in no way anxious to decline the combat.

'Come, none of that, you Nepean chap,' said a good-humoured, authoritative voice; 'no scrappin' till shearin's over, or I'll stop your pay. Besides, it's a daylight start to-morrow morning. I've a paddock to clear, and the glass is rising. The weather's going to take up.' This was the second overseer, whose word was law until the 'cobbler' was shorn, and the last man with the last sheep left the shed amid derisive cheers. After a little subdued 'growling,' the combatants, there being no grog to inflame their angry passions, subsided.

'What's that old Bill was sayin' about horses and men's lives? I heard it from outside,' demanded the centurion. 'Any duffing going on?'

'Why, Joe Downey passed the remark,' made answer a wiry-looking 'old hand,' then engaged in mending one of his boots so neatly that he might have passed for a journeyman shoemaker, had it not been an open secret that he had learned the trade within the walls of a gaol, 'that if a man was to "shake" a horse here and ride him into Queensland, he'd never be copped.'

'Oh, he wouldn't, eh? And why did Bill get his hair off?'

'Well, Bill he says, "You're a d—d young fool," says he. "I've seen smarter men than you lose their lives over a ten-pound 'oss—yes, and bring better men to the same end."'

'But he said something about five men,' persisted the overseer. 'What did he mean by that?'

'What did I mean by that?' said the old man, who had now drawn nearer, in stern and strident tones. 'Why, what I say. It's God's truth, as I stand here, and the whole five of 'em's now in their graves—as fine a lot of men, too, as ever you see—all along of one blasted mare, worth about two fivers, and be hanged to her!'

The old man's speech had a sort of rude eloquence born of earnestness, which chained the attention of the variously composed crowd; and when Mr. Macdonald, the overseer, said, 'Come, Bill, let's have it. It's a lost day, and we may as well hear your yarn as anything else before turn-in time,' the old man, thus adjured, took his pipe out of his mouth, and seating himself upon a three-legged stool, prepared to deliver himself of a singular and tragic experience.

William James, chiefly referred to as 'old Bill,' was a true type of the veritable 'old hand' of pre-auriferous Australia. Concerning an early voyage to Tasmania he was reticent. He referred to the period ambiguously as 'them old times,' when he related tales of mystery and fear, such as could have only found place under the *régime* of forced colonisation. No hirsute ornament adorned his countenance. Deeply wrinkled, but ever clean-shaved, it was a face furrowed and graven, as with a life-record of the darker passions and such various suffering as the human animal alone can endure and live. Out of this furnace of tribulation old Bill had emerged, in a manner purified and reformed. He gave one the impression of a retired pirate—convinced of the defects of the profession, but regretful of its pleasing episodes. Considered as a bush labourer, a more useful individual to a colony did not live. Bill could do everything well, and do twice as much of it as the less indurated industrialist of a later day. Hardy, resourceful, tireless, true to his salt, old Bill had often been considered by the sanguine or inexperienced employer an invaluable servant. And so in truth he was, until the fatal day arrived when the 'cheque fever' assailed him. Then, alas! 'he was neither to

hand nor to bind.' No reason, interest, promise or principle had power to restrain him from the mad debauch, when for days—perhaps for weeks—all semblance of manhood was lost.

However, he was now in the healthful stage of constant work—well fed, paid and sheltered. Cooking was one of his many accomplishments: in it he excelled. While, despite his age, his courage and 217
determination sufficed to keep the turbulent 'rouseabouts' in order. In his leisure hours he was prone to improve the occasion by demonstrating the folly of colliding with the law—its certain victory, its terrible penalties. And of the gloomy sequel to a solitary act was the present story.

'I mind,' he began—pushing back the grey hair which he wore long and carefully brushed—'when I was workin' on a run near the Queensland border. It's many a long year ago—but that says nothin'; some of you chaps is as young and foolish as this Jack Danvers as I'm a-goin' to tell ye about. Well, some of us was startin' a bit of a spree like, after shearin'; we'd all got tidy cheques; some was goin' one way and some another. Jack and his mate to Queensland, where they expected a big job of work. Just as we was a-saddlin' up—some of us had one neddy, some two—a mob of horses comes by. I knew who they belonged to—a squatter not far off. Among 'em was a fine lump of a brown filly, three year old, half bred, but with good action.

'"That's a good filly," says Jack—he'd had a few glasses—"she could be roped handy in the old cattle-yard near the crick. Lead easy too, 'long with the other mokes."

'"Don't be a darned fool, Jack," says I; "there'll be a bloomin' row over her, you take it from me. She's safe to be missed, and you'll be tracked up. D—n it all, man," says I, "what's a ten-pound filly for a man to lose his liberty over? If it was a big touch it might be different."

'"You're a fine cove to preach," says he, quite savage. The grog had got into his head, I could see. "Mind your own —— business." I heard his mate (he was a rank bad 'un) say something to him, and they rode away steady; but the same road that the "mob" had gone. I went off with some other chaps as wer' inside having a last drink, and thought no more about Jack Danvers and the brown filly till nigh a year after. Then it come out. The filly'd been spotted, working in a team, by the man that bred her. The carrier bought her square and honest; had a receipt from a storekeeper. They found the storekeeper in Queensland; he'd bought her from another man. "What sort of a man?"—"Why, a tall, good-looking chap, like a flash shearer." Word went to the police at Warwillah. 218
It was Jack Danvers of course; they'd suspected him and his mate all the time.

'Well, Jack was nabbed, tho' he was out on a Queensland diggin' far enough away. But they sent up his description from the shed we'd left together, and he was brought down in irons, as he'd made a fight of it. The storekeeper swore to him positive as the man that had sold him the brown J.D. filly—old Jerry Dawson's she was. The jury found him guilty and he got three years.

'Now I'm on to the part of the play when the "ante-up" comes in. You mind me, you young fellers, it *always does* sooner or later. He'd no call to shake that filly. I said so then, and I say so now. And what come'd of it? Listen and I'll tell you—*Death* in five chapters—and so simple, all along of an unbroke filly!

'Now Jack wa'n't the man to stop inside of prison walls if he could help it. He and another chap make a rush one day, knock over the warder and collar his revolver. Another warder comes out to help; Jack shoots him dead, and they clear. *Man's life number one.* Big reward offered. They stick up a roadside inn next. Somebody gave 'em away. Police waitin' on 'em as they walk in—dead of night. Soon's they see the police, Jack shoots the innkeeper, poor devil! thought he'd sold 'em. *Man's life number two.* Jack and his mate and the police bang away at each other at close quarters —trooper wounded—Jack shot dead—mate wounded, dies next day. *Men's lives number four.*

'Who gave the office to the police and collared the blood-money? Friend of Jack's, a pal. Five hundred quid was too much for him. What became of *him*? Job leaked out somehow—friends and family dropped him. The money did him no good. Took to drinking straight ahead, and died in the horrors within the year. *Men's lives number five.*

'Yes; he was the fifth man to go down. Two pound apiece their lives fetched! They're in their graves because Jack Danvers was a d—d fool, and when he was young, strong, good-looking and well-liked, must go and duff a man's mare out of sheer foolishness. He didn't see what was to come of it, or he'd 'a cut off his right hand first. But that's the way of it. We don't see them things till it's *too late*. But mark my words, you young chaps as has got all the world before you—take a fool's advice. *It* 219
don't pay to "go on the cross"—never did; and there's no one has cause to know it better than old Bill James.'

'By George!' said the overseer, 'that's the best yarn I have heard for a year. And if the parson preaches a better sermon when he holds service in the woolshed next Sunday, I'll be surprised.'

REEDY LAKE STATION

The Post-office clock in Bourke Street, Melbourne, is about to strike six, in the month of June 1858. At this 'everlastingly early hour A.M. in the morning' (as remarked by Mr. Chuckster), I am the box-passenger of Cobb's coach, *en route* for Bendigo. The team of greys stand motionless, save for a faint attempt to paw on the part of the near-side leader. The first stroke vibrates on high. Mr. Jackson, with an exclamation, tightens his 'lines.' The six greys plunge at their collars, and we are off.

There was no Spencer Street terminus in those days. We were truly thankful to King Cobb. I, for one, was glad to get over a hundred miles of indifferent road in a day—winter weather, too. We did not grumble so comprehensively as latter-day travellers.

Remembered yet, how, when we came to the long hill at Keilorbridge, the driver let his horses out when half-way down. The pace that we went 'was a caution to see.' The wheel-spokes flew round, invisible to the naked eye. The coach rocked in a manner to appal the nervous. The horses lay down to it as if they were starting for a Scurry Stakes. But it was a good piece of macadam, and we were half-way up to the next hill before any one had time to think seriously of the danger.

Nobody, of course, would have dared to have addressed the driver upon the subject. In those flush days, when both day and night coaches loaded well, when fares were high and profits phenomenal, he was an autocrat not to be lightly approached. It almost took two people to manage a communication—one to bear the message from the other. Silent or laconic, master of his work in a marvellous degree, he usually resented light converse, advice infuriated him, and sympathy was outrage.

The roads were bad, even dangerous in places. Muddy creeks, bush-tracks, sidelings, washed-out crossings, increased the responsibilities and tried the tempers of these pioneer sons of Nimshi. Men of mark they mostly were. Americans to a man in that day, though subsequently native-born Australians, acclimatised Irishmen, and other recruits of merit, began to show up in the ranks.

I remember the astonishment of a newly-arrived traveller at seeing Carter, a gigantic, fair-bearded Canadian, coming along a baddish road one wet day, with seven horses and a huge coach, containing about fifty Chinamen. How he swayed the heavy reins with practised ease, his three leaders at a hand-gallop; how he piloted his immense vehicle through stumps and ruts, by creek and hillside, with accuracy almost miraculous to the uninitiated.

Mr. Carter was not a 'man of much blandishment.' I recall the occasion, when a spring having gone wrong, he was, with the assistance of a stalwart passenger, silently repairing damage. A frivolous insider commenced to condole and offer suggestions in a weakly voluble way. 'Go to h—l,' was the abrupt rejoinder, which so astonished the well-meaning person, that he retreated into the coach like a rabbit into a burrow, and was silent for hours afterwards.

One always had the consciousness, however, that whatever could be done by mortal man, would be accomplished by them. Accidents might happen, but they belonged to the category of the inevitable.

One dark night, near Sawpit Gully, a tire came off. Al. Hamilton (poor fellow! he was killed by an upset in New South Wales afterwards) was off in a minute; found his way to the smith's house; had him back in an inconceivably short time; left word for us to get the fire lighted and blown up—it was cold, and we thought that great fun; and before another man would have finished swearing at the road, the darkness, and things in general, the hammer was clinking on the red-hot tire, the welding was progressing, and in three-quarters of an hour we were bowling along much as before. We had time to make up, and did it too. But suppose the blacksmith would not work? Not work! He was Cobb and Co.'s man—that is, he did all their 'stage' repairs. Well he knew that the night must be to him even as the day when their humblest vehicle on the road needed his aid. As a firm they went strictly by results and took no excuses. If a man upset his coach and did damage once, he was shifted to another part of the line. If he repeated the accident, he was dismissed. There was no appeal, and the managing body did not trouble about evidence after the first time. If he was negligent, it served him right. If he was unlucky, that was worse.

The journey to Bendigo was accomplished at the rate of nine miles an hour, stoppages included. It was midwinter. The roads were deep in places. It was therefore good-going, punctual relays, and carefully economised time, which combined to land us at Hefferman's Hotel before darkness had set in. As usual a crowd had collected to enjoy the great event of the day.

Bendigo was in that year a very lively town, with a population roused to daily excitement by fortunes made or lost. Gold was shovelled up like sugar in bankers' scoops, and good money sent after bad in reckless enterprise, or restored a hundredfold in lucky ventures.

Here I was to undergo a new experience in company with Her Majesty's Mails.

As I rather impatiently lingered outside of Hefferman's after breakfast next morning, an unpretending tax-cart, to which were harnessed a pair of queer, unmatched screws, drove up to the door. 'German Charlie'—his other name I never knew—driver and contractor, informed me that I was the only passenger, lifted my valise, and the talismanic words 'Reedy Creek' being pronounced, vowed to drop me at the door. He had always parcels for Mr. Keene. This gentleman's name he pronounced with bated breath, in a tone of deepest veneration.

Beyond all doubt would I be landed there early on the morrow.

I mounted the Whitechapel, saw my overcoat and valise in safely, and, not without involuntary

distrust, committed myself to Charlie's tender mercies. He gave a shout, he raised his whip—the off-side horse made a wild plunge; the near-side one, blind of one eye, refused to budge. Our fate hung on the balance apparently, when a man from the crowd quietly led off the unwilling near-side, and we dashed away gloriously. The pace was exceptional, but it was evidently inexpedient to slacken speed. We flew down the main street, and turned northward, along a narrow track, perilously near to yawning shafts, across unsafe bridges, over race channels; along corduroy roads, or none at all, our headlong course was pursued. The sludge-invaded level of Meyer's Flat is passed. Bullock Creek is reached, all ignorant of reservoirs and weirs, and a relay of horses driven in from the bush is demanded. 223

A smart boy of fourteen had the fresh team, three in number, ready for us in the yard. He felt it necessary to warn us. They 'were not good starters, that was a fact.' The statement was strictly correct. One horse was badly collar-galled, one a rank jib. The leader certainly had a notion of bolting; his efforts in that direction were, however, neutralised by the masterly inactivity of his companions. After much pushing, persuasion, and profane language, we effected a departure.

That the pace was kept up afterwards may be believed. Sometimes the harness gave way, but as the shaft and outrigger horses were by this time well warmed, they did not object to again urge on their wild career.

We stopped at the 'Durham Ox Inn' that night, then a solitary lodge in the wilderness, a single building of brick, visible afar off on the sea-like plain, which stretched to the verge of the horizon. Woods Brothers and Kirk had at that time, if I mistake not, just concluded to purchase Pental Island from Ebden and Keene, but were debating as to price. The pasture seemed short and sparse, after the deep, rich western sward, but overtaking a 'mob' of Messrs. Booth and Argyle's cattle farther on, I felt satisfied as to its fattening qualities. Each cow, calf, steer, and yearling in the lot was positively heaped and cushioned with fat. They looked like stall-fed oxen. And this in June! I thought I saw then what the country could do. I was correct in my deduction, always supposing the important factor of *rain* not to be absent. Of this, in my inexperience, I took no heed. In my favoured district there was always a plentiful supply; sometimes, indeed, more than was agreeable or necessary.

Kerang was passed; Tragowel skirted; Mount Hope, then in the occupation of Messrs. Griffith and Greene, reared its granite mass a few miles to the south. As Sir Thomas Mitchell stood there, gazing over the illimitable prairie, rich with giant herbage and interspersed but with belts and copses of timber, planted by Nature's hand, the veteran explorer exclaimed with a burst of enthusiasm, 'Australia Felix! This is indeed Australia Felix!' 224

Steady stocking and an occasional dry season had somewhat modified the standard of the nutritive grasses and salsolaceous plants, at this point advantageously mingled. But that the country was superlative in a pastoral point of view may be gathered from the fact that, upon my first visit to the homestead a few weeks afterwards, I saw five thousand weaners—the whole crop of lambs for the previous year—*shepherded in one flock*. Very fine young sheep they were, and in excellent condition. Of course it was on a plain, but, unless the pasturage had been exceptional, no shepherd could have kept such a number together.

Later in the afternoon my Teutonic conductor, who had been going for the last twenty miles like the dark horseman in Burger's ballad, pulled up at Reedy Lake Head Station. There dwelt the resident partner and autocrat of his district, Mr. Theophilus Keene.

I saw a slight, fair man with an aquiline nose, a steady grey eye, and an abundant beard, who came out of a neat two-roomed slab hut and greeted me with polished courtesy. 'He was extremely glad to see me. He had looked forward to my coming this week in terms of a letter he had received from Messrs. Ryan and Hammond, but, indeed, had hardly expected that I would trust myself to their mail.'

Mr. Keene, whom I saw then for the first time, was probably verging on middle age, though active and youthful in appearance, above the middle height, yet not tall—of a figure inclined indeed to spareness. He impressed me with the idea that he was no commonplace individual.

He carried nothing of the bushman about his appearance, at home or in town, being careful and *soigné* as to his apparel, formal and somewhat courtly in his address. He scarcely gave one the idea of a dweller in the waste; yet the roughest experiences of overlanding squatter-life, of a leader of the rude station and road hands, had been his. He looked more like a dandy Civil Servant of the upper grades. Yet he was more than a pioneer and manager—an astute diplomatist, a clever correspondent, an accurate accountant. The books of the Reedy Lake Station were kept as neatly as those of a counting-house. The overseer's sheep-books, ration accounts, and road expenses were audited as correctly as if in an office. The great station-machine revolved easily, and, though unaided by inventions which have smoothed the path of latter-day pastoralists, was a striking illustration of successful administration. 225

This large and important sheep property, as it was held to be in those primeval times, had considerably over 150,000 sheep on its books. Reedy Lake stood for the whole, but Quambatook, Murrabit, Lake Boga, Liegar, Pental Island and other runs were also comprised within its boundaries. These were separate communities, and were, upon the subdivision of the property, sold as such. These were worked under the supervision of overseers and sub-managers, each of whom had to render account to Mr. Keene—a strict one, too—of every sheep counted out to the shepherds of the division in his charge.

Mr. Ebden, erstwhile Treasurer of Victoria and for some years a member of Parliament, was the senior partner. He had sagaciously secured Mr. Keene, then wasting his powers on the Lower

Murray, by offering him a third share of the property, with the position of resident partner and General Manager. Mr. Ebden, residing in Melbourne, arranged the financial portion of the affairs, while Mr. Keene was the executive chief, with almost irresponsible powers, which he used unreservedly—no doubt about that.

This was the day, let it be premised, of 'shepherding,' pure and simple. There were, in that district at least, no wire fences, no great enclosures, no gates, no tanks. Improvements, both great and small, were looked upon as superfluous forms of expensiveness. To keep the shepherds in order, to provide them with rations and other necessaries, to see that they neither lost the sheep nor denied them reasonable range,—these were the chief duties of those in authority. And tolerably anxious and engrossing occupation they afforded.

Thus the great Reedy Lake Head Station, always mentioned with awe, north of the Loddon, was not calculated to strike the stranger with amazement on account of its buildings and constructions, formed on the edge of the fresh-water lake from which it took its name. The station comprised Mr. Keene's two-roomed hut aforesaid; also a larger one, where the overseers, young gentlemen, and strangers abode—known as The Barracks; the kitchen, a detached building; the men's huts, on the shore of the lake, at some considerable distance; an inexpensive, old-fashioned woolshed might be discerned among the 'old-man salt-bush' nearly a mile away; a hundred acre horse-paddock, surrounded by a two-railed sapling fence; a stock-yard—*voilà tout*; there was, of course, a store. These were all the buildings thought necessary for the management of £150,000 worth of sheep in that day. How different would be the appearance of such a property now! 226

The special errand upon which I had journeyed thus far was to inspect and, upon approval, to accept an offer in writing, which I carried with me, of the Murrabit Station, one of the subdivisions of the Reedy Lake property, having upon it sixteen thousand sheep and *no improvements whatever*, except the shepherds' huts and a hundred hurdles. The price was £24,000—one-third equal to cash, the remainder by bills extending over three years.

The tide of investment had set in strongly in the direction of sheep properties, near or across the Murray. I had followed the fashion for the purpose, presumably, of making the usual fortune more rapidly than through the old-fashioned medium of cattle. To this end it was arranged that Mr. Keene and I, with one of the overseers whom I had known previously, should on the morrow ride over and inspect the Murrabit country and stock, lying some twenty miles distant from Reedy Lake.

It is held to be bad form in Bushland to mount an intending purchaser badly. It is unnecessary to say that it was not done in this case. No detail was omitted to produce a state of cheerful self-complacency, suited to the distinguished rôle of guest and buyer. When Mr. Keene's famous pony Billy, an animal whose fame was heralded in two colonies, and from the Loddon to the Murrumbidgee, was led forth, I felt I was indeed the favoured guest. He certainly was 'the horse you don't see now,' or, if so, very very rarely. Neat as to forehand, with a round rib and powerful quarter, fast, easy, and up to weight, he was difficult to match. The area from Kerang northwards was known as 'salt-bush' country. But little grass showed except on the edges of watercourses. Bare patches of red sandy loam between the salsolaceous plants did not lead the early explorers to consider it first-rate pasturage. Varieties, however, were plentiful, from the 'old-man salt-bush,' seven to ten feet high, to the dwarf-growing but fattening plants on the plain. The cotton-bush, too, known to indicate first-class fattening country, was plentiful. Perhaps the best testimony to the quality of the herbage, however, and which I was sufficiently experienced to appreciate, was the uniform high health and condition of every flock of sheep that we saw. Nothing could be finer than their general appearance, as indeed is always the case in reasonably-stocked salt-bush country; no foot-rot, no fluke, and, *absit omen*, no sheep-scab. This dire disease was then, unhappily, common in Western Victoria. It had been a fair season. Everything was fit to bear inspection. The wether flock looked like donkeys for size, the breeding ewes were fit for market, the weaners precociously fat and well-grown. Nothing could look better than the whole array. 227

Besides the salt-bush country, plains chiefly, and a large dry lake, there was an important section of the run known as 'The Reed-beds,' which I was anxious to visit. This tract lay between Lake Boga, a large fresh-water lake on one side, the Murrabit, an anabranch, and the south bank of the Murray. In order to ride over this it was arranged that we should camp at the hut of a shepherd, known as 'Towney,' on Pental Island, thence explore the reed-beds and see the remaining sheep on the morrow.

Pental Island, formed by the Murrabit, a deep wide stream, which leaves the main river channel and re-enters lower down, we found to be a long, narrow strip of land, having sound salt-bush ridges in the centre, with reed-beds on either side. Crossing by a rude but sufficient bridge, we discovered Mr. 'Towney' living an Alexander Selkirk sort of life, monarch of all he surveyed, and with full charge of some ten or twelve thousand sheep turned loose. The bridge being closed with hurdles, they could not get away. His only duty was to see that no enterprising dingo swam over from Murray Downs on the opposite side and ravaged the flock.

The night was cloudless and starlit, lovely in all aspects, as are chiefly those of the Riverina—an absolutely perfect winter climate. The strange surroundings, the calm river, the untroubled hush of the scene, the chops, damper, and tea, all freshly prepared by Towney, were enjoyable enough. After a talk by the fire, for the night air was cool, and a smoke, we lay down on rugs and blankets and slept till dawn. Our entertainer was dejected because he had not a Murray cod to offer us. 'If we had only come last week.' 'Tis ever thus. 228

That day's ride showed me the reed-beds in the light of sound, green, quickly-fattening pastures. At one angle of the Murrabit, on *my* run—for my run, indeed, it was destined to be—there were two flocks of sheep, five thousand in all, of which the shepherds and hut-keeper inhabited the same hut.

It was managed thus. One flock was camped on the northern side of the bridge, one on the other. The hut-keeper, long disestablished, but then considered an indispensable functionary, cooked for both shepherds. £30 a year with rations was the wage for the shepherds; £25 for the hut-keeper.

Then there was a frontage of, perhaps, a mile and a half to the southern end of Lake Boga. This noble fresh-water lake, having shelving, sandy shores, is filled by the rising of the Murray. On the bluff, to the right of the road to Swan Hill, was a curious non-Australian cottage, built by Moravian missionaries, and situated upon a reserve granted to them by the Government of Victoria. These worthy personages, becoming discouraged at the slow conversion of the heathen, or deeming the *locale* unsuitable, sold their right and interest to Messrs. Ebden and Keene. I decided to place the head station close by, and there, I suppose, it is at the present day.

A picturesque spot enough. Northward the eye ranged over the broad, clear waters of the lake, now calm in the bright sunshine, now lashed into quite respectable waves by a gale. Eastward, over a wide expanse of reed-bed, dead level and brightly green, you traced the winding course of the great river by the huge eucalypti which lined its banks. Around was the unending plain, on which the salt-bushes grew to an unusual size, while across the main road to Melbourne, fenced off by the horse-paddock of the future, was a cape of pine-scrub, affording pleasing contrast to the wide, bare landscape.

We returned to Reedy Lake that evening, and before I slept was the contract signed, accepting 229
price and terms; signed in high hope, and apparently with a fair prospect of doubling the capital invested, as had done many another. Had I but known that this particular indenture, freely translated, *should have run thus*:—

'I hereby bind myself to take the Murrabit Run and stock at the price agreed, and to lose in consequence every farthing I have ever made, within five years from this date.

'(Signed) R. Boldrewood.'

Why can't one perceive such results and consequences now and then? Why are so many of the important contracts and irrevocable promises of life entered into during one's most sanguine, least reflective period? Will these questions ever be answered, and where? Still, were the veil lifted, what dread apparitions might we not behold! 'Tis more mercifully arranged, be sure.

Thus we entered with a light heart into this Sedan business, much undervaluing our Prussians. After visiting Melbourne, it was arranged that delivery of stock and station should be taken within a specified time.

I didn't know much about sheep then; what a grim jest it reads like *now*! I had leisure for reflection on the subject in the aftertime. I judged it well to leave the apportioning of the flocks to my host and entertainer. He did far better for me than I could have done myself. I had every reason to be satisfied with the quality of the sixteen thousand instruments of my ruin. There was a noble flock of fat wethers, three thousand strong; for the rest, 'dry' ewes, breeders, weaners, two-tooths, were all good of their sort. After engaging one of the overseers, a shrewd, practical personage, I considered the establishment of my reputation as a successful wool-grower to be merely a question of time.

The Fiend is believed to back gamblers at an early stage of their career. It looked as if His Eminence gave my dice a good shake *pour commencer*. The first sale was brilliant: the whole cast of fat sheep to one buyer (at the rate of £1 each for wethers, and 15s. for ewes)—over six thousand in all. They were drafted, paid for, and on their way to Melbourne in the afternoon of the day on which the buyer arrived. The lambing was good; the wool sold at a paying price, considering the primitive 230
style of washing. Next year, of course, all this would be altered. Meanwhile I surveyed the imprint 'R.B.' over Murrabit on the wool-bales with great satisfaction.

'But surely,' says the practical reader, 'things were going well; season, prices, increase satisfactory. How did the fellow manage to make a mull of it?' There *were* reasons. The cost of a run bought 'bare' is unavoidably great. Huts, yards, woolshed, homestead, paddock, brushyards, lambers, washers, shearers, all cost money—are necessary, but expensive. The cheque stream was always flowing with a steady current, it seemed to me. Fat stock, too, the great source of profit in that district, gradually declined in price. Interest and commission, which amounted to 12½ per cent or more, in one way and another, gradually told up. In 1861 an unprecedented fall took place in cattle, such as had not been felt 'since the gold.' Beeves fell to the price of stores. Buyers could not meet their engagements. The purchaser of my cattle-station in Western Victoria was among these. He was compelled to return it upon my hands after losing his cash deposit. Thus seriously hampered, the finale was that I 'came out' without either station or a shilling in the world. What was worse, having caused others to suffer through my indebtedness.

The Murrabit was then sold, well improved, though not fenced, with twenty thousand good sheep on it, at £1: 5s. per head—£25,000—nearly the same price at which I had purchased; but with four thousand more sheep, and costly improvements added, including a woolshed which had cost £500. The new purchaser paid £10,000 down, and I was sorry to hear afterwards lost everything in about the time it had taken me to perform the same feat. But he had, I believe, the expense of fencing—an economical luxury then so impossible for a squatter to deny himself. In addition to this, that terrible synonym of ruin, sheep-scab, broke out in the district, and in time among the Murrabit sheep. This, of course, necessitated endless expenditure in labour, dressing-yards, dips, and what not. No further explanation is needed by the experienced as to why my equally unlucky successor went under.

Talking of scab—now a tradition in Australia—it was then plentiful in Victoria, with the exception of certain favoured districts, among which the trans-Loddon country was numbered. Now in the days when Theophilus was king, foreseeing the ruin of the district (or chiefly, perhaps, to Ebden and Keene) which would ensue should the disease get a footing, he fought against its introduction, either by carelessness or greed, with all the vigilant energy of his nature. 231

There are men of contemplation, of science, of culture, of action. My experience has been that these qualities are but rarely united in the same individual. This may be the reason why 'Government by Talk' often breaks down disastrously—the man who can talk best being helpless and distracted when responsible action is imminent. This by the way, however. Mr. Keene did not dissipate his intelligence in the consideration of abstract theories. He never, probably, in his life saw three courses open to him. But in war time he struck hard and promptly. In most cases there was no need to strike twice.

Touching the scab pestilence, this is how he 'saved his country.' Primarily he put pressure upon his neighbours, until they formed themselves into a league, offensive and defensive. They did not trust to the Government official, presumably at times overworked, but they paid a private Inspector £200 a year, furnishing him also with serviceable horses and free quarters.

This gentleman—Mr. Smith, let us call him—an active young Australian, kept the sharpest look-out on all sheep approaching the borders of the 'Keene country.' He summoned the persons in charge if they made the least infraction of the Act, examined the flock most carefully for appearances of disease, and generally made life so unpleasant, not to say dangerous, for the persons in charge, that they took the first chance of altering their route. If there was the faintest room for doubt, down came Keene, breathing threats and slaughter. And only after the most rigid, prolonged inspection were they allowed to pass muster. Why persons selfishly desired to carry disease into a clean district may be thus explained. Store sheep—especially if doubtful as to perfect cleanliness—were low in price in Western Victoria. Near to or across the New South Wales border they were always high. If, therefore, they could be driven to the Murray, the profits were considerable. No doubt such 232
were made, at the risk of those proprietors through whose stations they passed. A *single sheep* left behind from such a flock, after weeks likely to 'break out' with the dire disease, might infect a district. Mr. Keene had fully determined that 'these accursed gains' should not be made at *his* expense.

One day he received notice from Mr. Smith that a lot of five thousand sheep of suspicious antecedents was approaching his kingdom. They were owned by a dealing squatter, who, having country both clean and doubtful, made it a pretext for travelling sheep, picked up in small numbers. 'From information received' just ere they had entered the clean country, Mr. Keene appeared with a strong force, with which he took possession of them under a warrant, obtained on oath that they were presumably scabby, had them examined by the Government official, who found the fatal acarus, obtained the necessary authority, *cut their throats, and burned the five thousand to the last sheep*.

After this holocaust, remembered to this day, it became unfashionable to travel sheep near the Reedy Lake country. He 'who bare rule over all that land' rested temporarily from his labours. They were not light either, as may be inferred from a statement of one of his overseers to me that about that time, from ceaseless work in the saddle, anxiety, and worry, he had reduced himself to an absolute skeleton, and from emaciation could hardly sit on his horse. Nothing, perhaps, but such unrelenting watch and ward could have saved the district from infection. But he won the fight, and for years after, not, indeed, until Theophilus I. was safe in another hemisphere, did marauders of the class he so harried and vexed dare to cross the Loddon northwards. As soon as the normal state of carelessness and 'nobody's business' set in (Mr. Smith having been discontinued), the event foreseen by him took place. The district became infected, and Reedy Lake itself, Murrabit, and other runs, all suffered untold loss and injury. Rabbits came in to complete the desolation. What with Pental Island being advertised to be let by tender in farms, dingoes abounding in the mallee, free selectors swarming from Lake Charm to the Murray, irrigation even being practised near Kerang, if Mr. Keene could return to the country where once he could ride for forty miles on end requiring any man he met to state what he was doing there, he would find himself a stranger in a 233
strange land. Without doubt he would take the first steamer back to England, hastening to lose sight and memory of a land so altered and be-devilled since the reign of the shepherd kings. Of this dynasty I hold 'Theophilus the First' to have been a more puissant potentate during his illustrious reign than many of the occupants of old-world thrones.

A FORGOTTEN TRAGEDY

It is difficult for the inhabitants of settled districts in Australia, where the villages, surrounded by farms or grazing estates, are now as well ordered as in rural England, to realise the nature of outrages which, in earlier colonial days, not infrequently affrighted these sylvan shades. It is well, however, occasionally to recall the sterner conditions under which our pioneers lived. The half-explored wilds saw strange things, when *émeutes* with murder and robbery thrown in compelled decisive action. In the year 1836 immense areas in the interior, described officially as 'Waste Lands of the Crown,' were occupied by graziers under pastoral licenses. Caution was exercised in the granting of these desirable privileges. It was required by the Government of the day that only persons of approved good character should receive them. Being merely permissive, they were liable to be withdrawn from the holders for immoral or dishonest conduct. When it is considered that the men employed in guarding the flocks and herds in these limitless solitudes were, in the great majority of cases, prisoners of the Crown, or 'ticket-of-leave' men, whose partially-expired sentences entitled them to quasi-freedom, it is not surprising that horse-and cattle-stealing, highway robbery, ill-treatment of aboriginals, and even darker crimes were rife.

The labourers of the day were composed of three classes, officially described as free, bond, and 'free by servitude.' This last designation, obscure only to the newly-arrived colonist, meant that the individual thus privileged had served his full term of imprisonment, or such proportion of it as entitled him to freedom under certain restrictions. He was permitted to come and go, to work for any master who chose to employ him (and most valuable servants many of them were), to accept the wages of the period, and generally to comport himself as a 'free man.' But he was restricted to a specified district, compelled at fixed periods to report himself to the police authorities, and he went in fear lest at any time through misconduct or evil report his 'ticket-of-leave' might be withdrawn, in which case he was sent back to penal servitude. The alternative was terrible. The man who the week before had been riding a mettled stock-horse amid the plains and forests of the interior, or peacefully following his flocks, with food, lodging, and social privileges, found himself virtually a slave in a chain-gang, dragging his heavy fetters to and fro in hard, distasteful labour. This deposition from partial comfort and social equality, though possibly caused by his own misconduct, occasionally resulted from the report of a vindictive overseer, or betrayal by a comrade. It may be imagined, therefore, what vows of vengeance were registered by the sullen convict, what bloody expiation was often exacted.

Taking into consideration the ludicrous disproportion of the police furnished by the Government of the day to the area 'protected'—say a couple of troopers for a thinly-populated district about the size of Scotland—it seems truly astonishing that malefactors should have been brought to justice at all. Even more so that armed and desperate felons should have been followed up and arrested within comparatively short distances of the scene of their misdeeds.

It says much for the alertness and discipline of the mounted police force of the day that in by far the greater number of these outrages the criminals were tracked and secured; more, indeed, for the active co-operation and public spirit of the country gentlemen of the land, who were invariably ready to render aid in carrying out the law at the risk of their lives, and, occasionally, to the manifest injury of their property.

Circumstances have placed in my hands the record of a murder which, in careful premeditation, as well as in the satanic malignity with which the details were carried out, seems pre-eminent amid the dark chronicles of guilt.

More than sixty years ago Mr. Thursby, a well-known magistrate and proprietor, residing upon his station, which was distant two hundred and fifty miles from Sydney, was awakened before daylight, when a note to this effect from the constable in charge at the nearest police-station was delivered to him:—

'Last night the lock-up was entered by armed men, and two prisoners removed. One man knocked at the door, stating that he was a constable with a prisoner in charge. I opened it; when two men rushed in, one of whom, presenting a pistol at me, ordered me into a corner, and covered my head with a blanket. I heard the door unlocked. When I freed myself the cell was empty.'

Upon receipt of this information, Mr. Thursby despatched a report to the Officer in charge of Police at Murphy's Plains, distant eighty-five miles. Taking with him the manager of a neighbouring station, and the special constable quartered there (a custom of the day), Mr. Thursby started in pursuit of the outlaws. Their tracks were not hard to follow in the dew of early morn, but near Major Hewitt's station, seven miles distant, they became indistinct. After losing much time the station was reached, and here a black boy was fortunately procured. With his aid the trail was regained, and followed over rough, mountainous country. Mr. Jones, the manager who had accompanied the party, informed Mr. Thursby that five of the convict servants assigned to the owner had run away previously—'taken to the bush.' They had committed depredations, and had been unsuccessfully followed by the mounted police, whose horses, after coming more than eighty miles, were fagged. However, two of them surrendered themselves next day. One man (Driscoll) was suspected of having spoken incautiously of the leader's doings (a man named Gore), who had vowed vengeance accordingly. Driscoll had been placed in the lock-up, along with Woods, a suspicious character, who said he was a native of Windsor, New South Wales. Gore and the other men were still at large.

After leading the party for some distance through the ranges, the black boy halted, and pointing to a thin thread of smoke, barely perceptible, said, 'There 'moke!' When they came to the fire from

which it proceeded, what a spectacle presented itself! On the smouldering embers was a human body, bound and *partially roasted*. It lay on its back, with legs and arms drawn up. The middle portion of the body was burned to a cinder, leaving the upper and lower extremities perfect. Mr. Thursby recognised the features of the man called Woods, who had been imprisoned the day before. The black boy was so horrified that he became useless as a tracker, and as the day was far advanced, Mr. Thursby had the body removed to Engleroi, a station not more than a mile distant. 237

Here fresh information was furnished. The tragedy deepened. Before daylight on the previous morning, Driscoll had knocked at the door of the shepherd's hut, breathless and half insane with terror, imploring them for the love of God to admit him as 'he was a murdered man.' Nothing more could be elicited from the shepherds, though it since appeared that they could have named one of the murderers. Fear of the 'Vehmgericht' of the day doubtless restrained them—fear of that terrible secret tribunal, administered by the convicts as a body, which in defiance of the law's severest penalties tried, sentenced, and in many cases *executed*, the objects of their resentment. The party decided later on to proceed to Mr. FitzGorman's head station, and on the way arrested and took with them the hut-keeper of the out-station. They did not know at the time (as was since proved) that he was one of the murderers.

On leaving the lock-up, the men had stolen the constable's blue cloth suit, and being informed at Tongah that a man in blue clothes had been met with, a few miles down the Taramba River, Mr. Thursby rode forward with the black boy, leaving the hut-keeper secured, to await his return. Some time was lost, as the tracks were not picked up at once, but on reaching Mr. FitzGorman's station, forty miles distant, at midnight, the man in blue clothes was discovered, housed for the night. He was at once secured. On being questioned, he said his name was Burns, and that he was looking for work. He produced a certificate, which did not impose upon his captor, who knew it to belong to the constable, who, being a ticket-of-leave man, required to hold such a document. In his bundle, when searched, several articles taken from the lock-up were found. Gore the bushranger and murderer stood confessed.

Mr. Thursby was at that time ignorant that the second murderer was already in his hands, but determined to follow up the pursuit, caused Gore to be mounted on one of the station horses, and rode back with as much speed as might be to Tongah. Suspecting the hut-keeper (whose name was Walker) of being in some way an accomplice of Gore, Mr. Thursby had both men lodged in the lock-up. Still unrelaxing in pursuit, and believing that the second murderer might be one of the three runaways from Major Hewitt's station, Mr. Thursby raised the country-side, and took such energetic measures that on the following day they were apprehended. 238

By this time the shepherds, gaining confidence from the capture of the outlaws, of whose vengeance they went in fear, commenced to make disclosures. The constable identified the hut-keeper (Walker) as the man who, at the point of the pistol, ordered him to stand in the lock-up. Driscoll knew him and Gore as the two men who removed him and Woods from the lock-up. He then went on to state that, after being hurried along for several miles after leaving the lock-up, they halted in a lonely place, where Gore ordered them to make a fire. When it was kindled to a blaze, Gore tied them back to back and blindfolded them. At this time Walker held the pistol. Driscoll heard a shot, when Woods dropped on the fire, dragging him with him. The bandage falling from his eyes, Walker struck him twice on the head with his pistol. In his agony, getting his hands free he ran for his life. He was followed for a considerable distance, but eventually escaped to Engleroi. Half an hour afterwards, Gore came up in search of him. What must have been the feelings of the hunted wretch, so lately a bound victim on his self-made funeral pile, when the armed desperado, who made so little of human life, reappeared? However, he contented himself with compelling Driscoll and the shepherds, among whom he was, to swear under tremendous penalties not to disclose the fact of his presence there.

Gore and Walker were brought before the nearest Bench of Magistrates and committed for trial at the next ensuing Assize Court.

There was not sufficient evidence, though a strong presumption, that the other runaways were implicated in the cold-blooded murder. It appeared to have been chiefly arranged by Gore and Walker—the former in order to be revenged on Driscoll, and the latter to get rid of Woods, who had threatened to give evidence against him for robbery and other misdeeds. No doubt their intention was to murder both men, destroying all evidence by burning their bodies. Driscoll had the good fortune to escape, and was thus enabled to give the necessary evidence at their trial. But though not directly implicated in the graver crime, the remaining three bushrangers—for such they were—lay under the charge of being associated with Gore in committing depredations which had alarmed the neighbourhood for the last six or seven weeks. They had not wandered far from the scene of their freebooting, and after eluding the police on several occasions, remained to be delivered up to justice by a party of civilians—headed, it is true, by an experienced and determined personage, exceptionally well mounted from one of the most famous studs in New South Wales. In that day the bushranger, desperate and ruthless though he may have been, was at a disadvantage compared to his modern imitator. He was mostly on foot. Horses were scarce and valuable. There were few stopping-places, except the stations of the squatters, where an armed, suspicious-looking stranger was either questioned or arrested. 'Shanties' had hardly commenced to plant centres of contagion in the 'lone Chorasmian waste.' The 'Shadow of Death Hotel' was in the future—fortunately for all sorts and conditions of men. 239

It is a curious coincidence, showing at once the just view taken of the circumstances of the locality and the means proper to lead to the extinction of 'gang robbery' (as the East India Company's servants termed the industry), that Mr. Thursby had just forwarded to the Legislative Council an estimate of the cost of a proposed Court of Petty Sessions at Wassalis. He also 'most respectfully

begged to submit for the consideration of His Excellency the Governor a suggestion that a mounted police force would be advantageously stationed there, as well for the protection of the district as for the purpose of connecting the detachments of police at Murphy's Plains and Curban.'

'Many a year is in its grave' since the incidents here recorded affrighted the dwellers in the lonely bush.

It is satisfactory to note that Wassalis was promoted to be a place where a Court of Petty Sessions is holden.

Walker and Gore, being found guilty, were sentenced to death, doubtless by Sir Francis Forbes, the Chief Justice of the day—indeed the first Chief Justice of Australia. They confessed their guilt in gaol, and were duly hanged—let us hope repenting of their crimes. The brother of the magistrate whose courage and energy led to their arrest, frequently visited them in gaol, where they confessed everything. The constable, on recommendation, was promoted. The police station at Wassalis is now organised and equipped with good horses, smart men, revolver at belt and carbine on thigh. Telegraphs in every direction are available for giving or receiving information; but it is doubtful whether armed and desperate felons, red-handed with the blood of their fellow-men, were ever more closely followed up, more quickly brought to justice, than the murderers of Woods.

THE HORSE YOU DON'T SEE NOW

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Many years ago I was summoned to attend the couch of a dear relative believed to be *in extremis*. The messenger arrived at my club with a buggy, drawn by a dark bay horse. The distance to be driven to Toorak was under four miles—the road good. I have a dislike to being driven. Those who have handled the reins much in their time will understand the feeling. Taking them mechanically from the man, I drew the whip across the bay horse. The light touch sent him down Collins Street East, over Prince's Bridge, and through the toll-bar gate at an exceptionally rapid pace. This I did not remark at the time, being absorbed in sorrowful anticipation.

During the anxious week which followed I drove about the turn-out—a hired one—daily; now for this or that doctor, anon for nurse or attendant. Then the beloved sufferer commenced to amend, to recover; so that, without impropriety, my thoughts became imperceptibly disengaged from her, to concentrate themselves upon the dark bay horse. For that he was no ordinary livery-stable hack was evident to a judge. *Imprimis*, very fast. Had I not passed everything on the road, except a professional trotter, that had not, indeed, so much the best of it? Quiet, too. He would stand unwatched, though naturally impatient. He never tripped, never seemed to 'give' on the hard, blue metal; was staunch up-hill and steady down. Needed no whip, yet took it kindly, neither switching his tail angrily nor making as if ready to smash all and sundry, like ill-mannered horses. Utterly faultless did he seem. But experience in matters equine leads to distrust. Hired out per day from a livery-stable keeper, I could hardly believe *that* to be the case.

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All the same I felt strongly moved to buy him on the chance of his belonging to the select tribe of exceptional performers, not to be passed over by so dear a lover of horseflesh as myself. Moreover, I possessed, curious to relate, a 'dead match' for him—another bay horse of equally lavish action, high courage, and recent accidental introduction. The temptation was great.

'I will buy him,' said I to myself, 'if he is for sale, and also if——' here I pulled up, got down in the road, and carefully looked him over from head to tail. He stepped quietly. I can see him now, moving his impatient head gently back and forward like a horse 'weaving'—a trick he had under all circumstances. Years afterwards he performed similarly to the astonishment of a bushranger in Riverina, whose revolver was pointed at the writer's head the while, less anxious indeed for his personal safety than that old Steamer—such was his appropriate name—should march on, and, having a nervous running mate, smash the buggy.

To return, however. This was the result of my inspection. Item, one broken knee; item, seven years old—within mark decidedly; legs sound and clean, but just beginning to 'knuckle' above the pasterns.

There was a conflict of opinions. Says Prudence, 'What! buy a screw? Brilliant, of course, but sure to crack soon. Been had that way before. I'm ashamed of you.'

Said Hope, 'I don't know so much about that. Knee probably an accident: dark night—heap of stones—anything. Goes like a bird. Grand shoulder. *Can't* fall. Legs come right with rest. Barely seven—quite a babe. Cheap at anything under fifty. Chance him.'

'I'll buy him—d—dashed if I don't.' I got in again, and drove thoughtfully to the stables of Mr. Washington, a large-sized gentleman of colour, hailing from the States.

'He's de favouritest animile in my stable, boss,' he made answer to me as I guardedly introduced the subject of purchase. 'All de young women's dead sot on him—donow's I cud do athout him, noways.'

Every word of this was true, as it turned out; but how was I to know? The world of currycombs and dandy-brushes is full of insincerities. *Caveat emptor!* I continued airily, 'You won't charge extra for this broken knee? What's the figure?' Here I touched the too yielding ankle-joint with my boot.

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That may have decided him—much hung in the balance. Many a year of splendid service—a child's life saved—a grand night-exploit in a flooded river, with distressed damsels nearly overborne by a raging torrent,—all these lay in the future.

'You gimme thirty pound, boss,' he gulped out. 'You'll never be sorry for it.'

'Lend me a saddle,' quoth I. 'I'll write the cheque now. Take him out; I can ride him away.'

I did so. Never did I—never did another man—make a better bargain.

I had partly purchased and wholly christened him to match another bay celebrity named Railway, of whom I had become possessed after this fashion. Wanting a harness horse at short notice a few months before, I betook myself to the coach depôt of Cobb and Co. situated in Lonsdale Street. Mr. Beck was then the manager, and to him I addressed myself. He ordered out several likely animals—from his point of view—for my inspection. But I was not satisfied with any of them. At length, 'Bring out the Railway horse,' said the man in authority. And out came, as I thought, rather a 'peacocky' bay, with head and tail up. A great shoulder certainly, but rather light-waisted—hem—possessed of four capital legs. Very fine in the skin—yes; still I mistrusted him as a 'Sunday horse.' Never was there a greater mistake.

'Like to see him go?' I nodded assent. In a minute and a half we were spinning up Lonsdale Street in an Abbot buggy, across William and down Collins Street, then pretty crowded, at the rate of fourteen miles an hour; Mr. Beck holding a broad red rein in either hand, and threading the ranks of vehicles with graceful ease.

'He can go,' I observed.

'He's a tarnation fine traveller, I tell you,' was the answer—a statement which I found, by after-experience, to be strictly in accordance with fact.

The price required was forty pounds. The which promptly paying (this was in 1860), I drove my new purchase out to Heidelberg that night. One of those horses that required of one nothing but to sit still and hold him; fast, game, wiry and enduring.

When I became possessed of Steamer, I had such a pair as few people were privileged to sit behind. 244
For four years I enjoyed as much happiness as can be absorbed by mortal horse-owner in connection with an unsurpassable pair of harness horses. They were simply perfect as to style, speed, and action. I never was passed, never even challenged, on the road by any other pair. Railway, the slower horse of the two, had done, by measurement, eight miles in half an hour. So at their best, both horses at speed, it may be guessed how they made a buggy spin behind them. Then they were a true match; one a little darker than the other, but so much alike in form, colour, and courage, that strangers never knew them apart. They became attached readily, and would leave other horses and feed about together, when turned into a paddock or the bush.

A check, however, was given to exultation during the first days of my proprietorship. Both horses when bought were low in flesh—in hard condition, certainly, but showing a good deal of bone. A month's stabling and gentle exercise caused them to look very different. The new buggy came home—the new harness. They were put together for the first time. Full of joyful anticipation I mounted the driving seat, and told the groom to let go their heads. Horror of horrors! 'The divil a stir,' as he remarked, could be got out of them. Collar-proud from ease and good living, they declined to tighten the traces. An indiscreet touch or two with the whip caused one horse to plunge, the other to hold back. In half-and-half condition I had seen both draw like working bullocks. Now 'they wouldn't pull the hat off your head,' my Australian Mickey Free affirmed.

By patience and persuasion I prevailed upon them at length to move off. Then it *was* a luxury of a very high order to sit behind them. How they caused the strong but light-running trap to whirl and spin!—an express train with the steam omitted. Mile after mile might one sit when roads were good, careful only to keep the pace at twelve miles an hour; by no means to alter the pull on the reins lest they should translate it into an order for full speed. With heads held high at the same angle, with legs rising from the ground at the same second of time, alike their extravagant action, their eager courage. As mile after mile was cast behind, the exclamation of 'Perfection, absolute perfection!' 245
rose involuntarily to one's lips.

In this 'Wale,' where deceitful dealers and plausible horses abound, how rare to experience so full-flavoured a satisfaction! None of us, however, are perfect all round. Flawless might be their action, but both Steamer and his friend Railway had 'a little temper,' the differing expressions of which took me years to circumvent. Curiously, neither exhibited the least forwardness in *single* harness.

Railway was by temperament dignified, undemonstrative, proud. If touched sharply with the whip he turned his head and gazed at you. He did not offer to kick or stop; such vulgar tricks were beneath him. But he calmly gave you to understand that he would not accelerate his movements, or start when unwilling, if you flogged him to death. No whip did he need, I trow. The most constant horse in the world, he kept going through the longest day with the tireless regularity of an engine.

They never became quite free from certain peculiarities at starting, after a spell or when in high condition. Years passed in experiments before I wrote myself conqueror. I tried the whip more than once—I record it contritely—with signal ill-success. It was truly wonderful why they declined to start on the first day of a journey. Once off they would pull staunchly wherever horses could stand. Never was the day too long, the pace too fast, the road too deep. What, then, was the hidden cause, the *premier pas*, which cost so much trouble to achieve?

Nervous excitability seemed to be the drawback. The fact of being attached to a trap in *double* harness appeared to overexcite their sensitive, highly-strung organisations. Was it not worth while, then, to take thought and care for a pair which could travel fifty or sixty miles a day—in front of a family vehicle filled with children and luggage—for a week together, that didn't cost a shilling a year for whip-cord, and that had *never* been passed by a pair on the road since I had possessed them? Were they not worth a little extra trouble?

Many trials and experiments demonstrated that there was but one solution. Success meant patience, with a dash of forethought. A little saddle-exercise for a day or two before the start. Then to begin early on the morning of the eventful day; to have everything packed—passengers and all— 246
in the buggy—coach fashion—before any hint of putting to. Both horses to be fed and watered at least an hour before. Then at the last moment to bring them out of the stable, heedfully and respectfully, avoiding 'rude speech or jesting rough.' Railway especially resented being 'lugged' awkwardly by the rein. If all things were done decently and in order, this would be the usual programme.

Steamer, more excitable but more amiable, would be entrusted to a groom. Silently and quickly they would be poled up, the reins buckled, and Railway's traces attached. All concerned had been drilled, down to the youngest child, to be discreetly silent. It was forbidden, on pain of death, to offer suggestion, much less to 't-c-h-i-c-k.' The reins were taken in one hand by paterfamilias, who with the other drew back Steamer's traces, oppressed with an awful sense of responsibility, as of one igniting a fuse or connecting a torpedo wire, and as the outer trace was attached, stepped lightly on to the front seat. The groom and helper stole backward like shadows. Steamer made a plunging snatch at his collar; Railway followed up with a steady rush; and we were off—off for good and all—for one hundred, two hundred, five hundred miles. Distance made no difference to *them*. The last stage was even as the first. They only wanted holding. Not that they pulled disagreeably, or

unreasonably either. I lost my whip once, and drove without one for six months. It was only on the first day of a journey that the theatrical performance was produced.

But this chronicle would be incomplete without reference to the sad alternative when the start did *not* come off at first intention. On these inauspicious occasions, possibly from an east wind or oats below sample, everything went wrong. Steamer sidled and pulled prematurely before the traces were 'hitched,' while Railway's reserved expression deepened—a sure sign that he wasn't going to pull at all. The other varied his vexatious plungings by backing on to the whippletree, or bending outwards, by way of testing the elasticity of the pole.

Nothing could now be done. Persuasion, intimidation, deception, had all been tried previously in vain. The recipe of paterfamilias, as to horse management, was to sit perfectly still with the reins 247
firmly held but moveless, buttoning his gloves with an elaborate pretence of never minding. All known expedients have come to nought long ago. Pushing the wheels, even down hill, is regarded with contempt; leading (except by a lady) scornfully refused. The whip is out of the question. 'Patience is a virtue'—indeed *the* virtue, the only one which will serve our turn. Meanwhile, when people are fairly on the warpath, this dead refusal to budge an inch is a little, just a little, exasperating. Paterfamilias computes, however, that ten minutes' delay can be made up with such steppers. He smiles benignantly as he pulls out a newspaper and asks his wife if she has brought her book. Two minutes, four, five, or is it half an hour? The time seems long. 'Trois cent milles diables!' the natural man feels inclined to ejaculate. He knows that he is sinking fast in the estimation of newly-arrived station hands and chance spectators. Eight minutes—Railway makes no sign; years might roll on before *he* would start with an unwilling mate. Nine minutes—Steamer, whose impatient soul abhors inaction, begins to paw. The student is absorbed in his leading article. Ten minutes!—Steamer opens his mouth and carries the whole equipage off with one rush. Railway is up and away; half a second later the proprietor folds up his journal and takes them firmly in hand. The children begin to laugh and chatter; the lady to converse; and the journey, long or short, wet or dry, may be considered, as far as horseflesh is concerned, to be *un fait accompli*.

At the end of four years of unclouded happiness (as novelists write of wedded life), this state of literal conjugal bliss was doomed to end. An epidemic of lung disease, such as at intervals sweeps over the land, occurred in Victoria. Railway fell a victim, being found dead in his paddock. Up to this time he had never been 'sick or sorry,' lame, tired, or unfit to go. His iron legs, with feet to match, showed no sign of work. In single harness he was miraculous, going mile after mile with the regularity of a steam-engine, apparently incapable of fatigue. I was lucky enough to have a fast, clever grandson of Cornborough to put in his place. He lasted ten years. A half-brother three years more. The old horse was using up his *fourth* running mate, and entering upon his twentieth year *in my service*, when King Death put on the brake.

Not the least noticeable among Steamer's many good qualities was his kindly, generous temper. His 248
was the Arab's docile gentleness with children. The large mild eye, 'on which you could hang your hat,' as the stable idiom goes, was a true indication of character. I was a bachelor when I first became his master. As time passed on, Mrs. Boldrewood and the elder girls used to drive him to the country town in New South Wales, near which we afterwards dwelt. The boys rode him as soon as they could straddle a horse. They hung by his tail, walked between his legs, and did all kinds of confidential circus performances for the benefit of their young friends. He was never known to bite, kick, or in any way offer harm; and, speedy to the last, with age he never lost pace or courage. 'All spirit and no vice' was a compendium of his character. By flood and field, in summer's heat or winter's cold, he failed us never; was credited, besides, with having saved the lives of two of the children by his docility and intelligence. He was twice loose with the buggy at his heels at night—once without winkers, which he had rubbed off. On the last occasion, after walking down to the gate of the paddock, and finding it shut—nearly a mile—he turned round without locking the wheels, and came galloping up to the door of the house (it was a ball night, and he had got tired of waiting). When I ran out, pale with apprehension, I discovered the headstall hanging below his chest. His extreme docility with children I attribute to his being for many years strictly a family horse, exclusively fed, harnessed, and driven by ourselves. It is needless to say he was petted a good deal: indeed he thought nothing of walking through the kitchen, a brick-floored edifice, when he thought corn should be forthcoming. Horses are generally peaceable with children but not invariably, as I have known of limbs broken and more than one lamentable death occasioned by kicks, when the poor things went too near unwittingly. But the old horse *couldn't* kick. 'I reckon he didn't know how.' And when he died, gloom and grief fell upon the whole family, who mourned as for the death of a dear friend.

For publication I mean. Having the pen of a ready writer by inheritance, I had dashed off occasional onslaughts in the journals of the day, chiefly in defence of the divine rights of kings (pastoral ones). I had assailed incoherent democrats, who perversely denied that Australia was created chiefly for the sustenance of sheep and cattle and the aggrandisement of those heroic individuals who first explored and then exploited the 'Waste Lands of the Crown.' The school of political belief to which I then belonged derided agriculture, and was subsequently committed to a scheme for the formation of the Riverina into a separate pastoral kingdom or colony. A petition embodying a statement to this effect, wholly unfitted as it was for the sustenance of a population dependent upon agriculture, was forwarded to the Secretary for the Colonies, who very properly disregarded it. The petitioners could not then foresee the stacking of 20,000 bags of wheat, holding four bushels each, awaiting railway transport at one of the farming centres of this barren region in the year 1897. Allied facts caused me to reconsider my very pronounced opinions, and, perhaps, led others to question the accuracy of theirs. My deliverances in the journals of the period occurred in the forties and fifties of the century, and gradually subsided.

I was battling with the season of 1865 on a station on the Murrumbidgee River, at no great distance from the flourishing town of Narandera, then consisting of two hotels, a small store, and a large graveyard, when an uncertain-tempered young horse kicked me just above the ankle with such force and accuracy that I thought the bone was broken. I was to have ridden at daylight to count a flock of sheep, and could scarcely crawl back to the huts from the stock-yard without assistance, so great was the agony. I sat down on the frosted ground and pulled off my boot, knowing that the leg would swell. Cold as it was, the thirst of the wounded soldier immediately attacked me. My room in the slab hut, preceding the brick cottage, then in course of erection, was, to use Mr. Swiveller's description, 'an airy and well-ventilated apartment.' It contained, in addition to joint stools, a solid table, upon which my simple meals of chops, damper, and tea were displayed three times a day by a shepherd's wife, an elderly personage of varied and sensational experiences.

I may mention that the great Riverina region was as yet in its unfenced, more or less Arcadian stage, the flocks being 'shepherded' (expressive Australian verb, since enlarged as to meaning) and duly folded or camped at night. Something of Mrs. Regan's advanced tone of thought may be gathered from the following dialogue, which I overheard:—

Shady township individual—'Your man shot my dorg t'other night. What d'yer do that fer?'

Mrs. Regan—''Cause we caught him among the sheep; and we'd 'a shot *you*, if you'd bin in the same place.'

Township individual—'You seem rather hot coffee, missus! I've 'arf a mind to pull your boss next Court day for the valley of the dorg.'

Mrs. Regan—'You'd better clear out and do it, then. The P.M.'s a-comin' from Wagga on Friday, and he'll give yer three months' "hard," like as not. Ask the pleece for yer character.'

Township individual—'D—n you and the pleece too! A pore man gets no show between the traps and squatters in this bloomin' country. Wish I'd never seen it!'

This was by the way of interlude, serving to relieve the monotony of the situation. I could eat, drink, smoke, and sleep, but the injured leg—worse than broken—I could not put to the ground. Nor had I company of any kind, save that of old Jack and Mrs. Regan, for a whole month. So, casting about for occupation, I bethought myself that I might write something for an English magazine. The subject pitched upon was a kangaroo drive or battue, then common in Western Victoria, which I had lately quitted. The kangaroo had become so numerous that they were eating the squatters out of house and home. Something had to be done; so they were driven into yards in great numbers and killed. This severe mode of dealing with the too prolific marsupial, in whole battalions, I judged correctly, would be among the 'things not generally known' to the British public.

I sat down and wrote a twelve-page article, describing a grand muster for the purpose at a station about twenty miles from Port Fairy, and seven miles from my own place, Squattlesea Mere.

The first time I went to Melbourne I posted it, with the aid of my good friend, the late Mr. Mullen, to the editor of the *Cornhill Magazine*, and thought no more about the matter. A few days after the adventure, my neighbour, Adam M'Neill, of North Yanko, hearing of my invalid state, rode over and carried me off to his hospitable home. I had to be lifted on my horse, but after a month's rest and recreation was well enough to return to pastoral duties. I was lame, however, for quite a year afterwards, and narrowly escaped injuring the other ankle, which began to show signs of over-work. About the time of my full recovery, I received a new *Cornhill Magazine*, and a note from Messrs. Smith and Elder, forwarding a draft, which, added to the honour and glory of seeing my article flourishing in a first-class London magazine, afforded me much joy and satisfaction. The English review notices were also cheering. I thereupon dashed off a second sketch, entitled 'Shearing in Riverina,' which I despatched to the same address. The striking presentment of seventy shearers, all going their hardest, was a novelty also to the British public.

The constant clash that the shear-blades make
When the fastest shearers are making play

(as Mr. 'Banjo' Paterson has it, in 'The Two Devines,' more than twenty years later), could not but challenge attention. This also was accepted. I received a cheque in due course, which came at a

time when such remittances commenced to have more interest for me than had been the case for some years past.

The station was sold in the adverse pastoral period of '68-'69, through drought, debt, financial 'dismalness of sorts'; but 'that is another story.' Christmas time found me in Sydney, where it straightway began to rain with unreasonable persistency (as I thought), now it could do me no 252
good; never left off (more or less) for five years. The which, in plenteousness of pasture and high prices for wool and stock, were the most fortunate seasons for squatters since the 'fifties,' with their accompanying goldfields prosperity.

The last station having been sold, there was no chance of repairing hard fortune by pastoral investment. 'Finis Poloniæ.' During my temporary sojourn in Sydney I fell across a friend to whom in other days I had rendered a service. He suggested that I might turn to profitable use a facile pen and some gift of observation. My friend, who had filled various parts in the drama of life, some of them not undistinguished, was now a professional journalist. He introduced me to his chief, the late Mr. Samuel Bennett, proprietor of the *Sydney Town and Country Journal*. That gentleman, whom I remember gratefully for his kind and sensible advice, gave me a commission for certain sketches of bush life—a series of which appeared from time to time. For him I wrote my first tale, *The Fencing of Wanderoona*, succeeding which, *The Squatter's Dream*, and others, since published in England, appeared in the weekly paper referred to.

Thus launched upon the 'wide, the fresh, the ever free' ocean of fiction, I continued to make voyages and excursions thereon—mostly profitable, as it turned out. A varied colonial experience, the area of which became enlarged when I was appointed a police magistrate and goldfields commissioner in 1871, supplied types and incidents. This position I held for nearly twenty-five years.

Although I had, particularly in the early days of my goldfields duties, a sufficiency of hard and anxious work, entailing serious responsibility, I never relinquished the habit of daily writing and story-weaving. That I did not on that account neglect my duties I can fearlessly aver. The constant official journeying, riding and driving, over a wide district, agreed with my open-air habitudes. The method of composition which I employed, though regular, was not fatiguing, and suited a somewhat desultory turn of mind. I arranged for a serial tale by sending the first two or three chapters to the editor, and mentioning that it would last a twelvemonth, more or less. If accepted, the matter was settled. I had but to post the weekly packet, and my mind was at ease. I was rarely more than one 253
or two chapters ahead of the printer; yet in twenty years I was only once late with my instalment, which had to go by sea from another colony. Every author has his own way of writing; this was mine. I never but once completed a story before it was published; and on that occasion it was—sad to say—declined by the editor. Not in New South Wales, however; and as it has since appeared in England, it did not greatly signify.

In this fashion *Robbery Under Arms* was written for the *Sydney Mail* after having been refused by other editors. It has been successful beyond expectation; and, though I say it, there is no country where the English language is spoken in which it has not been read.

I was satisfied with the honorarium which my stories yielded. It made a distinct addition to my income, every shilling of which, as a paterfamilias, was needed. I looked forward, however, to making a hit some day, and with the publication of *Robbery Under Arms*, in England, that day arrived. Other books followed, which have had a gratifying measure of acceptance by the English-speaking public, at home and abroad.

As a prophet I have not been 'without honour in mine own country.' My Australian countrymen have supported me nobly, which I take as an especial compliment, and an expression of confidence, to the effect that, as to colonial matters, I knew what I was writing about.

In my relations with editors, I am free to confess that I have always been treated honourably. I have had few discouragements to complain of, or disappointments, though not without occasional rubs and remonstrances from reviewers for carelessness, to which, to a certain extent, I plead guilty. In extenuation, I may state that I have rarely had the opportunity of correcting proofs. As to the attainment of literary success, as to which I often receive inquiries, as also how to secure a publisher, I have always given one answer: Try the Australian weekly papers, if you have any gift of expression, till one of them takes you up. After that the path is more easy. Perseverance and practice will ordinarily discover the method which leads to success.

A natural turn for writing is necessary, perhaps indispensable. Practice does much, but the novelist, like the poet, is chiefly 'born, not made.' Even in the case of hunters and steeplechasers, the 254
expression 'a natural jumper' is common among trainers. A habit of noting, almost unconsciously, manner, bearing, dialect, tricks of expression, among all sorts and conditions of men, provides 'situations.' Experience, too, of varied scenes and societies is a great aid. Imagination does much to enlarge and embellish the lay figure, to deepen the shades and heighten the colours of the picture; but it will not do everything. There should be some experience of that most ancient conflict between the powers of Good and Evil, before the battle of life can be pictorially described. I am proud to note among my Australian brothers and sisters, of a newer generation, many promising, even brilliant, performances in prose and verse. They have my sincerest sympathy, and I feel no doubt as to their gaining in the future a large measure of acknowledged success.

As to my time method, it was tolerably regular. As early as five or six o'clock in the morning in the summer, and as soon as I could see in winter, I was at my desk, proper or provisional, until the hour arrived for bath and breakfast. If at a friend's house, I wrote in my bedroom and corrected in the afternoon, when my official duties were over. At home or on the road, as I had much travelling to

do, I wrote after dinner till bedtime, making up generally five or six hours a day. Many a good evening's work have I done in the clean, quiet, if unpretending roadside inns, common enough in New South Wales. In winter, with a log fire and the inn parlour all to myself, or with a sensible companion, I could write until bedtime with ease and comfort. My day's ride or drive might be long, cold enough in winter or hot in summer, but carrying paper, pens, and ink I rarely missed the night's work. I never felt too tired to set to after a wholesome if simple meal. Fatigue has rarely assailed me, I am thankful to say, and in my twenty-five years of official service I was never a day absent from duty on account of illness, with one notable exception, when I was knocked over by fever, which necessitated sick-leave. It has been my experience that in early morning the brain is clearer, the hand steadier, the general mental tone more satisfactory, than at any other time of day.

A MOUNTAIN FOREST

Excepting perhaps the ocean, nothing in Nature is more deceitful than a mountain forest. Last time we crossed through snow, enveloped in mist and drenched with pitiless rain. Now, no one could think evil hap could chance to the wayfarer here—so dry the forest paths, so blue the sky, so bright the scene, so soft the whispering breeze. The shadows of the great trees fall on the emerald sward, tempering the ardent sun-rays. Flickers of light dance in the thickets, and laugh at the stern solemnity of the endless groves. Bird-calls are frequent and joyous. We might be roaming in the Forest of Arden, and meet a 'stag of ten' in the glade, for any hint to the contrary. Forest memories come into our heads as we stride merrily along the winding track. Robin Hood and his merry men, Friar Tuck and Little John! Oh, fountain of chivalry! How indissolubly a forest life in the glad summer days seems bound up with deeds of high emprise; how linked with the season of love and joy, hope and pride, with a sparkle of the cup of that divinest life-essence, youthful pleasure.

'Here shall he fear no enemy,
But winter and rough weather.'

As we thus carol somewhat loudly, we are aware of a man standing motionless, regarding us, not far from a gate, humorously supposed to restrain the stock in these somewhat careless-ordered enclosures. Ha! what if he be a robber? We have been 'stuck up' ere now, and mislike the operation. He has something in his hand too. May it be a 'shooting-iron,' as the American idiom runs?

We continue to sing, however,

'Viator vacuus coram latronem.'

Our treasury consists of half-a-sovereign and an old watch, a new hat and a clean shirt—what matter if he levy on these? He has a dog, however,—that is a good sign. Bushrangers rarely travel with dogs. And the weapon is a stick. Ha! it is well. Only an official connected with the railway line, awaiting the mailman. We interchange courtesies, and are invited to the camp with proffer of hospitality. We feel compelled to decline. We may not halt by any wayside arbour.

We reach St. Bago Hospice at Laurel Hill before lunch time. Sixteen miles over a road not too smooth. Really, we have performed the stage with ridiculous ease. We are half tempted to go on to Tumut; but twenty-eight miles seems a longish step. Let us not be imprudently enthusiastic. We decide to remain. The hospice has put on a summer garb, and is wholly devoid of snowballs or other wintry emblems. The great laurel, the noble elm, the hawthorn, are in full leaf and flower. The orchard trees are greenly budding. At the spring well in the creek five crimson lories are drinking. They stand on a tray, so to speak, of softest emerald moss, walking delicately; all things tell of summer.

During the afternoon, so fresh did we feel that we took a stroll of five miles, and visited the nearest farmer. As we stepped along the red-soiled path, amid the immense timber, we realised the surroundings of the earlier American settlers. Hawk-eye might have issued from the ti-tree thicket by the creek and chuckled in his noiseless manner, while he rested *la longue carabine* on a fallen log. Uncas and Chingachgook would, of course, have turned up shortly afterwards.

The tiny creek speeds swiftly onward over ancient gold-washings and abandoned sluice channels. Tracks of that queer animal the wombat (*Phascolomys*) near his burrows and galleries are frequent. His habitat is often near the sea, but here is proof that he can accommodate himself to circumstances. Easily-excavated soil like this red loam is necessary for his comfort apparently. Ferns are not objected to. Our host at Bago informed us that one dull winter's evening he observed two animals coming towards him through the bush. He took them to be pigs, until, shooting with both right and left barrels, they turned out to be wombats. He had happened to be near their burrow, to which they always make if disturbed. In confirmation of this statement he presented me with a skin—dark brown in colour—with long coarse hair, something between that of a dog and a kangaroo. The thick hide covers the body in loose folds. The dogs become aware by experience that, on account of its thickness and slippery looseness, it is vain to attempt capture of a wombat. Retreating to his burrow, he scratches earth briskly into his opponent's mouth and eyes until he desists. One peculiarity of this underground animal is, that the eyes are apparently protected by a movable eyebrow, which, in the form of a small flap of skin, shuts over the indispensable organ.

We are politely received at the selector's house. A few cattle are kept; pigs and poultry abound. The father and son 'work in the creek' for gold, when the water is low, and thus supplement the family earnings. Clearing is too expensive as yet to be entered into on a large scale. Want of roads must militate for a while against farming profits in rough and elevated country. A flower-garden and orchard bear testimony to the richness of the soil. But looking forward to the value of the timber, the certainty of annual crops, the gradual covering of the pasture with clover and exotic grasses, the day is not distant in our opinion when the agriculture of this region will stand upon a safe and solvent basis. It is hard to overestimate the value of a moist, temperate climate, and this the inhabitants of the vicinity possess beyond all dispute.

The sun is showing above the tall tree-tops as we sit at breakfast next morning. The air is keen. We need the fire which glows in the cavernous chimney. In ten minutes we are off—ready to do or die—to accomplish the voluntary march or perish by the wayside.

How pleasant is it as we swing along in the fresh morning air. If we had had a mate—one who read the same books, thought the same thoughts, had the same tastes, and in a general way was

congenial and sympathetic—our happiness would be complete. But in this desperately busy, workaday land, properly-graduated companionship is difficult to procure.

Still, to those who do not let their minds remain entirely fallow, there is choice companionship in these wooded highlands—that of the nobles and monarchs of literature is always at hand; ceases 258
not the murmuring talk of half-forgotten friends, acquaintances, lovers, what not, of the spirit-world of letters; 'songs without words,' wit and laughter, tears and sighs, pæans of praise, sadly humorous subtleties, recall and repeat themselves. So we are not entirely alone, even were there not the whispering leaves, the frowning tree-trunks, the tremulous ferns and delicate grasses, the smiling flowerets, each with its own legend to keep us company. The sun mounts higher in the heavens; still it is not too hot. The green gloom of the great woodland lies between us, a shade against the fiercest sun-rays. So we fare on joyously. Three hours' fair walking brings us to the end of the forest proper. We take one look, as we stand on a clear hill-top—while on either side great glens are hollowed out like demoniac punch-bowls (the Australian native idiom)—at the mountains, at the oceans of frondage.

We are on the 'down grade.' At our feet lies the Middle Adelong, with deserted gold-workings, sluices, and all the debris of water-mining; a roomy homestead, with orchard pertaining, once an inn doubtless; now no longer, as I can testify.

It is high noon and hot withal. The sun, no longer fended off by o'erarching boughs, becomes aggressive. We have gained the valley and lost the cooling breeze. We request a glass of water, which is handed to us by the good-wife. We drink, and, seating ourselves upon a log on the hillside, commence upon a crust of bread—unwonted foresight this—with considerable relish. As we happen to have Carl Vosmaer's *Amazon* in our hand (every step of the way did we carry her), we tackle an æsthetic chapter with enthusiasm.

In twenty minutes we breast the hill, a trifle stiffer for the rest, and, it may be fancy, our left boot-sole has developed an inequality not previously sensitive. We swing along, however, in all the pride of 'second wind,' and fix our thoughts upon the next stage, eight miles farther on. We have come about sixteen.

We pass another hill, a plateau, and then a long declivitous grade. By and by we enter upon the fertile valley which leads to Tumut. The green valley of river-encircled sward on either side is one 259
mat of clover and rye-grass. We display an increasing preference for the turf as distinguished from the roadway. The sun is becoming hotter. The clouds have retired. There is a hint of storm. The heavy air is charged with electricity. We put on the pace a little. One may as well have this sort of thing over in a condensed form.

Here we stop to look at a man ploughing for maize. Our brow is wet with 'honest——,' whatsy name? We must weigh pounds less than this morning. How far to the Gilmore Inn? 'Four miles!' Thermometer over a hundred in the shade. We set our teeth and march on. We are acquiring the regular slouching swing of the 'sundowner,' it appears to us. There is nothing like similar experience for producing sympathy. We can almost fancy ourselves accosting the overseer with the customary, 'Got any work, sir, for a man to do?' and subsiding to the traveller's hut, with the regulation junk of meat and pannikin of flour. Can partly gauge the feelings of the honest son of toil, weary, athirst, somewhat sore-footed (surely there must be a nail?), when said overseer, being in bad temper, tells him to go to the deuce, that he knows he won't take work if it's offered, and that he has no rations to spare for useless loafers.

It is more than an hour later—we think it more than an hour hotter—as we sight the Gilmore Inn, near rushing stream, hidden by enormous willows. We have abstained from drinking of the trickling rill, hot and dusty as we are. Thoughts of 'that poor creature, small beer,' obtrude, if the local optionists have not abolished him.

In the parlour of this snug roadside inn we put down our 'swag,' and order a large glass of home-brewed and a crust of bread. We certainly agree with Mr. Swiveller, 'Beer can't be tasted in a sip,' especially after a twenty-mile trudge. When we put down the 'long-sleever' there is but a modicum left.

We give ourselves about half an hour here, by which time we are cooled and refreshed, as is apparently the day. Sol is lower and more reasonable. We sling on, by no means done—rather improving pace than otherwise—till overtaken by a friend and his family in a buggy. He kindly proffers to drive us in; but we have made it a point of honour to walk every yard, so we decline. He 260
will leave the valise at our hotel—which kindness we accept. The rest is easy going. We lounge into the 'Commercial' as if we had just dismounted, and order a warm bath and dinner, with the *mens conscia recti* in a high state of preservation.

THE FREE SELECTOR
A Comedietta

ACT I

Enter The Honourable Rufus Polyblock, *Member of Upper House, and immensely rich squatter —his Overseer,* Mr. Gayters *(imperfectly educated).*

The Hon. Rufus. Well, Gayters, how's everything gettin' on? I mean the sheep, of course. Splendid season, ain't it? Grand lambing, tremendous heavy clip, eh? Why, you look dubersome?

Gayters. Marked 92 per cent of lambs all round. The clip'll be heavier than it was last year—that means money off a hundred and fifty thousand sheep, but——

Hon. Rufus. Sheep right; lambs too; shearing all to the good; why, what *can* be wrong? (*Walks up and down.*) Must be them infernal, underminding free selectors. Rot 'em! if they ain't worse than blackfellows or dingoes—and you can't shoot 'em or poison 'em legally; not yet, that is—*not yet*!

Gayters. You've about hit it, sir. I'd hardly the face to tell you, one of 'em's taken up the main camp, opposite the big water-hole—a half-section, too! [320 acres.]

Hon. Rufus. What! Our main camp! Good Gad! Why, the country's goin' to destruction! The best water-hole on the creek, too. Why, *I* thought that had been secured. Wasn't Sam Appinson to take it up last Thursday?

Gayters. Yes, sir; cert'nly, sir; but his mother went and died the day afore, and he had to go down the country. Didn't think it would matter for a week; when this young chap pops in, all on a sudden like, and collars it. It's turned out quite contrairy, ain't it, sir? 262

Hon. Rufus. Contrairy! It's ruination, that's what it is! It'll play h—l and Tommy with the sheep in the Ban Ban Paddock. What's to keep 'em off his pre-lease? And he can pound 'em any day he likes. He'll do me thousands of pounds' worth of harm with his beggarly half-section. Have to buy him out and give him two prices—the old story.

Gayters. I hardly think he'll agree to that, sir! I heard him yesterday say, says he, 'I'm a-going to settle down for good, and make a home in this wilderness; this here land is so fertile,' says he——

Hon. Rufus. Wilderness indeed! On a flat like that! Fert'le, fert'le—what's that? Good corn land? D—n his impudence; what's it to him, I'd like to know? Is he going to *cultivate* for a living in a dry country? Bah! I've seen them kind of coves afore. I give him two years to lose everything, to his shirt! What sort of a chap is he, Gayters?

Gayters. Well, a civil-spoken young man enough, sir. Talks very nice, and seems to know himself. I should take him to be a gentleman.

Hon. Rufus. A gentleman! Bosh! How the devil *can* he be a gentleman and a free selector, eh? A feller that robs people of their land. He's next door to a cattle duffer. He'd turn bushranger, only he ain't got pluck enough.

Gayters. Very true, sir; cert'nly, sir; but he says it's not agin the law.

Hon. Rufus. The law! *Hang* the law! What's that got to do with it? A parcel of fellers that never owned a run or a foot of ground get into this Lower 'Ouse and makes laws to bind people that could buy 'em out over and over again. D'ye call that honest? I call it daylight robbery; and I'm not a-goin' to keep laws made that way if I can find a way to drive through 'em; yes, *through* 'em, with a coach and four!

Gayters. Yes, sir; but what are we to do? He'll have his nine hundred and sixty acres of pre-lease, and our sheep can't be kept off it nohow.

Hon. Rufus. Put a man on to free select right agin his frontage, take up two flocks, and shepherd all round him. I'll feed him out; I'll make him keep to his blasted half-section. Curse him! I'll ruin him! Damme! I'll have him in gaol afore I've done with him. I'll—— 263

Enter Miss Dulcie Polyblock *in her riding-habit, also* Miss Alice Merton *(a friend).*

Miss Dulcie. Why, dad, what's all this about? Who's to be hanged, drawn, and quartered, whatever that means? We used to have it in our history lesson. Oh, I want to tell you something! Whom do you think we met?

Hon. Rufus. Don't know, I'm sure. Was it Lord Arthur Howard or young Goldsmith? I know they came up to Deem Deem the other day.

Miss Dulcie. Well, he was *such* a handsome young man, father; and so polite and gentlemanlike. Alice's horse shied at a hawker's cart, and Sultan, like an old goose, began to rear. Alice dropped her whip, so he picked it up and gave it to her with such a bow! He said he was coming to be a neighbour of ours, so perhaps it *was* Lord Arthur. Oh, I nearly forgot! He gave me a card, and said he hoped he might be permitted to call. Here it is.

Hon. Rufus. H'm, ha! Likely it was his lordship, or one of them swells that I heard were coming up to learn experience at Deem Deem. Old Maclaren's a regular brick for hospitality! Well, I'll ask him over, Dulcie. He won't see a prettier girl anywheres, nor a better one, tho' I say it. We must have him over to dinner on Sunday. What did you say his name was?

Miss Dulcie (*reads from card*). Mr. Cecil Egremont. Isn't it a pretty one?

Hon. Rufus. Eggermont, Eggermont, eh? Hand me over that paper there; it's a copy of a Application. Why, confound and smother all land-stealin' villains, if that ain't the very man that's took up my

main camp! He a gentleman! He's an impostor, a swindler. He's tryin' to rob your poor old father. He's a *free selector*!

BOTH GIRLS (*horrified*). A free selector! Oh!! (*Scream loudly and run out of room.*)

END OF FIRST ACT

ACT II

Enter Mr. Cecil Egremont, *dressed in blue Crimean shirt, moleskin trousers, knee-boots, straw hat.*

Egremont. And so I'm farming in Australia. A thing I've longed for all my days. Such a free, independent, pleasant life. No one to bother you; no one to interfere with you. Such a splendid large piece of land I've secured too—three hundred and twenty acres, with three times as much for grazing. Grazing right, that's the expression—a pre-lease, ha! (*Looks in book.*) I believe my fortune's made. Who's this? Some neighbour probably. Good-day, sir; very glad to see you.

Gayters. It's more'n I am to see *you* here. D'ye know where you are?

Egremont. On the Crown Lands of Her Majesty the Queen of England in the first place, and on the farm conditionally purchased (*refers to Land Regulations*) by Cecil Egremont, gentleman farmer, late of Bideford, Devon.

Gayters. What's the good of all this rubbish? You're on our *main camp*.

Egremont. Camp? camp?—I see no traces of an encampment. In what historical period, may I ask?

Gayters. Can't yer see this? (*Kicks bone aside.*) It's our cattle camp. I don't mean a soldier's camp or any of that rot. It's been our—the Hon'ble Rufus Polyblock's—Bundabah Run, this twenty year and more.

Egremont. Has this land been sold before? Then that land agent has deceived me! And yet he looked respectable. I paid him eighty pounds deposit. Have his receipt.

Gayters. I don't mean sold exactly—not but that Mr. Polyblock would have bought it fast enough if Government had let him. But we had a lease of it and always had stock running on it.

Egremont. Oh, a lease!—for a special object I presume, or perhaps a pastoral lease? (*Consults book.*) Perhaps it was a Run—Run—oh, I have it here!—page 38. But surely that gives you no legal right to hold it against the *bona-fide* conditional purchaser?

Gayters. Well, I expect we've no *legal* claim if it comes to that. But no gentleman in this country 265
goes to select on another gentleman's run. It ain't the thing, you know.

Egremont. Oh, 'it ain't the thing'? Something like poaching or shooting without a license; but how was I to know? The law says, 25 Vict. No. 1, Section 13 (*opens copy of Crown Lands Alienation Act*), 'On and from the first day of January 1862——'

Gayters. Oh, hang the law! The Act's all very well for them as knows no better, or as wants to take advantage-like of a squatter, but it ain't the square deal if you mean to act honest—what I call between man and man. Good-morning, sir.

[*Exit* Gayters.

Egremont (*soliloquising*). What an extraordinary country! When I quarrelled with my uncle, who wanted me to go into the Church, and came out to Australia to carve out a fortune in a new world where land was plentiful and caste unknown, I never expected to meet with class distinctions. Instead of being able to live my own life in peace, I am met with obstacles at every turn. I might as well have remained in North Devon, for all I can see. Well! courage—I'll go and finish my work, and cut this splendid log into lengths for fencing slabs. (*Begins to chop log.*) Why, here comes the young lady whose horse was frightened yesterday. How handsome she is, and such a figure too! What a soft voice she had. I had no idea the girls out here were anything like this! (*Goes on chopping; his dogs rush out.*) Down, Ponto! Down, Clumber! Come to heel! (*Throws down axe and calls off dogs.*) Pray don't be frightened—a—I haven't the pleasure of knowing your name—I hope you have quite recovered yesterday's accident.

Miss Dulcie P. I am not in the least frightened, thank you. What beautiful dogs! I am sure they are too well-bred to hurt a lady. Oh, my name! (*slight confusion*)—my name is Dulcie Polyblock. I feel much obliged by your kindness last evening.

Egremont. (*Aside*—Polyblock! Polyblock! Why, that's the name of the owner of the station, the overseer told me. Probably a nice person. I'll go and explain matters to him.) (*Speaks.*) Really I'm delighted to have been of the slightest service. I hope, as I am settled in this part of the world, that I may have the privilege of meeting you occasionally.

Miss Dulcie (*confused*). I don't know—I can't say—just at present, but—— (*Aside*—How 266
distinguished-looking he is, but what queer clothes!)

Egremont. Does your father, Mr. Polyblock (*aside*—Droll name, but that doesn't matter), live in this neighbourhood?

Miss Dulcie. *Live* here! Why, he owns the Run you're on. Our home-station, Bundabah, is about five miles off.

Egremont. Oh, indeed, what a long way! I had thought we might be near neighbours. I had intended to call and inquire if you had quite recovered from your fright.

Miss Dulcie P. I wasn't frightened, pray don't suppose *that*, but I might have been hurt if you had not come up. Are you going to stay here long?

Egremont (*proudly*). Till I make a fortune. [Dulcie (*aside*)—Oh!] I have resolved to turn this waste into a productive farm—a—it will be the work of years.

Miss Dulcie. I should think it would. (*Aside*—Waste, indeed!) It's the best part of Bundabah Run.

Egremont. So I was quite right to purchase it from the Crown.

Miss Dulcie. Oh no. Quite *wrong*. It's never done, except by—by low sort of people.

Egremont. Indeed! Then perhaps I'm mistaken about the law. Just oblige me by looking at this section of the Land Act. (*Hands book to her—she stoops from her horse—their heads come close together—she reads*—'Section 13, Crown lands other than town lands,' etc.) Well, it really seems as if you had the right to do it, or anybody else, but father's in the Upper House, and all that. He says it's a perfect robbery to free-select on his Run. It's very confusing, don't you think? But I must say good-bye.

Egremont. Good-bye, Miss Polyblock. (*Shakes hands warmly.*) You have really comforted me very much. If you had time to explain this Act to me I really think I should get over all my difficulties; as it is, I despair.

Miss Dulcie P. (*Aside*—Poor fellow! It's very hard for him; and how white his hands are—such expressive eyes too. I oughtn't to have come, I know, but still—I might bring about an understanding between him and father.) Well, perhaps I *might* be riding this way on Saturday, near that water-hole where the willows are. Good-bye. Now then you naughty Sultan (*canters off*). 267

Egremont (*sitting down on log*). She has gone! disappeared like a beautiful dream. What a kind face it is too—anxious to be friendly, and yet, with maidenly diffidence, doubting the propriety. Polyblock! Dulcie! a sweet name. Dulce Domum—ha! shall I ever have a home in this wilderness? So she's the daughter of this old party who owns the Run—the Run—ha! ha! What an idea! This elderly fossil in aboriginal times fed his flocks and herds here. He doesn't know the difference between lease and freehold evidently. What ignorant people these Australians are! But the daughter—how could she have acquired that air of *fierté*, that aplomb, that intonation? I must consider my course. (*Puts his head between his hands and seems lost in thought for some minutes.*) I have resolved (*rises and walks proudly erect*) I will visit the old gentleman in his own house. I will convince him of his error. I will argue the point with him. I will show him this Act of Parliament—these Regulations (*slaps book*). I will appeal to him as an Englishman bound to respect the law. We shall then be on good terms. Perhaps I may even catch a sight of *her*. But I must finish. (*Recommences chopping—sees a horseman approaching, and sits down on log.* Mr. Gayters *rides up.*)

Gayters. Good day—good day, Mr. Whatsisname! So you've sat down here permanent, it seems?

Egremont. My name is Egremont, if you will please to remember; yours I believe to be Gayters. I don't quite follow you about sitting down (*rises*); I get up occasionally, I assure you. But I have settled here permanently, as far as that goes.

Gayters. Oh yes, cert'nly, cert'nly, of course! We know all that. Heard it afore. But perhaps you'll hear reason (they mostly does). I'm here to make you an offer—so much on your bargain.

Egremont. I don't quite understand?

Gayters. Well (*sits down*), let's argue it out between man and man.

Egremont. I'm ready; which section do you refer to? (*Takes up copy of Act.*)

Gayters. Oh, blow the Act! What's it got to do with it? (Egremont *makes gesture of surprise.*) See here; of course you're here to make money? 268

Egremont. Honestly—legally—certainly I am.

Gayters. Dash the honesty! the legal part's all right of course—else it wouldn't *wash*, you know. Now you know, this being our main camp, it ain't the good you can do yourself, but the harm you can do him—the boss—the Hon'ble Rufus—that's what you're looking at, naturally.

Egremont (*appears puzzled*). Can't understand you.

Gayters. Perhaps you'll understand *this* (*takes out cheque*). Mr. Polyblock says, 'Gayters,' says he, 'we've not been half sharp this time; this here land ought to have been secured. But the young chap's been and got the pull, and we can't afford to lose our main camp. Of course he'll go pounding our stock night and day; so you take him this five 'undred pound—five 'undred! and give it him *on conditions* as he does the residence for twelve months and then conveys the s'lection over to me, all legal and ship-shape,' says he—and here it is. (*Hands out cheque.*) Ha! ha! I expect you understand me now.

Egremont (*rising slowly*). I believe I do.

Gayters (*rising quickly*). Just you sign this, then.

Egremont (*with lofty anger*). Confound your cheque, sir! Take it back, and with it my scorn and contempt, which you can present to your master, telling him from me, at the same time, that you are a pair of scoundrels!

Gayters. Scoundrels! What d'ye mean? Are yer off yer chump? A free selector to call the Hon'ble Mr. Polyblock of Bundabah and his super a pair of scoundrels! Take care what you're about, young man. A camp's a public place, or close up. 'Words calculated to cause a breach of the peace——'

Egremont (*deliberately*). Yes, scoundrels! First of all to insult a gentleman by treating him as a rascally blackmailer; secondly, by offering an honest man money to break the law of the land—to violate every principle of honour and integrity. And now, if you don't quit my land at once, I'll kick you from here into the brook!

Gayters (*hastily mounting*). You take care what you're about, young man—two can play at that

game. (*Aside*—Most extraordinary chap! Rummest free selector *I* ever seen.)

Later—Bundabah House—The Hon'ble Mr. Polyblock *in his morning room, pacing up and down, disturbed in mind. Enter* Gayters. 269

Mr. Polyblock. Well, what is it? He's got the money of course—I'm always *had*, seems to me. D'ye want any more cheques? If you'd been half sharp enough he'd never have been there.

Gayters. You won't want no more cheques, unless you're drove to dummying all round him.

Mr. Polyblock. *Dummy*, sir! Damme! What d'ye mean by that expression? Are you aware that I'm a member of the Hupper 'Ouse, Mr. Gayters?

Gayters. Beg pardon, sir. I meant perhaps other parties might desire to select on his pre-lease and might want a bit of assistance, like.

Mr. Polyblock. That's another matter! I always make a point of advancing money to the struggling free selector—as long as I get a proper mortgage on the land—Bonus Allround sees to that. But about this young chap?

Gayters. He won't take the cheque; all but threw it at me.

Mr. Polyblock (*much astonished*). Won't take the cheque! and won't go out?

Gayters. Not he; won't hear of it. Called you and—well his language was horful!

Mr. Polyblock. What did he call me—*me*?

Gayters. Said we was a pair of damned scoundrels! and he'd kick me off his ground.

Mr. Polyblock (*solemnly*). This is what the country's a-comin' to! What with universal sufferage, bushranging, and free selection—as is land robbery by Act of Parliament—pore old Australia ain't a country for a gentleman to live in. Are you sure he called *me*, the Hon'ble Rufus Polyblock, a scoundrel, or was it only *you*?

Gayters. Both of us, sure as I'm alive. 'Take this to your master,' says he, 'with my scorn and contempt.' He talked like a chap I see at that circus last shearin'. He looked grand, I tell you, sir.

Hon'ble Rufus (*gloomily*). He won't look so grand when I've done with him. He's got no stock yet?

Gayters. Not so much as a horse. He's building his cottage at present, he says—ha! ha! 270

Hon'ble Rufus (*grimly*). Wait till he gets his stock on, that's all. And you watch him—watch him night and day. If he puts a foot on my ground, pull him for trespass; if he touches a head of stock, have him up for stealin' 'em. It's what he's layin' himself out for, of course, and we may as well fit him first as last.

[*Exit* Gayters.

END OF SECOND ACT

ACT III

MR. EGREMONT (*discovered nailing up slabs, in order to complete dwelling*). Well, this is a most enjoyable life; that is, it will be enjoyable when I have completed my cottage (*hits finger with hammer, and examines same*), but at present I seem rather hurried. I have had to help the ploughman in order to get the crop in. I have quite ten acres of wheat nicely sown and harrowed. I intend to plant potatoes after the cottage is up, and I must manage to have some turnips; they're always useful for the stock. A good deal of money seems to be going out; it is equally certain that none is coming in. No man can have worked harder either in an old or new country. But the worst of it is (*sits down on round post and considers*), I am not fully convinced that I am working to the best purpose. I may be doing all this for nothing! Miss Polyblock—somehow I'm always thinking of that girl!—implied as much the last time I saw her. By all the saints and angels, here she comes! How gloriously handsome she always looks, and how well her habit becomes her! Strange, what a gulf there seems to be between us!

DULCIE. So you're working away as usual, Mr. Egremont? You certainly are a pattern young man. How hot it must make you this terrible weather?

EGREMONT. I thought everybody worked hard in this country.

DULCIE. That's a popular error, as you'll find out by and by. They work in some ways, but not usually with their hands, except when pioneering or exploring.

EGREMONT. Well, am I not pioneering?

DULCIE (*bursting out laughing*). What! upon three hundred and twenty acres of land! Excuse my 271
rudeness in laughing.

EGREMONT (*rather nettled*). *We* think it a decent-sized piece of land in England.

DULCIE. Oh, do you, really? I beg your pardon, but father did all the pioneering work here years and years ago. Fought the blacks when he took up the country, and was speared by them when I was a little girl. So there isn't much pioneering left for *you* to do, is there?

EGREMONT. I wish there was.

DULCIE. Oh, do you? Then why don't you go outside?

EGREMONT. Outside—outside—where's that? I thought I was pretty well outside here; I haven't slept under a roof these two months.

DULCIE (*laughing again*). Oh, indeed, I didn't mean that. Of course you're outside now; I wish you were not. I'm afraid you'll get a dreadful cold, the weather is so changeable; but I mean *real outside country*, beyond the settled districts, in Queensland, Western Australia, Kimberley—anywhere.

EGREMONT. But how far off is that?

DULCIE. Oh, a couple of thousand miles; but it doesn't matter *how far it is*; it's the way to make money, and position, and a name. Here no one can do anything but potter about, live miserably, and —and vegetate.

EGREMONT. But I thought everybody *farmed* in Australia?

DULCIE. Farmed! farmed! (*with amazement*). Why, *nobody* does; no *gentleman* farms, I assure you. But English people never seem to understand things for the first year or two.

EGREMONT (*with air of astonishment*). Oh, then I shall only *begin* to understand the country in another year? At present I am supposed to be blissfully ignorant of the real meaning of matters Colonial. I may have all my work to undo; is that what *you* think?

DULCIE. Well, very nearly. It's rude, of course, to say so, but you'd rather be told the truth, wouldn't you? (*He bows.*) I've heard young Englishmen say over and over again that if they'd done nothing for the first two years they would have learned a great deal and saved all their money.

EGREMONT. But surely there is nothing so hard to understand about the country after all? Any one
can see the sense of these regulations, for instance. (*Produces book, Land Act Amendment.*) 272

DULCIE. Oh, don't show me that horrid book! It's about free selection and all that, and dad says it's done no end of harm. Oh, I wish I could advise you properly!

EGREMONT. If you only would undertake the task! (*Takes her hand and looks at her tenderly.*)

DULCIE (*hastily*). Oh, really, I have no time now; I shall be late for lunch as it is. Good-morning.

MR. POLYBLOCK'S DRAWING-ROOM.

MR. POLYBLOCK (*looks at wrong card*). Mr. Stanley—Hubert Stanley—oh, one of the swells that came up with the governor! Show him in.

Enter MR. EGREMONT, *neatly and cleanly attired in bush-fashion—Crimean shirt, moleskin trousers, no coat.*

MR. P. (*surprised and irritated*). Hulloa! who the devil are you? Oh, I see, swell out of luck! Want employment or else, perhaps, I wouldn't mind advancing twenty pound till your remittance came out. Is that the game?

EGREMONT (*haughtily*). No, sir; I am perfectly able to pay my way, and trust to be so for the future. We have not met before, but no doubt you will know who I am when I tell you that my name is Cecil

Egremont.

Mr. P. Eggermont? Eggermont? We've not met afore, as you say; but, by George, I'll meet *you* some day! You're the chap as took up my main camp. Then what the devil do you want at my private house, eh? Mind, I won't sell you a pound of beef or mutton either, if you want it ever so bad. I ain't to be had that way.

Egremont (*proudly*). You're over-hasty in your conclusions, sir. I have no pressing need for butcher's meat. But you are right in surmising that I *do* want something from you—something of value also.

Mr. P. (*much surprised*). Good Gad! (*Aside*—What can he want? Don't want money nor beef; perhaps it's wheat or 'taters. Never knew a free selector yet that didn't want one of 'em.) What is it, man, speak out?

Egremont. The fact is, Mr. Polyblock, your daughter; that is, I have long cherished an admiration——

Mr. P. (*wrathfully*). Admiration be hanged! You said my daughter—*my* daughter! God bless my soul and body! You don't mean to say she'd ever say a word to the likes of you? 273

Egremont. I fear, sir, that without the least intention of gaining her affections clandestinely, I have been so imprudent as to receive counsel respecting my course of action in a strange land, which Miss Polyblock was too generous to refuse. This harmless intercourse has ripened into intimacy—into, I may boldly say, mutual affection. As a man of honour I feel it my duty to acquaint you with the fact, and to respectfully demand her hand. I——

Mr. P. (*deeply shocked and violently affected*). Stop! not another word! Man of honour! Ha! ha! how the devil *can* a free selector be a man of honour? So you think my daughter, as has been eddicated equal to the first lady in the land, is to go into a hut, and—and—— (*Breaks into uncontrollable rage.*) You—you—robber—murderer—*free selector*! Leave this room—get off my place, or by —— I'll set the dogs on ye! (*Advances threateningly.*)

Egremont (*slowly receding*). I can afford to smile at your vehemence, to laugh at your threats. There are reasons which prevent me from resenting your ignorant, ungentlemanly conduct.

Mr. P. (*in boxing attitude*). Come on, if that's what you want. Put up your 'ands. I may be a member of the Hupper 'Ouse, and not so young as I was, but I can take the conceit out of a chap like you yet. (*Advances with hands up.*)

Dulcie (*coming from behind, pulls him by the coat-tail*). Oh, father, father! don't touch him.

Mr. P. Let me go, girl!

Dulcie. Oh, Cecil, *Cecil*! why don't you go away? (*Throws her arms round* Mr. P. *and drags him back;* Egremont *slowly retreating,* Mr. Polyblock *struggling and menacing him.*)

[*Curtain falls.*

END OF THIRD ACT

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ACT IV

About a year afterwards—Mr. Polyblock *in library, also* Mr. Gayters.

Mr. P. (*walks up and down*). Well, I feel regularly stumped and dried out. Haven't felt so bad since the '68 drought. I don't know what's comin' over the country. This young Colonial experiencer stands up agin' me like a bulldog ant in front of a team of bullocks! My gal, Dulcie, as I've spent thousands on—and where's there a gal like her, high or low?—is turned that stupid and ungrateful that she's crying her eyes out; and who for? Why, a low feller with only a half-section of land to his name—worse than a boundary-rider, I call him! Damme! I'll dummy all round him—eat him up that close that he won't have grass for a bandicoot. I'm that miserable as I could go and drownd myself in that creek afore the door. Blast that infernal Land Act and them as made it! It'll ruin the country and every man of property in it. Well (*turns angrily to* Gayters), what do *you* want?

Gayters (*hesitatingly*). Mr. Overdew has just sent his reporter for ten thousand sheep, sir; wants to know if you'll let him take them through the Run, along the back track.

Mr. P. (*with concentrated wrath*). Tell him if he dares to go one yard off his half-mile from the main-frontage road I'll pound every hoof of his grass-stealin', hungry, loafin' sheep, as is the dead image of their owner—if he *does* own 'em, and not the bank. Tell him *that*, and mind you shepherd him slap through the boundary gate.

Gayters. Of course, sir; cert'nly, sir. Anything else, sir?

Mr. P. (*with sudden fury*). Only, you stand gapin' there another minute and I'll knock yer through my study winder!

Gayters. Cert'nly, sir; of course, sir.

[*Exit hastily.*

Mr. Cecil Egremont *on his selection, discovered chopping down a tree.*

(*Speaks.*) I am more than ever confirmed in my opinion that this is *the* most extraordinary, puzzling, topsy-turvy country in the whole world. I might just as well have remained in North Devon for all the good I am likely to do. I could have taken a farm there, and—well—probably have managed to pay the rent. I *have* bought a farm here, become a free-holder—that most enviable position, at least in England—and now when I've got it I don't know what to do with it. Old Polyblock's sheep eat right up to my boundary, and beyond it too. I gather there's not much to be done with three hundred and twenty acres in a dry season. My wheat is prematurely yellow; my potatoes won't come up! I must fence my farm in; that will cost—at six shillings a rod—let me see—how much? (*Sits down on log and begins to cipher in pocket-book.*) 275

Dulcie (*who has ridden closely up in the meantime, and is watching him, coughs slightly*). Don't let me interrupt you, but you seem absorbed in thought. Is it about the value of the tree, or some other abstruse calculation?

Egremont (*jumps up hastily*). Oh, my dearest Dulcie! neither, that is, both—really I hardly know what I am about at present. I was working to distract my mind. I suppose it's always right to cut down a tree?

Dulcie. Nonsense! About the worst thing you could do. Sinful waste of time. Do you suppose father made his money in that way? The pencil and pocket-book look more like it. We say in Australia that a man's head ought to be good enough to save his hands. Are your birth, breeding, and education only equal to a pound a week? Because you can buy a man's work for that—all the year round.

Egremont. But I thought all the early colonists worked with their hands, tended their sheep, drove bullocks and all that—the books say so.

Dulcie. Nonsense! The people who know, don't write books—very seldom at least. The people who write books, don't know. That's the English of it. But I came through the township and I've brought your post. Here's a letter and a newspaper.

Egremont. Heaven be thanked and my Guardian Angel! That's *you*, my dearest Dulcie. Oh, that I had you always to be near me—to protect me from the ways of this wicked Australian world!

Dulcie. H—m! *You want some one*, I do believe. I might consider over the contract, but my tender—ahem!—wouldn't be accepted at present. Father's going on like an old 'rager' bullock, all by himself in the strangers' yard. But hadn't you better open your letter? 276

Egremont. Then you *do* take an interest in me? After this I fear nothing. Why will you not consent to trust your future welfare to my guidance?

Dulcie (*scornfully*). A likely thing! Trust a free selector! Not if I know it!!! Why, what would become of us? Perhaps you'd like to see me lifting the top off a camp-oven—on a fire, under that black stump there—whilst you were—chopping—down—a—tree! ha! ha! No! (*surveying her well-fitting riding-habit—her thoroughbred horse, and stroking her gloves*) I seem to like this sort of thing better. I must drag on for a while with my allowance from poor old dad.

Egremont (*with lofty resolve*). You are heartless, Dulcie—devoid of natural affection. You laugh at my inexperience, you sneer at my poverty—let us part for ever. Go back to your father's mansion and leave me to my fate. I feel that I shall succeed, perhaps make a fortune, in the end.

DULCIE (*Aside*—It will be a precious long time first! What a dear, noble fellow he is—I hate to bully him!) *Aloud*—Come, Cecil (*winningly*), you mustn't be cross. I am only a poor simple girl brought up in the bush (I wonder what *he* is then?), but of course I know more about stock and land than you do. If we are not to be married (you see I love you a little) till you make enough to buy the ring out of this calf-paddock of yours, we may wait till we're grey! But why don't you open the letter? It might contain something of importance.

EGREMONT (*partly mollified*). I'm afraid not; merely an entreaty to return from this wild country, where there are no people fit for me to associate with, where I may starve, or be killed by blacks or wild beasts—that's the general tone of my letters of late. Ha! What is this? (*Reads*—Your poor Uncle Humphrey died last week; he was on bad terms with our side of the house, and has not spoken to your father for forty years; but he has left you £20,000, for which you will receive a bank-draft by this mail. Of course you will come home at once!) Of course, of course! Oh! eh! Dulcie dear? Now I shall build a house here, plant a garden, make a lakelet, sow artificial grasses, fence and subdivide, —in fact, make a paradise of these desolate, bare acres. Eventually it will be highly remunerative. 277
But when my house is completed and furnished in accordance with modern art, *you* will come there to be my queen and its most brilliant ornament? (*looks entreatingly at her*).

DULCIE (*with expression of horror*). What! improve a selection? Spend thousands of pounds on it? Build a really good house and ask me to live *there*! Did you ever hear of Tarban Creek?

EGREMONT. Not that I can recall—an aboriginal name, I presume. I have caught the name of Curbin, I think. Is that a similar watercourse?

DULCIE (*restraining herself*). It's hardly worth explaining—a little joke of mine. But to come to business. Suppose *I* show you a way to invest your money—to get twenty per cent for it in a few years, at the same time to make father think you a clever, rising man—an opinion which, ahem! he does *not* hold at present—and lastly, to cause him to give his consent to our marriage, (*coaxingly*) what should you say then? Would you be willing to do what I told you?

EGREMONT. I always thought you as clever as you were beautiful, my own dearest Dulcie! Take me with all that is mine and do what you will.

DULCIE. Very nice—indeed flattering! How long will it last, I wonder? 'Now you lisdens do me' (as our German gardener used to say) and you will hear something to your advantage. But first promise to do what I ask—you *will* promise? (*looking entreatingly and archly at him*).

EGREMONT. On my honour; on the cross of my ancestor's sword—he was a Crusader.

DULCIE. The first is enough; I am afraid you are inclined to be a Crusader too, as far as romantic enthusiasm goes—still it's a fault on the right side, and will be cured by colonial and other experience. Firstly, you must sell this selection.

EGREMONT. *What!* sell my farm—my home—my first venture in this new world?

DULCIE. Stuff and nonsense! It's poor dad's Run, to begin with, and you ought never to have touched it! You wouldn't, either, if you'd known how hard he worked for it before I was born.

EGREMONT (*meditatively*). How could it be *his*; or, if so, how did the Government sell it to *me*? 278
(*Placing his hand to his forehead*) I never *shall* understand the Land Act of this country. But don't ask me to sell my—my—birthright!

DULCIE (*decisively*). You've promised me, and you *must* sell it. Of course if you prefer living here by yourself as a 'hatter'—for *I'll* never come into it—you may keep it.

EGREMONT. (*Aside*—A hatter!—is that a legal term in this most perplexing Act? What can she mean? However, I surrender unconditionally.) To whom shall I sell it?

DULCIE. That's a good boy and he shall be rewarded. Go into the township and ask for the office of Mr. Bonus Allround, the lawyer; offer it to him, and he'll give you a cheque for it. How much has it cost you? Thousands by this time, I suppose.

EGREMONT. Really more than any one would suppose. Firstly, the deposit, five shillings per acre—and seed wheat—and other things.

DULCIE. Oh, of course, I forgot! Well, value all your improvements, loss of time, etc. You have lost plenty of time, you know, talking to me. We won't say yet whether you mightn't have done worse. But put it all down, every shilling; add your own time at a pound a week—you're not *quite* worth that, but he'll pass it to get the land. He'll pay you the money sharp, and all you have to do is to sign a transfer.

EGREMONT. Seems simple enough—only turn myself out of house and home. Well, after that little step?

DULCIE. Go to Sydney as soon as you can. I see Banda Plains Run is in the market, with only a few head of cattle—two thousand, I think. I've heard father talk about the place by the hour; he thinks no end of it—says he never saw better fattening country.

EGREMONT (*doubtingly*). Am I to go to him?

DULCIE. Not yet, goose! When you're in Sydney, call on Messrs. Drawwell and Backer—get Banda Plains as cheap as you can, but *buy* at all risks. Give them their price at last; then come back and tell dad what you've done. He can't eat you.

EGREMONT. He looked as if he *would* last time, without salt! But I will go straight to Sydney and do your bidding. Drawwell and Backer, Stock Agents, Pitt Street, Sydney, that's the address (*notes in pocket-book*).

DULCIE. You're getting quite a man of business. If you're so much improved in an hour, what will you be in a year? Really, I'm quite proud of my handiwork. And oh, one thing, dearest! don't forget—it's most important (*impressively*)—have your hair cut by Adger! You see it is a little long (*touches his hair*)—thinking of your woes, I suppose? But we respect the fashions in Australia, though you mightn't think it. You'd better not be eccentric. 279

EGREMONT (*laughs*). Anything else, Miss Polyblock? I see the foreshadowing of an oligarchy. But it will be a benevolent despotism, I trust?

DULCIE. Bless me! how late it is! The sun is quite low. I shall have to ride fast. Don't *you* lose a moment either.

EGREMONT. Trust me; but—one minute—as a reward for my unquestioning obedience, don't you think ——

[*Comes close as if to whisper—kisses her, and exit.*

ACT V

MR. POLYBLOCK (*discovered walking up and down the library*). Well, I don't know as ever I spent a more miserable month. Dulcie don't take no interest in the things as used to amuse her. I don't know what's come to the gal. If I could see my way at all, and thought this young chap was steady and sensible—likely to get on—I might push him; but—a free selector—a half-section, crawling duffer as won't have grass for a milker nor credit for a bag of flour in another year—No! I couldn't think of it. It's enough to make a man turn agin his own flesh and blood. (*Knocking heard.*) Who's that?

MAID. A gentleman wants to see you, sir.

MR. POLYBLOCK. Who is it? That chap as was going to buy the Weejoglag store-cattle, p'raps?

Enter CECIL EGREMONT, *dressed in tweeds.*

MR. POLYBLOCK. Oh, it's you, Mr. Eggermont! (*Aside*—How well the feller looks! Holds up his head too! Dashed if he ain't a fine, upstanding, good-looking chap when he's turned out decent! He looked more like a shearer when I seen him last.) Well, sir! what can I do for you? Sheep been trespassing, I suppose? 280

EGREMONT. No, Mr. Polyblock, such is not the case. Nor will it matter to me in future. I have sold my land.

MR. POLYBLOCK. Sold the s'lection! You don't say so! Who to? who to? Mr. Eggermont, why didn't you come to me, if you wanted to part with it? I'd have given you anything in reason.

EGREMONT. You must pardon me for reminding you, Mr. Polyblock, that your manner was not reassuring at our last interview.

MR. POLYBLOCK. Perhaps not—rather hasty, I know. Mustn't mind an old man; but who's got the s'lection?

EGREMONT. I disposed of it to Mr. Allround in the township, from whom I received a cheque, paying me in full for all improvements and loss of time.

MR. POLYBLOCK. Bonus Allround! Good shot! It's all right—you've sold to *me* through him—he's my agent. I should have been sold, my word! if any other buyer had come in there. And now what are you a-goin' to do? You're a man of capital now, you know!

EGREMONT. I was fortunate enough to have a moderate legacy left me by an uncle just before I went to Sydney. While there, under advice, I invested eight thousand pounds in a run called Banda Plains, on the Queensland border. They tell me it's a good purchase. There are two thousand cattle, besides horses.

MR. POLYBLOCK. Good purchase, sir! It's the best thing in the market. Banda Plains, with only two thousand head of cattle—it's a gift—a reg'lar gift! Your fortune's made.

EGREMONT. It gratifies me to hear you say so, Mr. Polyblock—most deeply, I assure you. And now, sir, perhaps you will reconsider your rather strongly-expressed refusal to me of your daughter's hand?

DULCIE (*who has opened the door softly and stolen into the room*). Oh, dad, you don't want to break your poor Dulcie's heart! I *do* love him so!

MR. POLYBLOCK (*clearing his throat and speaking in a parliamentary tone of voice*). Ahem! I am not aware, Mr. President, that there's anything in the Land Act or Regulations against the daughter of a M.L.C. marryin' a squatter—a squatter, you observe, Mr. Eggermont. Had the party been a selector; but I won't dwell on a subject too painful to a parent's feelin's. Take her, my boy! And a better gal, tho' I say it—good, game, and good-lookin'—she's all that and more—never——' 281

DULCIE (*moving up to* EGREMONT *and placing her hand on his shoulder*). Never gave advice to a struggling free selector. Is that what you were going to say, daddy? Never mind—he had sense enough to take it. Hadn't you, Cecil dear?

MR. POLYBLOCK. Seems to me he's free selected on a pastoral holding to some purpose, you monkey. Is there any clause about that in the new Land Act, I wonder, as they're makin' such a bother about? Anyway, I'm the happiest lessee in the unsettled districts, now this little matter's settled satisfactory. And tell you what, Dulcie (GAYTERS *comes in here—looks rather blank*), I'll send Gayters out to Banda Plains to take delivery and wire into the bullockin' for a bit. It'll do him good—he's

been takin' it too easy lately; and as it happens to be Christmas time, we'll get the transfer business put through by the Rev. Mr. Robinson at the township, and, Cecil, my boy! give us your hand (*puts* DULCIE'S *into it*). There now, you can take up this additional conditional selection. It won't want improvin', that's one thing. Ha! ha! I'm that full of happiness that I can get a joke out of the Land Act—Rum-ty-idity—fol-de-rol (*dances round the room*).

CECIL *puts his arm round* DULCIE*; they look tenderly into each other's faces.*

CURTAIN FALLS

BUSH HOSPITALITY

In the pioneer period of the pastoral industry, which has since known such phenomenal development and, alas! no less phenomenal declension, the hospitality of the dwellers in the wilderness was proverbially free and unchallenged. But even then there were 'metes and bounds.' Like Colonial society—though apparently 'a free and a fetterless thing'—there were lines of demarcation. These, though unsubstantial and shadowy to superficial observers, were nevertheless discovered by experiment to be strangely hard and fast.

In those Arcadian days the stranger, on arriving at the homestead of a man whom he had never seen, and whose name possibly he had scarcely heard, was warranted by custom, on riding up to the door, in proposing to stay all night. It was the rule of the period. If there was no inn within a dozen miles, it became an unquestioned right.

The owner or manager of the station, if at home, welcomed the stranger with more or less courtesy, according to his disposition, assisting the guest, whom Allah had sent him, to take off his saddle and place it in the verandah of the cottage, to turn out his horse in the paddock, or, in default of that "improvement," to hobble or tether the trusty steed on good pasture.

If the personages referred to were absent, the traveller, unless he happened to be abnormally diffident, informed the cook, hut-keeper, or any station hand whom he might chance to encounter, that he had come to stay all night, turned his horse out, and entering the plainly-furnished abode, made himself as comfortable as circumstances would admit of.

If his host delayed his coming, supper was served. The stranger foraged about among the books and newspapers, and with the aid of tobacco, managed to spend the evening, retiring to rest in the apartment indicated, with perfect cheerfulness and self-possession.

If, as chiefly happened, the hard-worked colonist returned from the quest of lost sheep or strayed cattle before bedtime, he usually expressed himself much gratified by the unexpected companionship, and after a cheery confab about the latest news, politics, prospects (pastoral), and a parting smoke, both retired to the couches where unbroken slumbers were the rule. It was a mutual benefit. The monotonous life of the squatter was cheered by the advent of a fresh face, fresh news and ideas. The weary traveller found frank entertainment for man and beast, company and a guide, possibly, for the morrow's journey.

In these strictly equestrian days (for gentlefolk) no man could carry more than a limited change of apparel in the leather valise strapped to the fore-part of the saddle. Saddlebags were occasionally used, but they were held to be cumbrous. The journeys were rough and protracted. Clean linen has ever been unwillingly dispensed with by the Briton. In that barbaric epoch, Crimean shirts could not be, the quarrel with the Sultan about the mythical keys not having arisen. Paper collars, much more celluloids, were in the future. The only recognised departure from the full-dress white raiment, the 'biled shirt' of the American humorist to come, was the check or 'regatta' shirt.

Now this was a garment of compromise, not disreputably soiled after a couple of days' use. Still its existence as a respectable article of apparel had a limit. When that was reached, the stranger was permitted to levy on the host's wardrobe, if a bachelor, to the extent of one coloured shirt, leaving his own in lieu. This was held to be fair exchange—the alien vestment, when washed, being, if of ordinary texture and age, of equal average value to the one taken; the host doing likewise when on *his* travels. The chief and perhaps only undesirable result was, that every proprietor on a frequented line of road had a collection of the most varied and cosmopolitan autographs in marking ink, on his shirts, probably ever noticed in one gentleman's wardrobe.

Now this was all very well in the days when Mr. Jones and Mr. Smith were in the free and independent condition of bachelors. They could smoke their pipe unconcernedly with Jackson the

cattle-dealer, or Tomkins the working overseer from an out-station, or Binks, who was nobody in particular, or Jinks, who was a cheeky sort of a fellow, but with no harm in him. But all this was changed when Jones or Smith took unto himself a wife. He then desired to have his evenings to himself; and though a gentleman or an agreeable stranger was always welcome, he by no means cared about entertaining half-and-half people, or being bothered with making talk for uncongenial persons all the evening. Yet he did not quite like to send all wayfarers whom he did not know or care about to the 'men's hut.' Some of them doubtless were more at home there, or managed to pass the evening without complaint; still, mistakes were occasionally made. Therefore some kind of intermediate arrangement came to be needed.

When an inn was within a mile or two, the difficulty was removed. No stranger could desire to be entertained at the house of a man he did not know, merely because it was cheaper. If he were mean enough to make the attempt, he received a rebuff—possibly no more than his due. Still, in some instances, the squatter, even if unmarried, dreaded the hotel as the nucleus of a township, and bore the enforced intrusion rather than risk the invasion of his Run.

It became thus one of the unwritten laws of Bushland that, though a bachelor station was fair game, and introductions might be dispensed with, more circumspection must be exercised in the case of the homestead which contained a lady. Even if the hospitality was unrestricted as of yore, the restraint was felt by the more homely of the wayfarers, and a sensible lowering of the average of visitors took place.

And even when there was no such adequate reason, the resident proprietor was occasionally, by nature or on principle, opposed to the indiscriminate entertainment of chance-comers, and cast about for some method of ensuring privacy. The late Mr. Charles Ebden discovered that 'Carlsruhe,'

named after a continental reminiscence of travel, was by no means likely to be the 'Charles' Rest' which the name promised. So he made a bold innovation, the fame of which went through the length and breadth of the land: he established a 'visitors' hut.'

285 There appeared to be no great harm in this—merely a comfortable cottage, wherein the visitor was supplied with an evening meal, bed, and breakfast, all comfortably arranged. His horse would of course be cared for, paddocked, and brought up in the morning. One would fancy this gratuitous entertainment would have been voted sufficient. But the roving pastoralists were dissatisfied. They did not want merely meat and drink—they wanted a welcome: to have speech also with the master of the house. He was suspected of considering himself too good for his surroundings. And so 'Carlsruhe' was gradually avoided—not that the perhaps too fastidious 'Count' Ebden cared a jot.

An amusing *contretemps* with respect to this novel disposal of guests was that related of the late Sir James Hawthorn. The good old gentleman arrived late one evening at 'Carlsruhe,' naturally concluding that he would receive special consideration. It did not so chance, however, whether from non-recognition—he was not a knight then, but a doctor—or some other cause. Before leaving the visitors' hut in the morning, he left a formal note of thanks for his night's lodging, and enclosed a cheque for a guinea as payment.

But the Colonial Treasurer of the future was equal to the occasion. He made answer by post, in a carefully-worded epistle, acknowledging 'a most extraordinary communication, containing a cheque, for which he was totally unable to conceive any reasonable explanation, and had forwarded to Secretary of the Lunatic Asylum.'

After the changes which turned the homesteads of the larger stations into small villages, the 'big house,' as it came to be called, was no longer expected to accommodate the proprietor, the overseer, and the young gentleman learning Colonial experience, in addition to every wanderer that turned up. The overseer generally had a commodious if, perhaps, plainly-furnished cottage allotted to him. This came to be known as the 'barracks,' and to be used as a convenient abode for strangers and pilgrims, as well as for the storekeeper, the working overseers, and the young gentlemen. Here, in summer, they could sleep on the verandah, smoke and yarn on the same, or, in winter, around the cheerful fire, without danger of disturbing the squatter's domestic arrangements. This of course without prejudice to personal friends or strangers of distinction.

286 As to the pilgrims, they might be described as 'human warious.' There was first the squatter proper, young, middle-aged, or elderly, on his way from one station to the other, returning from new country or from a journey with fat cattle or sheep. He was of course welcome, being, presumably, ready and willing to repay the accommodation in kind. Then there were overseers and managers, cattle and sheep buyers, agents and drovers. These were pastoral personages, and, of course, to be considered. The dealers, even when roughish in manner, were a power in the land, capable too of drawing cheques to an amount which secured respect. They could not in any case be sent to the men's hut. Tourists, *bona-fide* travellers, and globe-trotters, having business of some sort, others without any particular aim or destination,—these gentry in the 'barracks' were evidently the 'right men in the right place.'

It must be surmised also that adventurers travelled about among the stations as a pleasant way of seeing the country and spending a few months at free quarters. A man of prepossessing appearance and agreeable manners, 'who wanted to buy a station—a real first-class property, you know,' made his appearance in a certain district just 'after the gold.' He was courteously treated, and shown a variety of stations. He passed a whole summer in the leisurely inspection of sheep and cattle properties, none of which quite suited his taste. He became quite a well-known inhabitant. Many people believed at last that he had so invested, and accepted him as a recognised identity. But he never *did* buy a station or any stock—eventually contenting himself with a Government billet of a moderate description, under circumstances which proved the presumption of his being a capitalist to have been erroneous.

As a general rule it may be stated that the farther back, the more distant the station, the more liberal and invariable the hospitality. When men went seldom to town, when books and newspapers were scarce, the lonely squatter was well disposed towards any kind of stranger guest above the level of shepherd or stock-rider. He was a change, an animated evening newspaper, and as such intrinsically valuable. His visit, besides, was of a transitory or fleeting nature, so that only his good qualities were apparent.

Even this form of enjoyment was subject to abatement. There was the pilgrim now and then who 287 declined to proceed on his pilgrimage, especially when he fell upon a comfortable bachelor abode, with *cuisine*, library, and liquor reasonably up to date. Not infrequently the pilgrim's steed would stray, which the owner would search for in such a perfunctory manner that it seemed as if years might roll on before he was run in. One really most agreeable and gifted person——he afterwards became Premier in a neighbouring colony—was celebrated as protracting his visits by this device. One morning there appeared in a provincial paper the startling announcement, 'Mr. Blank's horse is found.' It was the making of him. The laughter was so general that he left that colony, and attained in another to political eminence and material prosperity.

Not always, however, was even the *bona-fide* squatter on his travels made welcome. A friend of mine arrived at a station late in the evening. 'I am Mr. Blake,' he said, 'of Kilrush'—a name well known throughout his own and other districts for generous, unstinted hospitality. The proprietor stood at his door, but offered no welcome.

'How far is it to the next place?' inquired the traveller.

'Sixteen miles; you can't miss the road.'

'Thanks; much obliged.' So he put spurs to his weary steed—he had come far since sunrise—and departed, reaching the station, so obligingly referred to, long after dark on a cold night.

In the following year the same squatter arrived at Kilrush. He was cordially received—invited to stay a day and rest his horse. 'I killed him with kindness,' were my friend's words—relating the affair to me years afterwards—'and when he rode away, did everything possible, short of holding his stirrup for him.

'"Mr. Blake," said he, "you've behaved to me like a gentleman! I am afraid I didn't give you that idea when you called at Bareacres. I feel ashamed of myself, I assure you."

'"So you ought to be," I said, looking him straight in the face. He muttered something and rode away.'

Ah me! who has not known and pitied them in this Australian land of ours? The workman's Paradise! yet all too well adapted for converting the gently-nurtured waif into the resigned labourer, the homeless vagrant. The gradations through which slowly, invisibly, but none the less surely, drifts to lower levels the luckless gentleman adventurer, are fraught with a melancholy interest. How sad it seems to realise that of the hundreds of well-dressed, well-educated, high-hearted youngsters, fresh from pleasant British homes, who every season land on our shores, a certain proportion will, in a few years of Colonial Experience (save the mark!), be transformed into misanthropic shepherds, ragged tramps, or reckless rouseabouts.

One always sees a few in the men's hut at shearing time, owning no higher aspirations than the ordinary station hand, living the rough life of the bush-labourer, relishing coarse tobacco and the coarser jests when the day's work is done, hardly distinguishable in dress, tone, and manner from their ruder comrades. Like them, alas! too prone to end each term's unrelieved labour by an aimless, ruinous drinking-bout.

It is not that the daily toil, the plain fare, and rude companionship would be in any sense degrading, were they used as means to an end. Did the cadet resolve to save all but the cash absolutely required for clothing and other needs, a small capital might easily be acquired, with reasonable credit in proportion, for which a profitable outlet is always to be found. And a knowledge of the rougher side of Australian life is always valuable wherever his lot might be cast.

The real social deterioration accrues when the well-born or well-educated man becomes fatally contented with his humble surroundings; when hope has faded out, when ambition is dead, when repeated trials have landed him in deeper failure; when the conviction is only too well founded that for him no higher position is attainable in this world. Nay, that even if attained, he is no longer fitted to occupy it.

Persons imperfectly acquainted with our social system may say, 'Oh, once a gentleman, always a gentleman!' and so on. From whatever rude environment, he will come forth true to his training, and assume his earlier habitudes as easily as the well-fitting garments which his altered circumstances render necessary.

It is not so, unfortunately. Granted that the exceptional individual emerges from the wreck of his youthful aspirations safe and uninjured, more numerous are they tenfold who reach the shore bleeding and disabled, never to be again but the simulacra of their former selves—hopeless of ever attaining the fair heaven-crowned heights, so near, so tempting of ascent in boyhood; heedless but of the lower pains and pleasures to which they have all unresistingly yielded their future lives.

Much of course depends on the mental fibre of the youngster. If happily constituted, he may defy the most inauspicious surroundings to alter his habits of thought or change his settled purpose in life. One boy, at the roughest station in the 'back blocks,' will save his money and do his work in a cheerfully observant spirit; he will utilise the spare time, of which he has so large a supply, in reading and improving his mind; he will find out all he can about the working of the station, with a view to future operations when he is promoted to partnership or management. To this he resolutely looks forward. He preserves the manners and the principles which he brought from home untarnished; an easy enough matter, since even in the farthest wilds, among the roughest working men in Australia, a true gentleman's mien and tone are always held in respect, which no man loses save by his own act.

Say that he has a few years of hard work and privation, he is sure to rise in life, and eventually, by dint of perseverance and attention to detail, to become the owner of or partner in a station. His character for steadiness, efficiency, and industry becomes known from one end of the district to the other. And if those with whom he is temporarily connected do not advance him, be sure that some neighbouring proprietor in need of an active lieutenant will not lose the opportunity.

The young man of less robust self-denial takes station life after a very different fashion. His fixed idea has been from the first that galloping about on horseback, smoking, shooting, and drinking are the recognised pastoral industries by which fortunes in Australia are made. He does not bother his head about the science of sheep-breeding, or the management of that capricious but profitable animal the merino. He forgets messages. He overrides the station horses. He smokes diligently, talks familiarly and plays cards with the men, from whom he learns to swear profanely and acquires no useful knowledge—on the contrary, much that is evil. On his visits to the village or post-town he learns to drink spirits, and thus lays the foundation of a dangerous habit, which, if not checked, may destroy his after-life. At the end of his two years' experience he is regarded as about on a level with the ordinary rouseabout—hardly as good, certainly no better. On making up his mind to leave for other employment, he is told that he is heartily welcome to please himself.

Occasionally the unsuccessful gentleman, emigrant or colonial, is not distinctly to blame for his fall in social position. He has adopted a bush life, trusting vaguely to be able to get on in one of the numerous ways of which he has heard tell. He tries hard at first for situations suited to his former position in life, finding, however, that no one is in pressing need of an inexperienced youth not brought up to work. Still, if strong and willing, he can earn ordinary wages as a station hand. He learns how to manage the routine work nearly as well as his comrades in the men's hut, and by degrees, not being mentally persistent, he adopts the tone and manner of the men who are his companions—not at once, and not altogether, but after a year or two—to a much greater extent than any one would think possible. In a work of fiction some kindly squatter would free the poor fellow from his rough, or let us say uneducated comrades, but in real life no one would risk the

experiment. He may have been deceived before. He would argue that though the waif might be a gentleman by birth, it must have been his own fault in some way that he was in his present position —most likely drank, gambled, or had done something shady; and this would be true in nine cases out of ten. If he introduced Mr. Waif to his family, or took him into his house if a bachelor, he might, of course, behave well for a time, but one fine day, unable to withstand the temptation of an open sideboard, would be found dead drunk or madly intoxicated on his employer's return. 291

Gradually the unsuccessful one, after a year or two of nomadic life, tramping it from one end of a colony to another, begins to abandon the punctilious habits of his early life. His speech shows signs of degeneration. He talks of people indifferently as 'coves' or 'cards'; *causerie* with him is 'pitching'; he refrains with difficulty from expletives, and so on. His reading has not been kept up, though, had he cared, it might have been. He is scented unpleasantly with coarse tobacco, occasionally, alas! with the too frequent 'nip' of alcohol. If he by any chance re-enters civilised life, he shows in a dozen ways that he is no longer in touch with it. He makes things uncomfortable for his friends or companions, and is thoroughly convinced that he is out of place himself.

A youngster of this type came to a squatter's station one evening, carrying his 'swag' like any other tramp. The owner knew that he was or had been a gentleman, but apologised, as he had guests, for not asking him into the house. He was too dirty to be quite exact, and neither in raiment nor in other matters was he then fitted for the society of ladies. So he had his supper and bed in the men's hut, smoked his pipe over the fire with the man-cook, and turned in, quite contented with his accommodation.

Sometimes, if fairly industrious and steady, the ex-tramp makes his way to a managership, or even a share in a station, where he recovers a portion of his earlier form. But he is apt to be rough and careless to the end, which his English friends attribute to the necessarily deteriorating influences of colonial life.

Perhaps the saddest sight of all is the broken-down 'swell' of maturer years, carrying his 'swag' along the road, sometimes a solitary 'traveller'—a name that has its own significance in Australia— 292
sometimes in company with other 'sundowners.' He is free of the guild now, unluckily. They neither resent his companionship, nor feel flattered by it; in no way do they alter their mode of speech or action in consequence. It is known that he has 'seen better days,' as the phrase runs. If so, it is nobody's business but his own. A certain amount of reticence characterises Australian bushmen, which is not noticeable among their British comrades. The nomadic habit, and the goldfields' experience—for nearly every able-bodied man in Australia has graduated there—may be held accountable for this trait. Travel is the true civiliser, and in many respects supplies the place of the higher education, teaching reserve, undemonstrativeness, and the patient endurance of privations and dangers which cannot be evaded.

So, though it is generally believed that Jack Somers or Bill Brown *was* a gentleman (nothing, alas! will ever make or keep him one again), he is treated by the master who employs him, and the station hands or farm labourers who work with him, exactly as the others—neither better nor worse. Generally a smart, intelligent worker, whether a shearer, rouseabout, boundary rider, road hand, what not, during the often protracted periods when he is compulsorily sober. This is secured by giving him no money (the more obvious necessaries can be procured from the station store), until his term of work be completed or his contract finished. Then he gets his cheque, and short work he makes of it. For the nearest bush public-house is to him a barrier fixed and impassable, while there is a pound in his purse.

After all, Australia is perhaps the best country for the fallen swell. A reasonable share of honest work is always open to him, which, from the custom of the country, is not held to be degrading, as it would be in Europe. He could not work in the field in Britain, tend sheep, drive a team, break stones. All these things he can do in Australia with but temporary loss of prestige or social rank. He would find it next to impossible to gain a living in the old country in any form of day labour. Were he even to succeed in doing so, he would be gazed and wondered at by the whole country-side. A man of good family requested me to officially certify his identity for the security of his people at 293
home, who were remitting money to his credit. Roughly dressed was he—had evidently been 'on the wallaby' recently. After telling me his name and birth, he must have thought I looked doubtful, for he said, 'I am the man I say; I'm not the Claimant.' That great personage was then supplying England and Australia with food for conversation. A book lay near me with a Latin quotation on the frontispiece. This I slightly indicated; he at once took the hint and translated it correctly.

'What have you been doing lately?' I inquired. His hands, roughened and gnarled, with no make-believe manual labour, assured me that he had been pretty continuously at work of some sort.

'Well, station work mostly,' he returned answer. 'My last job was cooking for a survey camp.'

'Was it for this that you graduated at Trinity College, Dublin?' was my unspoken thought. That he drank hard between times, poor fellow, was apparent to my experienced eye. He received his money duly, which was, of course, 'blued' like all previous remittances. I exchanged letters with the friends who had written after him. I advised, if they were really anxious for his return, that he should be placed on board ship, but no money given to him till safe on blue water. What historiettes of lapsed gentlefolk in the colonies might be written! The Honourable Blank Blank, long past even the middle passage of station work, who loafs about country towns, taking work as ostler, or even 'boots' at the hotels, ready to drink with any rough, and feebly subsisting upon the reflection of former greatness, until he becomes too useless for even such a position, is locked up for repeated drunkenness, and finally dies in a gutter.

The 'cranky' long-bearded shepherd vegetates on a back-block station, amid desert regions now

becoming traditionary, where wire fences are all unknown, or by dingoes rendered ineffectual.

A row of books adorns his solitary hut, a weekly paper, perhaps his sponge and ivory-backed brushes, curious-appearing souvenirs of old days. He talks pleasantly enough to the rare-appearing stranger, who is also a gentleman. The British tourist, if a new arrival, rides off with pity in his heart, possibly with some idea of aiding the hermit to return to his friends in England. If a colonist, 294
he knows better; knows that the old man has his half-yearly or annual 'break-out'; that he can no more inhabit the same dwelling as ardent spirits without utter debasement than fly; that such will be his life, without change or amendment, until he ends it in a Benevolent Asylum, or, more probably, is found dead in his hut. Then from his papers it will be discovered that 'Old Jack' or 'Jindabyne Joe' was, once upon a time, Lieutenant Harry Willoughby Howard of the—th Fusiliers, one of the smartest subalterns in that distinguished and tolerably fast regiment. What brought him here? How fared he so ill in Australia, where blue blood always counts for something, the Radical press notwithstanding? Heigho! These and other questions may be answered some day, or they may never be. The nearest magistrate holds an inquiry, sitting on a bench outside of the lonely hut on the sandhill. The overseer counts out his flock to a fresh hand, and the ex-Fusilier, younger brother of one of the magnates of Blankshire, is carted into the head station and decently buried, with the collie dog as chief mourner, *his* grief being real and unaffected, and his lamentations for the next few days touchingly audible.

Having a favourite horse to put in harness in the early goldfield days, I betook me to an establishment in Melbourne where a brake was kept. Of course I mounted the box to watch and perhaps assist in the interesting performance. When the brakesman got up—a good-looking middle-aged man with grey whiskers—if he was not a gentleman, and an ex-swell at that, I had never seen one. From his cravat to his well-polished boots—a neat foot, too—from his hat to his accurate dogskin gloves, he was 'good form.' He might have walked straight out of one of Whyte Melville's novels.

His 'hands,' in stable language, were perfection, and as he and the brake-horse between them, with practised adroitness, conducted the drag and my Zohrab, a slashing grey son of Donald Caird, out of the yard and up Lonsdale Street, I felt a measureless pity for the dear old man, who, doubtless failing to score at Bendigo or Sandhurst, had come down to this for a livelihood. Charmed with his conversation and manners, I am afraid I prolonged the lesson unduly, for when we returned my aristocratic friend was urgently required to school other young ones at a guinea per lesson. The 295
proprietor, a vulgar person, expressed his disapproval in language unfit for publication. I remonstrated hotly, but the dependent *emigré* said no word. I departed sadly, and never saw him more. Melbourne was full of such derelicts in 'the fifties.'

SHEARING IN RIVERINA, NEW SOUTH WALES

'Shearing begins to-morrow!' These apparently simple words were spoken by Hugh Gordon, the manager of Anabanco Station, in the district of Riverina, in the colony of New South Wales, one Monday morning in the month of August. The utterance had its significance to every member of a rather extensive *corps dramatique*, awaiting the industrial drama about to be performed.

A low sandhill, a few years since, had looked out over a sea of grey plains, covered partly with grass, partly with salsiferous bushes and herbs. Three huts built of the trunks of the pine and roofed with the bark of the box-tree, and a skeleton-looking cattle-yard with its high 'gallows' (a rude timber arrangement whereon to hang slaughtered cattle), alone broke the monotony of the plain-ocean. A comparatively small herd of cattle, numbering two or three thousand, found more than sufficient pasturage during the short winter and spring, but were often compelled to migrate to mountain pastures when the precarious water-stores of the 'Run' were dried up. But, at most, half-a-dozen stock-riders and station hands were ever needed for the purpose of managing the herd, so inadequate in number and profitable occupation to this vast area of grazing country.

But a little later, one of the chiefs of the pastoral interest—a shepherd king, so to speak—of shrewdness, energy, and capital—had seen, approved of, and purchased the Crown lease of this waste kingdom. As if by magic, the scene changed. Gangs of navvies appeared, wending their way across the silent plain. Dams were made, wells were dug. Tons of fencing-wire were dropped on the sand by long lines of teams which never ceased arriving. Sheep by thousands and tens of thousands came grazing and cropping up to the erstwhile lonely sandhill—now swarming with blacksmiths, carpenters, engineers, fencers, shepherds, bullock-drivers—till the place looked like a fair on the borders of Tartary.

Meanwhile everything was moving with calculated force and cost, under the 'reign of law.' The seeming expense illustrated the economic truth of doing all necessary work at once, rather than by instalments. One hundred men for one day, rather than one man for a hundred days. Results began to demonstrate themselves. Within twelve months the dams were full, the wells sending up their far-fetched, priceless water, the wire-fences completed, the shepherds gone, and a hundred and seventy thousand sheep were cropping the herbage of Anabanco. Tuesday was the day fixed for the actual commencement of the momentous, almost solemn transaction—the pastoral Hegira, so to speak, as the time of most station events is calculated with reference to it, as happening before or after shearing. But before the first shot is fired which tells of the battle begun, what raids and skirmishes, what reconnoitring and vedette duty must take place!

First arrives the cook-in-chief to the shearers, with two assistants, to lay in a few provisions for the week's consumption of seventy able-bodied men. Now the cook of a large shearing shed is a highly paid and irresponsible official. He is chosen and provided by the shearers themselves. Payment is generally arranged on the scale of half-a-crown a head weekly from each shearer. For this sum he contracts to provide punctual and effective cooking, paying out of his own pocket as many *marmitons* as may be needful for that end, and must satisfy the taste of his exacting and fastidious employers.

In the present case he confers with the storekeeper, Mr. de Vere, a young gentleman of aristocratic connections, who is thus gaining an excellent practical knowledge of the working of a large station; and to this end has the store-keeping department entrusted to him during shearing.

He is not, perhaps, quite fit for a croquet party as he stands now, with a flour-scoop in one hand and a pound of tobacco in the other. But he looks like a man at work, also like a gentleman, as he is. 'Jack the Cook' thus addresses him:

'Now, Mr. de Vere, I hope there's not going to be any humbugging about my rations and things. The men are all up in their quarters, and as hungry as free selectors. They've been a-payin' for their rations for ever so long, and of course, now shearin's on, they're good for a little extra.'

'All right, Jack,' returns De Vere good-humouredly; 'your order was weighed out and sent away before breakfast. You must have missed the cart. Here's the list. I'll read it out to you—three bags flour, half a bullock, two bags sugar, a chest of tea, four dozen of pickles, four dozen of jam, two gallons of vinegar, five lbs. pepper, a bag of salt, plates, knives, forks, ovens, frying-pans, saucepans, iron pots, and about a hundred other things. You're to return all the cooking things safe, or *pay for them*, mind that! You don't want anything more, do you? Got enough for a regiment of cavalry, I should think.'

'Well, I don't know, sir. There won't be much left in a week if the weather holds good,' makes answer the chief, as one who thought nothing too stupendous to be accomplished by shearers; 'but I knew I'd forgot something. As I'm here, I'll take a few dozen boxes of sardines, and a case of pickled salmon. The boys likes 'em, and, murder alive! haven't we forgot the plums and currants; a hundredweight of each, Mr. de Vere. They'll be crying out for plum-duff and currant-buns for the afternoon, and bullying the life out of me if I haven't a few trifles like. It's a hard life, surely, a shearers' cook. Well, good-day, sir, you have 'em all down in the book.'

Lest the reader should imagine that the rule of Mr. Gordon at Anabanco was a reign of luxury and that waste which tendeth to penury, let him be aware that shearers in Riverina are paid at a certain rate, usually that of one pound per hundred sheep shorn. They agree, on the other hand, to pay for all supplies consumed by them, at certain prices fixed before the shearing agreement is signed. Hence it is entirely their own affair whether their mess bills are extravagant or economical. They can have everything within the rather wide range of the station store—*pâtés de foie gras*, ortolans,

roast ostrich, novels, top-boots, double-barrelled guns, *if they like to pay for them*; with one exception—no wine, no spirits! Neither are they permitted to bring these stimulants 'on to the ground' for their private use. Grog at shearing? Matches in a powder-mill! It's very sad and bad; but 299
our Anglo-Saxon industrial champion cannot be trusted with the fire-water. Navvies, men-of-war's men, soldiers, *and* shearers—fine fellows all. But though the younger men might only drink in moderation, the majority of the elders are utterly without self-control, once in the front of temptation. And wars, 'wounds without cause,' hot heads, shaking hands, delay, and bad shearing, would be the inevitable result of spirits, *à la discrétion*. So much is this a matter of certainty from experience, that a clause is inserted and cheerfully signed in most shearing agreements, 'that any man getting drunk or bringing spirits on to the station during shearing, loses *the whole of the money* earned by him.' The men know that the restriction is for their benefit, as well as for the interest of the master, and join in the prohibition heartily.

Let us give a glance at the small army of working-men assembled at Anabanco—one out of hundreds of stations in the colony of New South Wales, ranging from 100,000 sheep downwards. There are seventy shearers; about fifty washers, including the men connected with the steam-engine, boilers, bricklayers, etc.; ten or twelve boundary riders, whose duty it is to ride round the large paddocks, seeing that the fences are intact, and keeping a general look-out over the condition of the sheep; three or four overseers; half-a-dozen young gentlemen acquiring a practical knowledge of sheep-farming, or, as it is generally phrased, 'colonial experience,' a comprehensive expression enough; a score or so of teamsters, with a couple of hundred horses or bullocks waiting for the high-piled wool-bales, which are loaded up and sent away almost as soon as shorn; wool-sorters, pickers-up, pressers, yardsmen, extra shepherds. It may easily be gathered from this outline what an 'army with banners' is arrayed at Anabanco. While statistically inclined, it may be added that the cash due for the shearing alone (less the mess-bill) amounts to £17,000; for the washing (roughly), £400, exclusive of provisions consumed, hutting, wood, water, cooking, etc. Carriage of wool, £1500. Other hands from £30 to £40 per week. All of which disbursements take place within eight to twelve weeks after the shears are in the first sheep.

Tuesday arrives, 'big with fate.' As the sun tinges the far sky-line the shearers are taking a slight refection of coffee and currant-buns, to enable them to withstand the exhausting interval between 300
six A.M. and eight o'clock, when serious breakfast occurs. Shearers diet themselves on the principle that the more they eat the stronger they must be. Digestion, as preliminary to muscular development, is left to take its chance. They certainly do get through a tremendous amount of work. The whole frame is at its utmost tension, early and late. But the preservation of health is due to natural strength of constitution rather than to their profuse and unscientific diet. Half an hour after sunrise Mr. Gordon walks quietly into the vast building which contains the sheep and their shearers —called 'the shed,' *par excellence*. Everything is in perfect cleanliness and order. The floor swept and smooth, with its carefully planed boards of pale yellow aromatic pine. Small tramways, with baskets for the fleeces, run the wool up to the wool-tables, superseding the more general plan of handpicking. At each side of the shed-floor are certain small areas, four or five feet square, such space being found by experience to be sufficient for the postures and gymnastics practised during the shearing of a sheep. Opposite each square is an aperture, communicating with a long, narrow, paled yard, outside of the shed. Through this each man pops his sheep when shorn, where he remains in company with the others shorn by the same hand, until counted out. This being done by the overseer or manager, supplies a check upon hasty, unskilful work. The body of the woolshed, floored with battens placed half an inch apart, is filled with the woolly victims. This enclosure is subdivided into minor pens, of which each fronts the place of two shearers, who catch from it till the pen is empty. When this takes place, a man detailed for the purpose refills it. As there are local advantages, an equal distribution of places is made by lot.

On every subdivision stands a shearer, as Mr. Gordon walks, with an air of calm authority, down the long aisle. Seventy men, chiefly in their prime, the flower of the working-men of the colony, they are variously gathered. England, Ireland, and Scotland are represented in the proportion of one-third of the number; the balance is composed of native-born Australians.

Among these last—of pure Anglo-Saxon or Anglo-Celtic descent—are to be seen some of the finest men, physically considered, the race is capable of producing. Taller than their British-born 301
brethren, with softer voices and more regular features, they inherit the powerful frames and unequalled muscular development of the breed. Leading lives chiefly devoted to agriculture, they enjoy larger intervals of leisure than are permissible to the labouring classes of Europe. The climate is mild and favourable to health. They have been accustomed from childhood to abundance of the best food; opportunities of intercolonial travel are common. Hence the Anglo-Australian labourer, without, on the one hand, the sharpened eagerness which marks his Transatlantic cousin, has yet an air of independence and intelligence, combined with a natural grace of movement, unknown to the peasantry of Britain.

An idea is prevalent that the Australians are, as a race, physically inferior to the British. It is asserted that they grow too fast, tend to height and slenderness, and do not possess adequate stamina and muscle. This idea is erroneous. The men reared in the cities on the sea-boards, living sedentary lives in shops or counting-houses, are often pallid and slight of form. Such are they who live under similar conditions all over the world. But those youngsters who have followed the plough on the upland farms, or lived a wilder life on the stations of the far interior; who have had their fill of wheaten bread, chops, and steaks since they could walk, and sniffed up the free bush breezes from infancy, they are *men*—

Stout of heart and ready of hand,
As e'er drove prey from Cumberland

—a business, I may remark, at which many of them would have distinguished themselves.

Take Abraham Lawson, as he stands there in a natural and unstudied attitude, six feet four in his stockings, wide-chested, stalwart, with a face like that of a Greek statue. Take Billy May, fair-haired, mild, insouciant, almost languid, till you see him at work. Then, again, Jack Windsor, handsome, saucy, and wiry as a bull-terrier; like him, with a strong natural inclination for the combat; good for any man of his weight or a trifle over, with the gloves or without.

It is curious to note how the old English practice of settling disputes with nature's weapons has 302
taken root in Australia. It would 'gladden the sullen souls of defunct gladiators' to watch two lads, whose fathers had never trodden Britain's soil, pull off their jackets, and go to work 'hammer and tongs' with the savage silence of the true island type.

It is now seven o'clock. Mr. Gordon moves forward. As he does so, every man leans towards the open door of the pen, in front of which he stands. The bell sounds. With the first stroke each one of the seventy men has sprung upon a sheep; has drawn it out, placed its head across his knee, and is working his shears, as if the 'last man out' was to be flogged. Four minutes—James Steadman, who learned last year, has shorn down one side of his sheep; Jack Holmes and Gundagai Bill are well down the other side of theirs; when Billy May raises himself with a jerking sigh, and releases his sheep, perfectly clean—shorn from the nose to the heels, through the aperture of his separate enclosure. With the same effort apparently he calls out 'Wool!' and darts upon another sheep. Drawing this second victim across his knee, he buries his shear-point in the long wool of its neck. A moment later (a lithe, eager boy having gathered up fleece number one and tossed it into the tram-basket) he is half-way down its side, the wool hanging in one fleece like a great glossy mat, before you have done wondering whether he did really shear the first sheep, or whether he had not a ready-shorn one in his coat sleeve, like a conjurer. By this time Lawson and Windsor, Jack Holmes and Gundagai Bill are 'out,' or finished, and the cry of 'Wool! wool!' seems to run continuously up and down the long aisles of the shed, like a single note upon some rude instrument. Now and then the refrain is varied by 'Tar!' being shouted instead, when a piece of skin is snipped off as well as the wool. Great healing properties are attributed to this extract in the shed. And if a shearer slice off a piece of flesh from his own person, as occasionally happens, he gravely anoints it with the universal remedy, and considers that the onus then lies with Providence, there being no more that man can do. Though little time is lost, the men are by no means up to the speed which they will attain in a few days, when in full practice and training. Their nerve and muscle will be then, so to speak, at concert-pitch, while sheep after sheep will be shorn with a precision and celerity almost 303
magical to the unprofessional observer.

The reader may here be informed that speed and completeness of denudation are the grand desiderata in shearing. The employer thinks principally of the latter, the shearer of the former. To adjust the proportion equitably is one of the incomplete aspirations which torment humanity. Hence the contest—old as human society—between labour and capital.

This is the first day. According to old-established custom, a kind of truce obtains. It is before the battle—the *salut*, when no hasty word or too demonstrative action can be suffered by the canons of good taste. Red Bill, Flash Jack, Jem the Scooper, and other roaring blades, more famous for expedition than faithful manipulation, are shearing to-day with a painstaking precision, as of men to whom character is everything. Mr. Gordon marches softly up and down, regarding the shearers with a paternal and gratified expression, occasionally hinting at slight improvements of style, or expressing unqualified approval, as a sheep is turned out shaven rather than shorn. All goes on well. Nothing is heard but expressions of goodwill and enthusiasm for the general welfare. It is a triumph of the dignity of labour.

One o'clock. Mr. Gordon moved to the bell and sounded it. At the first stroke several men on their way to the pens stopped abruptly, and began to put on their coats. One fellow of an alert nature had just finished his sheep and was sharpening his shears, when his eye caught Mr. Gordon's form in close proximity to the final bell. With a bound like a wild-cat, he reached the pen and drew out his sheep a bare second before the first stroke, amidst the laughter and congratulations of his comrades. Another man had his hand on the pen-gate at the same instant, but by the Median law was compelled to return sheepless. He was cheered, but ironically. Those whose sheep were in an unfinished stage quietly completed them, the others moving off to the dinner, where the board literally smoked with abundance. An hour passed. The meal was concluded; the smoke was over; and the more careful men were back in the shed sharpening their shears by two o'clock. Punctually at that hour the bell repeated its summons *da capo*. The warm afternoon gradually lengthened its 304
shadows; the shears clicked in tireless monotone; the pens filled and became empty. The wool-presses yawned for the mountain of fleeces which filled the bins in front of them, divided into various grades of excellence, and continuously disgorged them, neatly, cubically packed and branded.

At six o'clock the bell brought the day's work to a close. The sheep of each man were counted in his presence, and noted down with scrupulous care, the record being written in full and hung up for public inspection in the shed next day. This important ceremony over, master and men, manager, labourers, and supernumeraries betook themselves to their separate abodes, with such avoidance of delay that in five minutes not a soul was left in or near the great building lately so busy and populous, except the boys who were sweeping up the floor. The silence of ages seems to fall and settle upon it.

Next morning at a rather earlier hour every man is at his post. Business is meant decidedly. Now commences the delicate and difficult part of the superintendence which keeps Mr. Gordon at his post in the shed nearly from daylight to dark for from eight to ten weeks. During the first day he has formed a sort of gauge of each man's temper and workmanship. For now and henceforth the natural bias of each shearer will appear. Some try to shear too fast, and in their haste shear badly. Some are rough and savage with the sheep, which do occasionally kick and become unquiet at critical times, and, it must be confessed, are provoking enough. Some shear fairly and handsomely to a superficial eye, but commit the unpardonable offence of 'leaving wool on.' Some are deceitful, shearing carefully when overlooked, but 'racing' and otherwise misbehaving directly the eye of authority is diverted. These and many other tricks and defects require to be noted and abated, quietly but firmly, by the manager of the shed—firmly, because evil would develop and spread ruinously if not checked; quietly, because immense loss might be incurred by a strike. Shearing differs from other work in this wise—it is work *against time*, more especially in Riverina. If the wool be not off the backs of the sheep before November, all sorts of drawbacks and destructions supervene. The spear-shaped grass seeds, specially formed as if in special collusion with the evil one, hasten to bury themselves in the wool and even in the flesh of the tender victims. Dust rises in red clouds from the unmoistened, betrampled meadows, so lately verdurous and flower-spangled. From snowy white to an unlovely bistre turn the carefully-washed fleeces, causing anathemas from overseers and depreciation from brokers. All these losses of temper, trouble, and money become inevitable if shearing be protracted, it may be, beyond a given week. 305

Hence, as in harvest with a short allowance of fair weather, discipline must be tempered with diplomacy. Lose your temper, and be over particular; off go Billy May, Abraham Lawson, and half-a-dozen of your best men, making a weekly difference of two or three thousand sheep for the remainder of the shearing. Can you not replace them? Not so! Every shed in Riverina will be hard at work during this present month of September and for every hour of October. Till that time not a shearer will come to your gate, except, perhaps, one or two useless, characterless men. Are you to tolerate bad workmanship? Not that either. But try all other means with your men before you resort to harshness; and be *quite* certain that your sentence is just, and that you can afford the defection.

So our friend Mr. Gordon, wise from tens of thousands of shorn sheep that have been counted out past his steady eye, criticises temperately but watchfully. He reproves sufficiently, but no more, any glaring fault; makes his calculation as to who are really bad shearers, and can be discharged without loss to the commonwealth; or who shear fairly and can be coached up to a decent average. One division, slow, and good only when slow, have to be watched lest they emulate 'the talent,' and so come to grief. Then 'the talent' has to be mildly admonished from time to time lest they force the pace, set a bad example, and lure the other men on to 'racing.' This last leads to slovenly shearing, ill-usage of the sheep, and general dissatisfaction.

Tact, temper, patience, and firmness are each and all necessary attributes in that captain of industry who has the delicate and responsible task of superintending a large woolshed. Hugh Gordon had shown all in such proportion as would have made him a distinguished person anywhere, had fortune not adjusted for him this particular profession. Calm with the consciousness of strength, he was considerate in manner as in nature, until provoked by glaring dishonesty or incivility. Then the lion part of his nature awoke, so that it commonly went ill with the aggressor. As this was matter of public report, he had little occasion to spoil the repose of his bearing. Day succeeds day, and for a fortnight the machinery goes on smoothly and successfully. The sheep arrive at an appointed hour by detachments and regiments at the wash-pen. They depart thence, like good boys on Saturday night, redolent of soap and water, and clean to a fault—entering the shed white and flossy as newly-combed poodles, to emerge on the way back to their pasturage, slim, delicate, agile, with a bright black **A** legibly branded with tar on their paper-white skins. 306

The Anabanco world—stiffish but undaunted—is turning out of bed one morning. Ha! what sounds are these? and why does the room look so dark? Rain, as I'm alive! 'Hurrah!' says Master Jack Bowles, one of the young gentlemen. He is learning (more or less) practical sheep-farming, preparatory to having (one of these days) an Anabanco of his own. 'Well, this is a change, and I'm not sorry, for one,' quoth Mr. Jack. 'I'm stiff all over. No one can stand such work long. Won't the shearers growl? No shearing to-day, and perhaps none to-morrow either.' Truth to tell, Mr. Bowles' sentiments are not confined to his ingenuous bosom. Some of the shearers grumble at being stopped, 'just as a man was earning a few shillings.' Those who are in top pace and condition don't like it. But to many of the rank and file—working up to and a little beyond their strength—with whom swelled wrists and other protests of nature are becoming apparent, it is a relief. They are glad of the respite. At dinner-time all the sheep in the sheds, put in overnight in anticipation of such a contingency, are reported shorn. All hands then are idle for the rest of the day. The shearers dress and avail themselves of various resources. Some go to look at their horses, now in clover or its equivalent, in the Riverina graminetum. Some play cards, others wash or mend their clothes. A large proportion of the Australians, having armed themselves with paper, envelopes, and a shilling's worth of stamps from the store, bethink themselves of neglected or desirable correspondents. Many a letter for Mrs. Leftalone, Wallaroo Creek, or Miss Jane Sweetapple, Honeysuckle Flat, as the case may be, will find its way into the post-bag to-morrow. A pair of the youngsters are having a round or two with the gloves; while to complete the variety of recreations compatible with life at a woolshed, a selected troupe are busy in the comparative solitude of that building, at a rehearsal of a tragedy and a farce, with which they intend, the very next rainy day, to astonish the population of Anabanco. 307

At the home station a truce to labour's 'alarms' is proclaimed, except in the case and person of Mr. De Vere. So far is he from participation in the general holiday, that he finds the store thronged with

shearers, washers, and 'knockabout men,' who, being let loose, think it would be nice to go and buy something. He therefore grumbles slightly at having no rest like other people.

'That's all very fine,' says Mr. Jack Bowles, who, seated on a case, is smoking a large meerschaum and mildly regarding all things; 'but what have you got to do when we're all *hard at work* at the shed?' with an air of great importance and responsibility.

'That's right, Mr. Bowles,' chimes in one of the shearers; 'stand up for the shed. I never see a young gentleman work as hard as you do.'

'Bosh!' growls De Vere; 'as if anybody couldn't gallop about from the shed to the wash-pen, and carry messages, and give half of them wrong! Why, Mr. Gordon said the other day he should have to take you off and put on a Chinaman—that he couldn't make more mistakes.'

'All envy and malice and t'other thing, De Vere, because you think I'm rising in the profession,' returns the good-natured Bowles. 'Mr. Gordon's going to send 20,000 sheep, after shearing, to the Lik Lak paddock, and he said I should go in charge.'

'Charge be hanged!' laughs De Vere (with two very bright-patterned Crimean shirts, one in each hand, which he offers to a tall young shearer for inspection). 'There's a well there, and whenever either of the two men, of whom you'll have *charge*, gets sick or runs away, you'll have to work the whim in his place, till another man's sent out, if it's a month.'

This appalling view of station promotion rather startles Mr. Bowles, who applies himself to his 308
meerschaum, amid the ironical comments of the shearers. However, not easily daunted, or 'shut up,' according to the more familiar station phrase, he rejoins, after a brief interval of contemplation, that 'accidents will happen, you know, De Vere, my boy—*apropos* of which moral sentiment, I'll come and help you in your dry-goods business; and then, look here, if *you* get ill or run away, I'll have a profession to fall back upon.' This is held to be a Roland of sufficient pungency for De Vere's Oliver. Every one laughed. And the two youngsters betook themselves to a humorous puffing of the miscellaneous contents of the store: tulip beds of gorgeous Crimean shirts, boots, books, tobacco, canvas slippers, pocket-knives, Epsom salts, pipes, pickles, pain-killer, pocket-handkerchiefs, and pills, sardines, saddles, shears, and sauces; in fact, everything which every kind of man might want, and which apparently every man did want, for large and various were the purchases, and great the flow of conversation. Finally, after everything had been severely and accurately debited to the purchasers, the store was cleared and locked up. A store is a necessity of a large station; not by any means because of the profit upon goods sold, but it obviously would be bad economy for old Bill the shepherd, or Barney the bullock-driver, to visit the next township, from ten to twenty miles distant, as the case may be, every time the former wanted a pound of tobacco, or the latter a pair of boots. They might possibly obtain these necessary articles as good in quality, as cheap in price. But there are wolves in that wood, oh, my weak brothers! In every town dwells one of the 'sons of the giant'—the Giant Grog—red-eyed, with steel muscles and iron claws; once in these, which have held many and better men to the death, Barney nor Bill emerges not, save pale, fevered, nerveless, and impecunious. So arose the station store. Barney befits himself with boots without losing his feet; Bill fills his pockets with match-boxes and smokes the pipe of sobriety, virtuous perforce till his carnival, *after* shearing.

The next day was wet, and threatened broken weather. Matters were not too placid with the shearers. A day or two for rest is all very well, but continuous wet weather means compulsory idleness, and gloom succeeds repose; for not only are all hands losing time and earning no money, but they are, to use the language of the stable, 'eating their heads off' the while. The rather profuse 309
mess and general expenditure, which caused little reflection when they were earning at the rate of two or three hundred a year, became unpleasantly suggestive now that all was going out and nothing coming in. Hence loud and deep rose the anathemas, as the discontented men gazed sadly or wrathfully at the misty sky.

A few days' showery weather having well-nigh driven our shearers to desperation, out comes the sun in all his glory. He is never far away or very faint in Riverina.

All the pens are filled for the morrow; very soon after the earliest sunbeams, the bell sounds its welcome summons, and the whole force tackles to the work with an ardour proportioned to the delay, every man working as if for the ransom of his family from slavery. These men work, spurred on by the double excitement of acquiring social reputation and making money rapidly. Not an instant is lost; not a nerve, limb, or muscle doing less than the hardest taskmaster could flog out of a slave. Occasionally you see a shearer, after finishing his sheep, walk quietly out, and not appearing for a couple of hours, or perhaps not again during the day. Do not put him down as a sluggard; be assured that he has tasked Nature dangerously hard, and has only just given in before she does. Look at that silent, slight youngster, with a bandage round his swollen wrist. Every 'blow' of the shears is agony to him, yet he disdains to give in, and has been working 'in distress' for hours. The pain is great, as you can see by the flush which surges across his brown face, yet he goes on manfully to the last sheep, and endures to the very verge of fainting.

A change in the manner and tone of the shed is apparent towards the end of the day. It is now the ding-dong of the desperate fray, when the blood of the fierce animal man is up, when mortal blows are exchanged, and curses float upwards with the smoke and dust. The ceaseless clicking of the shears—the stern earnestness of the men, toiling with feverish, tireless energy—the constant succession of sheep shorn and let go, caught and commenced—the occasional savage oath or passionate gesture, as a sheep kicked and struggled with perverse, delaying obstinacy—the cuts and stabs, with attendant effusion of blood, both of sheep and shearers—the brief decided tones of 310
Mr. Gordon, in repression or command—all told the spectator that tragic action was introduced into

the performance; indeed, one of the minor excitements of shearing was then and there transacted. Mr. Gordon had more than once warned a dark, sullen-looking man that he did not approve of his style of shearing. He was temporarily absent, and on his return found the same man about to let go a sheep, whose appearance, as a shorn wool-bearing quadruped, was painful and discreditable in the extreme.

'Let your sheep go, my man,' said he, in a tone which arrested the attention of the shearers; 'but don't trouble yourself to catch another.'

'Why not?' said the delinquent sulkily.

'You know very well why not!' said Gordon, walking closely up to him, and looking straight at him with eyes that began to glitter. 'You've had fair warning; you've not chosen to take it. Now you can go!'

'I suppose you'll pay a man for the sheep he's shorn?' growled out the ruffian.

'Not one shilling until after shearing. You can come then, if you like,' answered Mr. Gordon with perfect distinctness.

The bully looks savage; but the tall, powerful frame and steady eye were not inviting for personal arbitration of the matter in hand. He puts up his two pairs of shears, takes up his coat, and walks out of the shed. The time was past when Red Bill or Terrible Dick (ruffians whom a sparse labour market rendered necessary evils) would have flung down his shears on the floor and told the manager that if he didn't like that shearing he could shear his —— sheep himself and be hanged to him; or, on refusal of instant payment, would have proposed to bury his shears in the intestines of his employer, by way of adjusting the balance between Capital and Labour. Wild tales are told of woolshed rows. One squatter at least was stabbed mortally with that fatal and too convenient weapon, a shear-blade.

The man thus summarily dealt with could, like most of his companions, shear very well if he took pains. Keeping to a moderate number of sheep, his workmanship could be good; but he must needs try and keep up with Billy May or Abraham Lawson, who can shear from a hundred to a hundred 311
and thirty sheep per day, and do them beautifully. So in 'racing' he works hastily and badly, cuts the skin of his luckless sheep, and leaves wool here and there on them, grievous and exasperating to behold. So sentence of expulsion goes forth fully against him. Having arrayed himself for the road, he makes one more effort for a settlement and some money wherewith to pay for board and lodgings on the road. Only to have a mad carouse at the nearest township, however; after which he will tell a plausible story of his leaving the shed on account of Mr. Gordon's temper, and avail himself of the usual free hospitality of the bush to reach another shed. He addresses Mr. Gordon with an attempt at conciliation and deference:

'It seems very 'ard, sir, as a man can't get the trifle of money coming to him, which I've worked 'ard for.'

'It's very hard you won't try and shear decently,' retorts Mr. Gordon, by no means conciliated. 'Leave the shed!'

Ill-conditioned rascal as he is, he has a mate or travelling-companion in whose breast exists some rough ideas of fidelity. He now takes up the dialogue.

'I suppose if Jim's shearing don't suit, mine won't either.'

'I did not speak to you,' answered Mr. Gordon, as calmly as if he had expected the speech; 'but of course you can go too.' He said this with an air of studied unconcern, as if he would rather like a dozen more men to knock off work. The two men walk out; but the epidemic does not spread; and several take the lesson home and mend their ways accordingly.

The weather is now splendid. Not a cloud specks the bright blue sky. The shearers continue to work at the same express-train pace; fifty bales of wool roll every day from the wool-presses; as fast as they reach that number they are loaded upon one of the numerous drays and waggons which have been waiting for weeks. Tall brown men have been recklessly cutting up hides for the last fortnight, wherewith to lash the bales securely. It is considered safer practice to load wool as soon as may be; fifty bales represent about a thousand pounds sterling. In a building, however secure, should a fire break out, a few hundred bales are easily burned; but once on the dray, this much-dreaded *edax rerum* in a dry country has little chance. The driver, responsible to the extent of his freight, 312
generally sleeps under his dray; hence both watchman and insulation are provided.

The unrelaxing energy with which work is pushed at this stage is exciting and contagious. At or before daylight every soul in the great establishment is up. The boundary riders are always starting off for a twenty or thirty mile ride, and bringing tens of thousands of sheep to the wash-pen; at that huge lavatory, there is splashing and soaking all day with an army of washers; not a moment is lost from daylight till dark, or used for any purpose save the all-engrossing work and needful food. At nine o'clock P.M. luxurious dreamless sleep obtains, given only to those whose physical powers have been taxed to the utmost, and who can bear without injury the daily tension.

Everything and everybody is in splendid working order, nothing is out of gear. Rapid and regular as a steam-engine the great host of toilers moves onward daily, with a march promising an early completion. Mr. Gordon is not in high spirits, for so cautious and far-seeing a captain rarely feels himself so independent of circumstances as to indulge in that reckless mood, but much satisfied with the prospect. Whew! the afternoon darkens, and the night is given over to waterspouts and hurricanes, as it appears. Next day is raw, gusty, with chill heavy showers, drains to be cut, roofs to be seen to, shorn sheep shivering, washers all playing pitch-and-toss, shearers sulky; everybody but

the young gentlemen wearing an injured expression of countenance. 'Looks as if it would rain for a month,' says Long Jack. 'If we hadn't been delayed, might have had the shearing over by this.' Reminded that there are 50,000 sheep yet remaining to be shorn, and that by no possibility could they have been finished; answers, 'He supposes so, always the same, everything sure to go agin the pore man.' The weather does not clear up. Winter seems to have taken thought, and determined to assert his rights even in this land of eternal summer. The shed is filled, and before the sheep so kept dry are shorn, down comes the rain again. Not a full day's shearing for ten days. Then the clouds disappear as if the curtain of a stage had been rolled up, and lo! the golden sun, fervid and impatient to obliterate the track of winter.

313 On the first day after the recommencement, matters go much as usual. Steady work and little talk; every one is apparently anxious to make up for lost time. But on the second morning after breakfast, when the bell sounds, instead of the usual cheerful dash at the sheep, every man stands silent and motionless in his place. Some one uttered the words 'Roll up!' Then the seventy men converge, and slowly, but with one impulse, walk to the end of the shed, where stands Mr. Gordon.

The concerted action of any large body of men bears with it an element of power which commands respect. The weapons of force and number are theirs; at their option to wield with or without mercy. At one period of Australian colonisation a superintendent in Mr. Gordon's position might have had good ground for uneasiness. Mr. Jack Bowles sees in it an *émeute* of a democratic and sanguinary nature; regrets deeply his absent revolver, but draws up to his leader, prepared to die by his side. That calm centurion feels no such serious misgivings. He knows there had been dire grumbling among the shearers, in consequence of the weather. He knows of malcontents among them. He is prepared for some sort of demand on their part, and has concluded to make moderate concessions. So, looking cheerfully at the men, he quietly awaits the deputation. As they near him there is some hesitation; then three delegates come to the front. These are old Ben, Abraham Lawson, and Billy May. Ben Thornton had been selected from his age and long experience of the rights and laws of the craft. A weather-beaten, wiry old Englishman, his face and accent, darkened as the former is by the Australian summers of half a century, still retain the trace of his native Devonshire. It is his boast that he had shorn for forty years, and as regularly 'knocked down' (or spent in a single debauch) his shearing money. Lawson represents the small free-holders, being a steady, shrewd fellow, and one of the fastest shearers. Billy May stands for the fashion and 'talent,' being the 'Ringer,' or fastest shearer of the whole assembly, and as such truly admirable and distinguished.

'Well now, men,' quoth Mr. Gordon, cheerily meeting matters half-way, 'what's it all about?' The younger delegates look at old Ben, who, now that it was 'demanded of him to speak the truth,' or such dilution thereof as might seem most favourable to the interests of the shed, found a difficulty, 314 like many wiser men, about his exordium.

'Well, Muster Gordon, look'ee here, sir. The weather's been summat awful, and clean agin' shearin'. We've not been earning our grub, and——'

'So it has,' answered the manager, 'so it has; but can I help the weather? I'm as anxious as you are to have the shearing over quickly. We're both of us of one mind about that, eh?'

'That's right enough, sir,' strikes in Abraham Lawson, feeling that Ben was getting the worst of the argument, and was moreover far less fluent than usual, probably from being deprived of the aid of the customary expletives; 'but we're come to say this, sir, that the season's turned out very wet indeed; we've had a deal of broken time, and the men feel it hard to be paying for a lot of rations, and hardly earning anything. We're shearing the sheep very close and clean. You won't have 'em done no otherways. Not like some sheds where a man can "run" a bit and make up for lost time. Now, we've all come to think this, sir, that if we're to go on shearing the sheep well, and stick to them, so as to get them done before the dust and grass-seed come in, you ought to make us some allowance. We know we've agreed for so much a hundred, and all that. Still, the season's turned out so out-and-out bad, and we hope you'll consider it and make it up to us somehow.'

'Never knew a worse year,' corroborated Billy May, who thought it indispensable to say something; 'haven't made enough, myself, to pay the cook.'

This was not strictly true, at any rate, as to Master Billy's own earnings; he being such a remarkably fast shearer (and good withal), that he had always a respectable sum credited to him for his day's work, even when many of the slower men came off short enough. However, enough had been said to make Mr. Gordon fully comprehend the case. The men were dissatisfied. They had come in a roundabout way to the conclusion that some concession, not mentioned in their bond, should come from the side of Capital to that of Labour. Whether wages, interest of capital, share of profits or reserved fund, they knew not, nor cared. This was their stand. And being Englishmen they intended to abide by it.

315 The manager had considered the situation before it actually arose. He now rapidly took in the remaining points of debate. The shearers had signed a specific agreement for a stipulated rate of payment, irrespective of the weather. By the letter of the law they had no case. Whether they made little or much profit was not his affair. But he was a just and kindly man, as well as reasonably politic. They had shorn well, and the weather had been discouraging. He knew, too, that an abrupt denial might cause a passive mutiny, if not a strike. If they set themselves to thwart him, it was in their power to shear badly, to shear slowly, and to force him to discharge many of them. He might have them fined, perhaps imprisoned by the police court. Meanwhile how could shearing go on? Dust and grass-seeds would soon be upon them. He resolved on a compromise, and spoke out at once in a decided tone, as the men gathered yet more closely around him.

'Look here, all of you! You know well that I'm not bound to find you in good shearing weather. Still, I'm aware that the season has been against you; you have shorn pretty well, so far, though I've had to make examples, and am quite ready to make more. What I am willing to do is this: to every man who works on till the finish, and shears to my satisfaction, I will make a fair allowance in the ration account. That is, I will make no charge for the beef. Does that suit you? There was a chorus of 'All right, sir, we're satisfied.' 'Mr. Gordon always does the fair thing,' etc. And work was immediately resumed with alacrity.

The clerk of the weather, too gracious even in these regions, as far as the absence of rain is concerned, became steadily propitious.

Cloudless skies and a gradually ascending thermometer were the signs that spring was changing into summer. The splendid herbage ripened and dried; patches of bare earth began to be discernible amid the late thick-swarded pastures, dust to rise, and cloud-pillars of sand to float and eddy—the desert genii of the Arab. But the work went on at a high rate of speed, outpacing the fast-coming summer; and before any serious disaster arose, the last flock was 'on the battens,' and amid ironical congratulations the 'cobbler' (or last sheep) was seized, and stripped of his dense and difficult fleece. In ten minutes the vast woolshed, lately echoing with the ceaseless click of the shears, the jests, the songs, the oaths of the rude congregation, was silent and deserted. The floors were swept, the pens closed, the sheep on their way to a distant paddock. Not a soul remains about the building but the pressers, who stay to work at the rapidly lessening piles of fleece in the bins, or a meditative teamster who sits musing on a wool-bale, absorbed in a calculation as to when his load will be made up. 316

It is sundown, a rather later time of closing than usual, but rendered necessary by the possibility of the grand finale. The younger men troop over to the hut, larking like schoolboys. Abraham Lawson throws a poncho over his broad shoulders, lights his pipe, and strides along, towering above the rest, erect and stately as a guardsman. Considerably more than you or I, reader, would have been, had we shorn a hundred and thirty-four sheep, as he has done to-day. Billy May has shorn a hundred and forty-two, and he puts his hand on the four-foot paling fence of the yard and vaults over it like a deer, preparatory to a swim in the creek. At dinner you will see them all, with fresh Crimeans and jerseys, clean, comfortable, and in grand spirits. Next morning is settling day. The book-keeping department at Anabanco being severely correct, all is in readiness. Each man's tally, or number of sheep shorn, has been entered daily to his credit. His private and personal investments at the store have been as duly debited. The shearers, as a corporation, have been charged with the multifarious items of their rather copious mess-bill. This sum-total is divided by the number of the shearers, the extract being the amount for which each man is liable. This sum varies in its weekly proportion, at different sheds. With an extravagant cook, or cooks, the weekly bill is often alarming. When the men and their functionary study economy, it may be kept reasonably low.

The men have been sitting or standing about the office for half an hour, when Mr. Jack Bowles rushes out and shouts, 'William May.' That young person, excessively clean, attired in a quiet tweed suit, with his hair cut correctly short, advances with an air of calm intrepidity, and faces Mr. Gordon, now seated at a long table, wearing a judicial expression of countenance.

'Well, May! here's your account:— 317

So many sheep at £1 per 100		£
Cook, so many weeks	£	
Shearing store account		
Private store account		
	———	
		———
Total		£
		======

Is the tally of your sheep right?'

'Oh, I daresay it's all right, Mr. Gordon. I made it so and so; about ten less.'

'Well, well; ours is correct, no doubt. Now, I want to make up a good subscription for the hospital this year. How much will you give? You've done pretty well, I think.'

'Put me down a pound, sir.'

'Very well, that's fair enough. If every one gives what they can afford, you men will always have a place to go to when you're hurt or laid up. See, I put your name down, and you'll see it in the published list. Now, about the shearing, May. I consider that you have done your work excellently well, and behaved well all through. You're a fast shearer, but you shear closely, and don't knock your sheep about. I therefore do not charge you for any part of your meat bill, and I pay you at the rate of half-a-crown a hundred for all your sheep, *over and above* your agreement. Will that do?'

'Very well indeed, and I'm much obliged to you, Mr. Gordon.'

'Well, good-bye, May. Always call when you're passing, and if any work is going on you'll get your share. Here's your cheque. Send in Lawson.' Exit May in high spirits, having cleared about three pounds per week during the whole time of shearing, and having lived a far from unpleasant life, indeed akin to that of a fighting cock, from the commencement to the end of that period.

Lawson's interview may be described as having similar results. He also was a first-class shearer,

though not so artistic as the gifted Billy. Jack Windsor's saucy blue eyes twinkled merrily as he returned to his companions, and incontinently leaped into the saddle on his wild-eyed colt. After these worthies came a shearer named Jackson. He belonged to quite a different class; he could shear well if he pleased, but had a rooted disbelief that honesty was the best policy, and a fixed 318
determination to shear as many sheep as he could get the manager to pass. By dint of close watching, constant reprimand, and occasional 'raddling' (marking badly shorn sheep and refusing to count them), Mr. Gordon had managed to tone him down to average respectability of execution; still he was always uneasily aware that whenever his eye was not upon him, Jackson was doing what he ought not to do, with might and main. He had indeed kept him on from sheer necessity, but he intended none the less to mark his opinion of him.

'Come in, Jackson. Your tally is so and so. Is that right?'

Jackson.—'I suppose so.'

'Cook and store account, so much; shearing account so much.'

Jackson.—'And a good deal too.'

'That is your affair,' said Mr. Gordon, sternly enough. 'Now, look here, you're in my opinion a bad shearer and a bad man. You have given me a great deal of trouble, and I should have kicked you out of the shed weeks ago, if I had not been short of men. I shall make a difference between you and those who have tried to do their best; I make you no allowance of any sort; I pay you by the strict agreement; there's your cheque. Now, go!'

Jackson goes out with a very black countenance. He mutters, with an oath, that, if he'd known how he was going to be served 'he'd 'a "blocked" 'em a little more.' He is believed to have been served right, and he secures no sympathy whatever. Working-men of all classes in Australia are shrewd and fair judges generally. If an employer does his best to mete out justice, he is always appreciated and supported by the majority. These few instances will serve as a description of the whole process of settling with the shearers. The horses have been got in. Great catching and saddling-up has taken place all the morning. By the afternoon the whole party are dispersed to the four winds: some, like Abraham Lawson and his friends, to sheds 'higher up,' in a colder climate, where shearing necessarily commences later. From these they will pass to others, until the last flocks in the 'mountain runs' are shorn. Those who have not farms of their own then betake themselves to 319
reaping. Billy May and Jack Windsor are quite as ready to back themselves against time in the wheat-field as on the shearing-floor. Harvest over, they find their pockets inconveniently full, so they commence to visit their friends and repay themselves for their toils by a liberal allowance of rest and recreation.

Old Ben and a few other specimens of the olden time get no further than the nearest public-house. Their cheques are handed to the landlord, and a 'sdubendous and derrible spree' sets in. At the end of a week or ten days, that worthy informs them that they have received liquor to the amount of their cheques—something over a hundred pounds—save the mark! They meekly acquiesce, as is their custom. The landlord generously presents them with a glass of grog each, and they take the road for the next shed.

The shearers being despatched, the sheep-washers, a smaller and less regarded force, file up. They number some forty men. Nothing more than fair bodily strength, willingness, and obedience being required in their case, they are more easy to get and replace than shearers. They are a varied and motley lot. That powerful and rather handsome man is a New Yorker, of Irish parentage. Next to him is a slight, neat, quiet individual. He had been a lieutenant in a line regiment. The lad in the rear was a Sandhurst cadet. Then came two navvies and a New Zealander, five Chinamen, a Frenchman, two Germans, Tin Pot, Jerry, and Wallaby—three aboriginal blacks. There are no invidious distinctions as to caste, colour, or nationality. Every one is a man and a brother at sheep-washing. Wage, one pound per week; wood, water, tents, and food provided. Their accounts are simple: so many weeks, so many pounds; store accounts, so much. Hospital? Well, five shillings. Cheque; good-morning.

The wool-pressers, the fleece-rollers, the fleece-pickers, the yardsmen, the washers' cooks, the hut cooks, the spare shepherds—all these and other supernumeraries, inevitable at shearing-time, having been paid off, the snowstorm of cheques which has been fluttering all day comes to an end. Mr. Gordon and the remaining *sous-officiers* go to rest that night with much of the mental strain removed, which has been telling on every waking moment for the last two months.

The long train of drays and waggons, with loads varying from twenty to forty-five bales, has been 320
moving off in detachments since the commencement. In a day or two the last of them will have rolled heavily away. The 1400 bales, averaging three and a half hundredweight, are distributed, slow journeying, along the road, which they mark from afar, or standing huge and columnar, like guide tumuli, from Anabanco to the waters of the Murray. Between the two points, a hundred and fifty miles, there is neither a hill nor a stone. All is one vast monotonous sea of plain—at this season a prairie-meadow exuberant of vegetation; in the late summer, or in the occasional and dreaded phenomenon of a *dry winter*, dusty and herbless as a brickfield, for hundreds of miles.

Silence falls on the plains and waters of Anabanco for the next six months. The woolshed, the wash-pen, and all the huts connected with them are lone and voiceless as caravanserais in a city of the plague.

Our good barque anchored in Launceston harbour in 1831—about the same year, by the way, in which Marcus Clarke's dream-ship, the *Malabar*, ended her eventful voyage to the same port. The writer's father owned and commanded the vessel. Our steerage passengers were of the same class as those of the *Malabar*, being a draft of convicts, in process of deportation to the strange South land, there to undergo experimental discipline, which to some meant probationary industry—the path to a prospective fortune; to others, a slave's dread life, a felon's shameful death.

Ruffians doubtless cursed and caballed among the two hundred prisoners which crowded the lower deck, but they were in a minority. A herd of luckless peasants constituted the main body; found guilty of rick-burning and machine-breaking only—crimes common enough in England, before the repeal of the corn-laws.

Their offences had been but the ignorant, instinctive protest of Labour against Capital; less dangerous far than the organised communism of the present day. Poachers and petty larcenists, with other humble criminals, completed the list. For the most part they were a timid and obedient company, cowed and unresisting, incapable of planning mutiny or revenge. Our family party consisted of two tiny sisters and myself, my mother, and our nursemaid—a resolute, sterling Englishwoman, destined in days to come to be the best friend our childhood could have found in the new world or the old. The ordinary military guard, so many rank and file, with their officers, together with the Surgeon-Superintendent, had been detailed for the duty of ensuring discipline and the safety of the ship.

It may well have been that among the band of exiles were some unjustly sentenced, mixed up accidentally with a crowd of excited rustics engaged in unlawful deeds—wondering spectators rather than actors. Such a victim was probably the unhappy Annetts, a vacant-faced farm labourer, from Essex or Dorset, whose wife, accompanied by their two children, came daily to see him before the ship sailed. 322

I seem to remember the wretched group, though most probably it was my good nurse's description that imprinted it indelibly on my memory.

There would they sit, hour after hour, bathed in tears—he, with the irons on his limbs and the ugly prison garb; she almost a girl, with traces of rustic beauty, as he was hardly more than a boy—holding each other's hands and weeping silently for hours; then, sobbing in paroxysms of lamentation, both repeatedly declaring his innocence, the children wondering gravely at the strange surroundings, at times mingling their tears with those of their parents. It was a sight to touch the heart of the sternest. Then the last agonised parting, when the fainting woman was carried on shore, when the hopeless outcast watched his native land recede, instinctively aware that he gazed on it for the last time.

Is there such a physiological process as a broken heart? It would seem so, even in this world of lightly-borne sorrows and forgotten joys. He, at least, was not thus fashioned, stolid peasant as he seemed to outward view, untaught, uncared-for, born to the plough and the monotonous labour of the farm animals, which in his undeveloped intelligence he so closely resembled. But their fidelity to the heart's deepest feelings was rooted in his being. He never raised his head afterwards, as the phrase goes. He moved and spoke, went through the ordinary motions of humanity, as in a dream. Day by day he pined and wasted; in little more than a month, from no particular ailment, he died and found burial in that mysterious main which before his sentence he had never seen.

The only other death on board was that of the second mate, a fine young seaman named Keeling. Strange to say, he had a presentiment that drowning would be the manner of his end. He would say as much, on one occasion telling us that he was one of three brothers. Two had been lost at sea. He *knew* the same fate was in store for him. He even put his head in a bucket of water once, and held it there, 'to see how it felt.' He was strong, active, temperate, and a smart officer. One day, in calm weather, when spearing fish from the dolphin-striker, he lost his balance and fell overboard. The ship had way on, though the breeze was light. He was a good swimmer; a boat was instantly lowered. I believe that my recollection of seeing him rise and fall upon the waves, far astern of the vessel, is accurate. The boat rapidly nears him—swimming strongly and easily supporting himself. It turns for a moment, shutting him out from sight. A man leans over to grasp him. Why do they commence to pull round in circles? Why can we not see the rescued man taken into the boat? After an interval which appears terribly long, the boat comes back to the ship *without him*. At the very moment of rescue a wave drove the boat stem on. The keel struck him on the head. He sank like a stone, never being visible to the boat's crew afterwards. Thus was his doom accomplished. 323

Though our passengers did not resemble those of the *Malabar*, we boasted a similar military force. The Surgeon-Superintendent was a much-travelled, cultured man. The Major and Subalterns in charge of the detachment were agreeable personages; fortunately they were not required to act in any military capacity beyond causing guards to be strictly kept. Had the prisoners even been other than they were, their chance in rising would have been small, having to deal with one of the most watchful, prompt, and determined men, in the captain of the vessel, that ever trod a plank. It was happily ordered otherwise. The voyage was successful and devoid of adventure. There were neither storms, mutinies, fevers, nor other disasters. And somewhere about the month of August (as we left England in April 1831) we delivered our passengers to the authorities in Launceston, in good order and condition. Our military friends quitted us after our arrival in Sydney, our final destination. My father had visited the port when an officer in the East India Company's service as far back as the year 1820, had been struck with the land's capabilities, and augured well of its future. He resolved

to settle therein in the aftertime, did events shape themselves that way. By that voyage our destinies as a family were decided.

The Paris of the South was then a seaside town, numbering not more than thirty or forty thousand 324
inhabitants. Described in station parlance, it was well grassed and lightly stocked. As a matter of fact there was a good deal of grass in the streets, and between Macquarie Place, which was our first location, and the Domain, the little Alderney cow, which had accompanied us on the ship, was able to pick up a good living. She and other vagrom milch kine often eluded the vigilance of the sentry, at the entrance to the Domain, where they revelled in the thick couch-grass; to be turned out at the point of the bayonet when discovered. Much of the city is changed; but much remains unchanged. Our first abode was a moderate-sized house in Macquarie Place. It possessed a second story and a garden, standing next to a tall, narrow building, occupied by Mr. Harrington, an eminent civil servant of the pre-parliamentary régime, later on Griffiths Fanning's office. Messrs. Montefiore, Breillat, and Co. possessed the corner house with its walled enclosure, taking in the angle of Bent Street, with a frontage also to O'Connell Street. The wall, the house, and the store *still* stand, unaltered in half a century. Mr. Dalgety, then himself a junior clerk, might be seen walking to and fro from the wharves, inspecting cargo, note-book in hand. Think of that, young gentlemen in like positions, and ponder upon the mercantile monarchies which have been (and may still be) reached by perseverance, financial talent, and prudent ambition!

Chief-Justice and Mrs. Forbes, with their family, inhabited a large stone house on the opposite side of the street, also surrounded by a wall. It now forms a portion of the Lands Office buildings. Archdeacon Cowper lived on the other side, now New Pitt Street, a grass plot with two large cedars being in front of the house.

Sydney must have been then not unlike in appearance to one of the larger country towns, Bathurst or Goulburn, save and excepting always its possession of the unrivalled harbour and that fragment of Eden the Botanic Garden. There we children walked in the mornings of our first summer in Sydney. The grateful freshness of the air, the beauty of the overhanging trees, the vision of blue water and white-winged skiffs seen through flower thickets, still remains among my childhood's fairest memories.

At the back of our garden rose a stone wall, which supported the higher level of the allotments fronting O'Connell Street. In a balconied mansion opposite lived Mr. Raymond, the Postmaster- 325
General, with his numerous family of sons and daughters.

How few survive of that merry band of youths and maidens, whom I remember so well! After our debarkation no time was lost in sending me to school. A lady who lived conveniently close, in O'Connell Street, first directed the pothooks and hangers, which, further developed, have since covered so many a printed page. Mr. Walter Lamb and the late Colonel Peel Raymond were among my schoolfellows. At the ripe age of seven, being according to the maternal partiality too far advanced for a dame school, I was promoted to Mr. Cape's Sydney Academy, in King Street, opposite to St. James's Church. Seventy boys more or less were there, not a few of whom have since distinguished themselves 'in arms, in arts, in song.' William Forster, Walter Lamb, Whistler Smith, and Allan Macpherson were among my older comrades. I well remember on the day of my arrival how Forster, actuated by the hatred of injustice which characterised his after-life, fought a sanguinary battle with another oldster who had been oppressing a smaller boy. Sir James Martin was there then, or came soon afterwards. At any rate he was one of the scholars when Mr. Cape, then newly appointed Headmaster of the Sydney College, moved over and took possession of that institution upon its opening day. The Nortons, James and John, were among the pupils, with many others whom I could perhaps recall, but whose names are at present fading in the mists of the past. The Dowlings, Mitchells, David Forbes, Sir John Robertson, Mr. Dalley, with many another, were among the pupils of that most conscientious and earnest teacher. They will always acknowledge, doubtless, their indebtedness to him for a sound classical training, the groundwork of their higher education.

The late Mr. James Laidley was one of the smaller boys at that time. Our fathers had been friends in other lands. I saw Commissary-General Laidley's funeral—a military one—and Dick Webb, the family coachman, leading the dead officer's favourite chestnut mare in the procession.

On the day of my introduction came also a new boy, about the same age. His name was Hugh Ranclaud. We were placed in a class in order to test our reading, and, as the last comers, at the 326
bottom of the class. The lesson commenced; the others went through their allotted portion haltingly, after the fashion of the small boy of the period. When it came to Ranclaud's turn, he commenced in a clear, distinct, properly-punctuated manner, much as if he had been in the habit of performing at penny readings, or acting as curate on occasion. I see (as if it were yesterday) Mr. Cape, who paused to listen, take him by the arm and march him to the head of the class. I was promoted, too, and we soon quitted that class for a higher place in the Division, from that day to be close friends and confidants in literary matters. Eager, voracious readers we both were. He was a poet as well. We used to walk about arm in arm and recite bits out of Walter Scott and Byron. Until we left school and settled in different colonies our friendship remained unbroken.

The first thing I remember after the ceremony of installation was the adjournment to the new cricket-ground granted for our use in that part of Hyde Park then known as the Racecourse, which was opposite to the College, now the Grammar School. Percy and Hamilton Stephen were at the wickets. They, with their cousins James and Frank, Alfred, Consett, and Matthew Henry were among the schoolboys of that period; Prosper and André de Mestre, with, later on, Etty (Etienne), then a little chap, like myself.

We of the old school were much gratified at the superior advantages we now enjoyed in the way of

playgrounds. The free use of Hyde Park, then merely fenced and not planted, was granted to us. Below the school building was a large area, divided by a wall from the present labyrinth of terraces built on the Riley Estate, then a furze-covered paddock of pathless wilds, in which we were free to wander.

A chain-gang was at that time employed, under armed warders, in levelling the line of road which leads towards Waverley. One of the prisoners tried to escape and was shot by a warder. We boys went over. There he lay dead in his prison garb, with a red stain across his chest, 'well out of the scrape of being alive and poor,'—only paupers were unknown then, and prisoners, of course, plentiful.

We were near enough to the Domain for the boarders to walk to 'The Fig-tree,' that well-known spot in Wooloomooloo Bay, where so many generations of Sydney boys have learned to swim. The old 327
tree (a wild one) was there long years after, and from the stone wharf, with steps considerately made in Governor Macquarie's time, how many a 'header' has been taken, how many a trembling youngster pitched in by ruthless schoolmates! There was no danger, of course, and among rough-and-ready methods of teaching a useful accomplishment, it is perhaps one of the best. Mr. Cape was a good swimmer, and on the mornings when he accompanied us, these little diversions were not indulged in.

My recollections of him as a headmaster, and, indeed, in every other capacity, is uniformly favourable. He was a strict, occasionally severe, but invariably just ruler. Discriminating too, always ready to assist real workers such as Forster, Martin, George Rowley, and other exceptional performers. But for us of the rank and file, whose scholastic ambition lagged consistently behind our powers, he had neither mercy nor toleration. A thorough disciplinarian, prompt, punctual, unsparing, we knew what we had to expect. The consequence was that a standard of acquirement was reached at a comparatively early age by his scholars which with a less resolute instructor would never have been gained.

The constitution of the school was professedly in accordance with the Church of England denomination, but it was wisely ordered by the founders that no religious disability should exist. The fees were low, particularly for the day scholars. All ranks and denominations were equally represented, equally welcome. Mr. Cape himself, though inflexibly orthodox as an Anglican Churchman, was liberal and comprehensive in his views. The school was commenced (I think)—certainly ended—with a prayer from the Liturgy. The boys who belonged to Jewish, Roman Catholic, or Nonconformist denominations were permitted at pleasure to absent themselves from this observance. Very few troubled themselves to do so. Among the boys themselves I never remember the religious question being raised. We remained united and peaceable as a family (resorting, of course, to the British ordeal of single combat on occasions), but all took rank in the school chiefly in accordance with their prowess in the classes or the cricket-field. We had no other standards of merit.

Talking of cricket, the 'stars' of my day were Mr. William Roberts, senior, who with his brothers Dan 328
and Jack were my contemporaries, and Mr. William Still. Roberts was a distinguished bat, renowned for the finer strokes and artistic 'cuts.' Still was a deadly bowler, a first-class field, and unerring catch.

In those days the old barrack-square was in existence, taking up many thousand feet of priceless frontage, at present value, in George Street. The military reviews and evolutions performed therein afforded unfailing interest to the schoolboy and nursery-maid of the period. Colonel Despard was the military commander of the day. His carriage and pair of chestnut horses, George and Charger, both nearly thoroughbreds, passed into our hands at the sale of his effects previous to his departure from the colony for New Zealand.

Racing matters, which have received of late years such astonishing development, were then in an infantile condition, it may be believed. Hyde Park was probably the first race-course. The next arena (literally) was the Old Sandy Course near Botany. To this unimproved tract I remember trudging with school comrades in 1836, when we witnessed a closely contested race, in heats too, between Traveller and Chester, the former winning. Frank Stephen rode a mule that day, who kicked all the way there and back. Lady Godiva and Lady Cordelia were the heroines of that meeting. Charles Smith and Charles Roberts were the principal supporters of the turf. This was near the proclamation of Her Gracious Majesty's accession to the throne at the age of eighteen years. Hugh Ranclaud and I attended the ceremony, and heard the proclamation read among the oak trees not far from the Lands Office.

The late Colonel Gibbes was a friend of the family. Edmund Gibbes was a schoolfellow, and many holiday visits were paid to Point Piper, their lovely residence. It was my ideal of perfection as a haven of bliss for boys, far removed from lessons and other drawbacks of youth. Many a happy day I spent there, though nearly coming to premature grief in the fair (and false) harbour. A large, well-ordered mansion, sufficiently removed from town to have country privileges, Point Piper contained all the requirements for youthful enjoyment. The kindest hostess, the nicest girls, a picturesque old-fashioned garden with fruit and flowers in profusion, fishing, bathing, boating to any extent, books, 329
and music,—all the refinements and elegancies then procurable in Australia. As to the course of everyday life, it did not differ noticeably, as I can aver from after-experience, from that of country-house life in England. The stables were well ordered, grooms and coachman being assigned servants of course. Perhaps a stricter supervision was necessary for some reasons. At a stated hour one of the sons of the house was expected to walk down to the stables, which were half a mile distant, to perform the regulation inspection, to see the evening corn given, the horses bedded down for the night.

We boys (Edmund, his younger brother Gussie, and myself) used to fish and bathe nearly all day long, continuing indeed the latter recreation in the summer afternoons till the sun scorched our backs. Then, after a joyous evening, how sweet to fall asleep, lulled by the surges, which ever, even in calmest weather, made mournful music on rock or silver-sanded shore the long night through!

About this time a certain adventure befell our party, which might have ended tragically. One fine morning Gussie and I, with a kinsman about the same age, went fishing in the bay. Our 'kellick' was down, and the sport had been good. The provisional anchor was lifted at length, as the wind, having shifted, began to blow off the land. We had delayed too long, and found it hard work to make headway against it. Pulling with unusual determination, one oar snapped. The blade floated away. The gale was rising fast. Moving broadside on meant being blown out to sea. An interval of uncertainty ensued. Gussie, who was a little fellow, began to cry as we rapidly receded from the Point and the waves rose higher.

I took the command—my first salt-water commission. It was no use letting matters (and the boat) drift. To this day I wonder at the inventiveness which the emergency developed. Taking off Gussie's pinafore, a brown holland garment of sufficient length, I caused him to stand up and hold it like a sail. Wallace, the other boy, was to act as look-out man. I took the tiller and steered towards Shark Island, which lay between Point Piper and the Heads. Our spread of canvas was just sufficient to keep steerage way on. The wind was right aft. And in a comparatively short time we jammed the boat's bow between two rocks, where there was just beach enough to haul her up safe on our desert island. 330

We knew, of course, that they would see us from the house, and judging that we were cast away, send for us. Soon we discerned a boat coming to our rescue manned by the groom and the gardener —both fair oarsmen. The wind was a good capful by this time, and it took two hours' hard pulling to land us at the Point Piper jetty. 'Oh, you naughty boys!' I can hear the mild châtelaine saying in simulated wrath as we marched up, extremely glad to be so well out of it; and as they were very glad too, no serious consequences tending to moral improvement ensued.

At the Sydney College half-yearly examination Archbishop Polding was always among the examiners —a gentle, if dignified, old man, whom all of us revered. Our own Bishop and clergy attended on these occasions, but I have a more distinct impression of the Prelate first mentioned than of any other clergyman of the day. St. Mary's Cathedral was building then—it is building now—a monument of the persistent progress of the Church of Rome. What she begins she always ends, rarely relinquishing an undertaking or a stronghold. My reason for mentioning the religious aspect of the question is that, save for the morning and evening prayer and Mr. Cape's regular church-going, our school, though strictly denominational in theory, was virtually national and secular; chiefly, as I said before, because we of the different sects and persuasions agreed to respect each other's religious opinions and beliefs.

Whether this practical Christianity made us the worse churchmen in after-life I leave others to judge. When my father deserted salt water for the land permanently, he did not fix on one of the charming nooks embosomed in sea-woods which lay so temptingly between Hyde Park and the South Head road. Like most sailors, he had had enough of 'the sad sea waves,' whether in play or in earnest, and was relieved to be out of sound of them. Glenrock was, I believe, offered to him at a temptingly low rate, but he preferred to buy a tract of wild land at Newtown, as the suburban hamlet was then called, there to build and improve.

Beginning in good earnest, the walls of a large two-storeyed house soon arose—something between a bungalow and a section of a terrace. One Indian feature of the place was a verandah fully a 331
hundred feet in length, and twelve feet in breadth, running across the façade and turning the ends of the house. This was flagged with the cream-coloured Sydney sandstone. Well do I remember its refreshing coolness of touch and appearance in our first summer. The house being built, the garden planted, and the whole purchase substantially fenced, the property was christened 'Enmore,' the name borne by the suburb into which it has grown to this day. East Saxon originally, it may be quoted as an instance of the evolution even of names. From one of the eastern counties of England it emigrated to Barbadoes, where it served to distinguish the plantation of an intimate friend of my father, the late James Cavan, a wealthy mercantile celebrity of Barbadoes in the good old days—the days of slavery and splendour, of princely magnificence and gorgeous profits, whereof the author of *Tom Cringle's Log* has left such picturesque descriptions. Hence to an Australian suburb, and going further afield, still following the course of colonisation, the homely name has travelled into the far interior. There are now the Enmore Blocks, an Enmore sheep station, and possibly in the future there will arise an Enmore inland town, with railway terminus, town hall, and municipality complete.

In the years between 1836 and 1840, when we lived at Enmore, we had, like all other householders of the day, assigned servants. The only exceptions at that time were our confidential nurse, and Copeland the coachman, an ex-50th man. Most fortunate was it for us young people that such a woman had attached herself to the family; of exceptional energy and intelligence, deeply religious, with an earnest and unswerving faith—'a slave of the ought,' like Miss Feely. As she abode with us from 1828 to 1858, it may be imagined what an influence for good she exerted upon us children when almost wholly under her control.

As for the poor convicts, they were really much the same as other people. Some were good, none of them particularly bad. Their master, though with a natural leaning to quarterdeck discipline, was not severe. When they got 'into trouble,' as they expressed it, it was through their own irregularities. A man would apply for a 'pass' (a permit in writing), granting leave to go to town and 332
return by, say, eight o'clock P.M.; instead of which (like the ingrate who stole geese off a common)

he would get drunk, be locked up by the police, and be brought up before Captain Wilson or other Police Magistrate of the day, charged with intoxication and being out after hours, whereupon he received twenty-five or fifty lashes, and was carefully returned to our service. The first intimation we received was the sight of Jack or Bill, as the case might be, coming up the carriage-drive in charge of a constable; his blood-stained shirt tied over his shoulders by the sleeves, instead of being worn as usual.

The flogging wasn't child's play, as may be believed. I have seen the weals and torn flesh; but the men did not seem to care so much about it, nor did it tend to brutalise them, as asserted. They admitted that it was their own fault, for running against that stone wall, the law. We had nothing to do with it, but indeed suffered loss of work thereby. In a day or two they were all right and cheerful again, well behaved of course, until that fatal 'next time.' Whether the men were of tougher fibre in those days, I can't say; but fancy a latter-day larrikin getting fifty or a hundred lashes, as these men did occasionally, without wincing, too! Compared to the modern product, the 'larrikin,' with his higher wages, better food, and more of the comforts of life than are good for him, they were angels of light.

The groom was a prisoner; so also the gardener, the butler, the housemaid, the laundress, the cook. The women were, no doubt, more difficult to manage. If they got to the sideboard when there was a bottle of wine open, trouble ensued. Hard working and well behaved generally, none of them could withstand the temptation of drink. This may have occurred more than once, but the ultimatum of which they stood in dread was, after repeated misbehaviour, to be sent to the Factory at Parramatta —the Bridewell of the colony. Their hair was cut short in that house of correction. They were supposed to work at hard and monotonous tasks. The work the unfortunates did not mind so much, but the short-cropped hair—all ignorant of the turn fashion was to take in after-years—they detested unutterably.

Two of these *engagés* (as French colonial officials called them) played us a pretty trick, for which, though it caused temporary inconvenience to the household, I have always felt inclined to pardon them. 333

The butler was a smartish young Dublin man, not more than a year out. He behaved well—was steady and willing. The laundress—Catherine Maloney, let us say—a quiet, hard-working young woman, was a valuable servant, worth about fifteen shillings a week, as wages go now. Fancy the privilege of keeping a capable servant, say, for four or five years certain! 'Please to suit yourself, ma'am,' and the later domestic tyrannies were then unknown. However, Patrick and Kate nourished deep designs—made it up to get married; wicked, ungrateful creatures! One fine morning they were missing, and, what was really exceptional in those man-hunting days, were never discovered—never indeed found from that day to this! 'These lovers fled away into the storm.' It would be in 1839, just about the 'breaking out' of Port Phillip. They probably got there undetected. Who knows? One wonders what became of them. Did Patrick grow rich, prosperous—even politically eminent? It was on the cards. They had my good wishes, in any case.

When we migrated to Port Phillip in 1840, a special permit was obtained from the Governor in Council to take down our servants—eight men and two women. The men went overland with the stock, and of course remained till their tickets-of-leave were due. But the women, our fellow-passengers by sea, married soon after they got to Melbourne. It was a 'rush,' in the latter-day goldfields' idiom, and women were at a premium. We might have refused our royal permission to this, but were not hard-hearted enough to do so. We were thus left desolate and servantless, a condition in life much less common in those days than it is now, I grieve to say, speaking as a householder. The men on the whole behaved well. George Stevenson, a clever mechanic and gardener from the north of Ireland, was drowned while crossing the Yarra at Heidelberg by night—a shanty being the fatal temptation. The groom died in the Benevolent Asylum at Melbourne, after many a year of faithful service to us and others. All our men but one got their tickets-of-leave, and drifted away out of ken. But while on the question, I may here record my opinion, that these men and their class generally did an immense deal of indispensable work in the earlier decades of the colony. They were, on the whole, when fairly treated, well behaved. They rarely shirked their work, were often touchingly attached to the families wherein they had done their enforced servitude, and after their virtual freedom was gained, mostly led industrious and reputable lives. 334

AFTER LONG YEARS

'This is the place; stand still, my steed, let me review the scene!' Quite correct, this is the place, though so changed that I hardly recognise the homestead which I built when I 'took up the Run' still known as 'Squattlesea Mere,' so many a year ago. Can it be possible that half a century should have passed—fleeted by like a dream—as a tale that is told—and that I should again stand here, looking at the work of my hands in that old time, whereof the memory is so fresh? The huts, the stock-yards, the cottage wherein we dwelt in peaceful contentment, nearly all are there, though much decayed and showing manifest signs of old Time—*edax rerum*—with his slow but sure attrition. The fruit trees in the garden, planted with my own hands, are of great age and size, and still bearing abundantly in a soil and climate so favourable to their growth. I find it almost impossible to realise that in June 1844, being then a stripling of eighteen, I should have established this 'lodge in the wilderness,' now developed into a fair-sized freehold, besides supporting a number of families in comfort and respectability on the selected portions.

Well do I remember the dark night when I reached this very spot, on a tired horse, having ridden from Grasmere on the Merrai that day, nearly fifty miles, without food for man or beast. The black marauders of the period held revel on a cape of the lava-bestrewn land which jutted out upon the marsh, near the Native Dog's Well. I had stumbled on to their camp, not seeing it until I was amid their dimly-burning fires. Relations were strained between us, and as they were then engaged in banqueting upon one of my milch cows (name Matilda), there is no saying what might have happened to the chronicler if my colt, a great-grandson of Skeleton (own brother to Drone), had not responded to the spur.

The overseer and I, arming ourselves, rode to the scene of the entertainment next morning, which presented an appearance much resembling the locality in Robinson Crusoe's island after the savages had finished their repast. Portions of the murdered milker were visible, also her orphaned calf, lowing in lament after his kind. But our sable neighbours had vanished.

I drove over the identical spot last week. How different its aspect! Drained and fenced—the black soil of the fen showing by depth and colour what crops it is destined to grow—a wire fence, a dog-leg ditto, all sorts of queer enclosures. Only the volcanic trap ridges remain unchanged, and the 'Blue Alsatian Mountains,' as typified by Mount Eeles and Mount Napier, which seem to 'watch and wait alway.'

Yes. The landscape has an altered appearance. What we used to call 'the smooth side' of the Eumeralla—as differentiated from the 'stones' of Mount Eeles, then, as now, rough enough in all conscience—has since our day been almost wholly denuded of timber. The handsome, umbrageous, blackwood trees (*Acacia melanoxylon*), which marked and shaded the 'islands' in the great mere, are dead and gone.

The marsh lands, then divided into islands, flats, and reed-beds, now present one apparently dead level, less picturesque, but more profitable, as fields of oats and barley are now to be seen where the 'wild drake quacked and the bittern boomed.'

Yon broad arterial drain is responsible for this transformation. More complete reticulation will in time turn the ancient fen, I doubt not, into one of the most productive agricultural areas in the Port Fairy district.

Still, with the increase of population and the onward march of civilisation, one natural enemy of the grazier comes forward as another is displaced. The dingo and kangaroo, with our poor relations, the aborigines, have mostly disappeared. But the rabbit in countless multitudes has arrived and come to stay; while the hero of our nursery tales and I wot not of what mediæval legends, Master Reynard, the fox, has found the climate suit his constitution. He raids the good-wife's turkeys, not wholly neglecting lambs, much as he might have done in the midland counties of England. Charles Kingsley's father (he tells us) took him into the garden one night to hear a fox bark, believing that the breed would soon be extinct in England; but he has held his own so far in the old country, and as I was told of a vixen with six cubs discovered in a log at Snaky Creek last week, I doubt whether we should not be able to re-export him, like the hares and rabbits, if a demand sprang up for the Australian Reynard.

Squattlesea Mere was certainly a good place for game. Snipe were plentiful, and might be shot, so to speak, from the parlour window. Wild ducks, geese, turkeys, quail, and the beautiful bronze-wing pigeon also. The kangaroo was then in the land, and helped our larder (notably with his tail, which made excellent soup), and an occasional dish of steak or hashed wallaby. The flesh tasted something between lean beef and veal, not at all a bad substitute for salt junk, when well cooked. A couple of hundred rabbits at least must have crossed the road, running eastward, in two or three miles, as we drove along this morning.

How such a sight would have astonished us formerly! Hares, too, from time to time. Our kangaroo dogs were then nearly as fast as the pure greyhounds now so plentiful on every estate, and what good sport we should have had! Driving by coach between the towns of Hamilton and Macarthur, I observed with satisfaction that the old stations survived in the form of respectable, though not overgrown, freehold estates. And although the owners are no longer the same, they still bear their old names, and are thus distinguished from the smaller-sized arable and grazing farms which have occupied the remaining areas.

'Monivae' (the first in order along the Macarthur road), from which I have more than once seen

Acheson Ffrench driving his four-in-hand, now boasts a mansion and excellent fencing. The old cottage, however, yet stands, surrounded by the station buildings, where the merry girls and boys grew up, and where we used to be glad to be asked to stop for a night in the 'dear dead days beyond recall.' Werongurt too, where John Cox held sway, where the first orchard was planted, 338
where the choice Herefords roamed at will, where The Caliph and The Don were located, may still be recognised. There the rye-grass and clover—in after-years destined to overspread the land—were introduced; and more wonderful still, where the first swing-gate for drafting cattle was put up in 1842 or 1843 (*pace* Mr. Lockhart Morton). At the thriving township of Macarthur I had the pleasure of renewing my acquaintance with my old friend Mr. Joe Twist, formerly the crack stock-rider of the Port Fairy district.

At a little distance on the old Port Fairy road to Hamilton, now left untouched by the present railway, is Lyne, once the station of Messrs. Lang and Elms. At Macarthur, where I again beheld the deep, unruffled waters of the Eumeralla, still exists a compact freehold, running back to Mount Eeles and the volcanic country, which is now, I am afraid, an extensive rabbit preserve. This is known as Eumeralla West, at present in the occupation of Mr. John Learmonth, in whose hands it presents a thriving well-managed appearance. On the other side of the river is Eumeralla East, cut off from the original run by an authoritative decision of Mr. Commissioner Fyans, and now in the possession of Mr. Staughton.

Dunmore alone—once a show station for the quality of its sheep, cattle, and horses—has suffered a melancholy change. The last of the three partners, Messrs. Campbell, Macknight, and Irvine, strong in youthful hope and sanguine trust in fortune when I first knew the district, died but a few months since.

'Tis a saddening task to run over the list of the companions of one's youth and to note how the summons of death, the warning, the unsparing hand of time, has thinned or menaced their ranks.

Poor dear old Dunmore! How many a jolly muster have we shared in there! How many a loving 'look through' the stud—how many a race had we talked over with the first owners! It was taken up only a year or two before Squattlesea Mere. What dances and picnics, rides and drives, had we there joined in! What musters of well-bred bullocks, fat and high-priced, had we escorted from Paradise Camp when 'Long John Mooney' reigned as king of the cattle-dealers! And now, to think of all this greatness departed! The pity of it! No herd of cattle, no stud—Traveller and Clifton, The Premier, 339
Tramp, Triton and Trackdeer, St. George, The Margravine, Lord of Clyde, Mormon—all dead and gone! Equine shadows and phantoms of the 'brave days of old.'

Hospitably received by the present proprietor of Squattlesea Mere, with whom I had much in common, as we had shared the changing seasons and varying profits of the Riverina in the sixties, I stayed a day at the old place. Once more I slept in the old chamber, sat at the table in the parlour where so many a cheerful evening had been passed by the young people who then formed our family circle, and for whom for a decade it was so safe and healthy a shelter. Again I heard the roll of the surges, as they beat in days of old on the shore. Again I felt as I rose at sunrise the fresh, pure air of early morn, and wondered if I should have the horses run into the stock-yard to pick out those wanted for the day's work.

Tempora mutantur, indeed. Where are now the overseer, the groom, the stock-rider, who, well mounted, and high-mettled as their steeds, were wont to fare forth with me for a long day's muster of 'the lower end of the run'? Where, indeed? Frank, the groom, most patient and cool-couraged of rough-riders—good alike on camp or road—is dead. The trusty overseer, who could ride all day and night at a pinch, or stride through the Mount Eeles rocks for hours at a time, now walks with a stick and is restricted to a buggy with a quiet horse for locomotion. And the gay Irish stock-rider, who took so kindly to the trade, though not to 'the manner born,' would, I fear me, distinctly decline to sit in the saddle for ten hours of a winter's day, wet to the waist and splashed to the eyes, as many a time and oft was our custom.

There is no doubt we are Rip Van Winkle. All the intervening life which has passed like a dream and left so few traces, must be in the nature of a magic slumber.

We could think so, were it not for certain changes we wot of.

The knight has been to the wars, and though shrewdly wounded, has escaped with life, and once more beholds the walls of the old keep. It sadly recalls the ballad—

Hawk, hound and steed roam masterless, 340
His serving-men grow grey,
His roofs are mossed—'tis thirty years
Since the warrior went away.

My next stage was past Orford, on the Shaw River, locally known in that olden time 'before the gold' as the 'Crossing Place,' now a township with inhabitants. The brothers Horan, my faithful servitors, were the principal business men there, after the Free Selector's Act of Sir Gavan Duffy altered the pastoral proprietary so materially.

One kept the hotel, The Horse and Jockey, built and first opened by the Dunmore stud-groom, Baker. He trained Triton, Tramp, Trackdeer, and other Tr-named descendants of Traveller. A good jock and finished horseman in his day, but grown too heavy for the trade, he took to the general stud business, and subsided into hotel-keeping. Death, the inexorable, had claimed Mr. Michael Horan, but his widow still holds the license, with a goodly number of young people, mostly settled in life, to uphold the family name and fame.

Mr. Patrick Horan owns the general store which supplies the wants of the township, but the hardships of bush life have told on the once active and athletic frame, and though the dark blue eyes are still bright and clear, the white beard and faded lineaments might well accompany an older man. However, men can't live for ever, even in the cool and temperate clime of Port Fairy.

Pat and I are still in the land of the living. For that, and the moderate enjoyment of life, let us be duly thankful; and though neither of us, I venture to say, will ride buck-jumpers any more, or follow the fast-receding herd through the forest thickets, some reasonable recreation may yet be meted out to us in our 'declining days.'

Melancholy-sounding phrase! But *triste* or otherwise the reality has arrived. And we must make the best of it.

IN THE DROVING DAYS

It is midwinter. The season has been severe, the rainfall heavy and continuous, almost without parallel. The floods are out and the whole country is generally spoken of as being 'under water.' We are on the road from Goulburn, New South Wales, to Gippsland with a thousand head of store cattle. We have crossed the high bare downs of the historical district of Monaro, rich in tales of wonderful feats of stock-riding, performed by 'the old hands,' and repeated by one generation of stock-riders after another. The Snowy River, rushing savagely over granite boulders, is in sight, and we hail that turbulent stream as a midway stage in our long, tedious, and adventurous journey.

Now there is cattle-droving and cattle-droving. When loitering in early summer-time over rich or level country the expedition is an idyll. The cattle follow one another without pressing, feeding as they go. The horses lounge along or are driven among the cattle, some of the men always preferring to be on foot. The dogs are easy in their minds, the whips are at rest. Around the camp-fires at night are heard sounds of careless merriment; the air seems charged with exhilaration, and all is *couleur de rose*. This sort of business is occasionally the rule for weeks, causing the unreflecting newcomer to exclaim, 'Is this the overlanding of which we have heard so much? Why, any fellow could do this.'

Quite another style of travelling was that which we had experienced for weeks and which was even now becoming intensified. When the country travelled through is rough, thickly timbered, or mountainous; when ceaseless rain floods the rivers and soaks the baggage; when the horses and cattle are enfeebled and therefore prone to straggle, ordinary difficulties are increased fourfold. Everybody is required to be at the fullest stretch of exertion, with both head and hand, from daylight till dark—occasionally for all night as well. Horses become lame or die; losses occur among the cattle; the person in charge has a tendency to become gruff, even abusive; hard work, anxiety, and perhaps short commons are frequently inscribed on this, the reverse side of the shield. Such is the prospect which we shrewdly suspect lies before us as we halt the drove nearly a mile from the formidable ice-fed stream, 'rolling red from brae to brae,' and prepare for a swim over.

Our party consists of eight mounted men, exclusive of a cook or tent-keeper, and a boy, hardy, knowing, and, it might be added, impudent beyond his years. The leader is Mr. Harold Lodbroke, an Australian of English descent; he has managed cattle from his youth up, and these are not the first thousand head that he has personally conducted from one side of the country to the other.

Mr. Elms, the second in command, is an Englishman who has plainly, by some peculiar arrangement of circumstances, been 'born out of his native country.' In speech, in manner, in the fifteen stone which he walks, in the square-built, clever cob which he rides, he is as conspicuously English as his name 'John Meadows Elms' would lead you to suppose. Nevertheless he is a 'Campbelltown native'—(why were so many of the early Australians born in that curious old-fashioned village in New South Wales?)—and he knows, I feel persuaded, not only what any cow or bullock would do under given circumstances, but what they would *think*.

James Dickson (otherwise Monaro Jim) and his mate, whom he introduced at their hiring as 'a young man from the big Tindaree,' are stock-riders of the ordinary run of Australian bush natives. They are given to long hair, tight breeches, tobacco, and profane swearing; it is possible they may be 'everything that is bad,' but bad riders—their worst enemy could find no fault in that respect. They require to be kept well in hand, but as they will receive no payment until the completion of the journey, it is probable they will do their work well.

Mr. Jones (of England) is a young gentleman recently arrived, who has joined the partly mainly for the sport and to add to his colonial experience—of this last commodity he is likely to gain on this expedition perhaps a little more than accords with amusement; but he is plucky and energetic, so he will most likely come well through, with a fair allowance of grumbling, as befits his nation.

Some preparation for the wilderness is now progressing, this being the last outpost of civilisation. Whips are looked to, and 'crackers' are at a premium; every horse has his shoes examined in anticipation of rocky passes and absence of blacksmiths. 'You won't find no shoes on the Black Mountain,' says Monaro Jim to Mr. Jones, 'and you'd look well leading that chestnut mare fifty mile.' At this cheerful way of putting things, Mr. Jones has a close overhaul of his charger's feet and makes at once for the smithy. Flour and beef are laid in, spare boots, and, above all, full supplies of tobacco are secured by the men, and lastly the pack-saddles, provisions, tent, and general property are ferried across the river in a rough sort of punt. It is now mid-day, dinner is ready, and after due observance of that ceremony, every one mounts and real work begins.

Harold Lodbroke on The Dromedary, a long brown horse, not far from thoroughbred, plain enough, but with legs of iron and a constitution to match, slides in among the cattle, followed by Monaro Jim and his mate. They bring on separately, or as they would say 'cut off,' three or four hundred of the vanguard; the rest of the party close up behind these and they are brought briskly towards the river. There is a steep but sandy bank, below which is the river shore. The cattle see this and hesitate; at a shout from the leader, every whip and every voice is raised simultaneously; the half-wild, half-fierce bullocks dash forward like a herd of deer. Down the bank they go, dropping over and breaking down the overhanging bank as they are forced on by the maddened animals in the rear. Harold jumps The Dromedary over the crumbling ledge, and, making a drop leap of three or four feet, lands right among their undecided lead. Swinging his twelve-foot stockwhip and yelling like a Sioux Indian, he forces half-a-dozen bullocks into the foaming water. The next moment they are struggling with the deep, violent stream, heading straight for the further shore and followed by all the rest. Other detachments are brought down, which readily follow their comrades, and in little more than an hour the whole expedition is safe on the right side of the treacherous Snowy River.

We do not purpose to camp after the usual fashion to-night; no watching is thought necessary, we can see for some ten miles in every direction, the cattle are not likely to re-swim that pleasant rivulet, so the order goes forth, 'Let 'em rip.' They graze peacefully in the gathering darkness, a fire is made of drift-wood, the tent is pitched, and that day at least is successfully over. I have often thought that a nearer approach to perfect contentment, and therefore to happiness, is more frequently realised 'on the road' than under any other circumstances of life's travel. Everything conduces to those 'short views' which Sydney Smith recommended. The hours spent in the saddle or at the watch-fire tend to a pleasant weariness of mind and body. Health and spirits are at a high register, owing to a freshness of the atmosphere and the regularity of muscular action. A certain amount of anxiety is felt for the success of the daily enterprise, and when that is reached in the crossing of a dangerous river, or by the attainment of a favourable camp, the needs of our nature seem fully if temporarily gratified. Let the morrow provide for itself. The abstract incompleteness appears to diminish, almost to disappear in the illimitable distance, and we smoke our meerschaum by the watch-fire, or sink into well-earned repose, in the luxurious enjoyment of that unbroken slumber which is born of toil and toil alone.

So, one by one, we lie down to rest with the lulling sound in our ears of the turbulent, rock-strewn river. The *réveillé* is sounded at 5.30; there is no possibility of daylight for more than an hour, but breakfast can be cooked and eaten before dawn, whereas horses cannot be profitably searched for without some manner of daylight. The day breaks, cold and discouraging. The rain, which had poured steadily during the latter part of the night, causes us to congratulate ourselves that we are on the right bank of old Snowy, now rising fast. The faintly chiming bells, which every other horse of the twenty-three composing our 'caballada' wore, warn us of their whereabouts. We see, as the mist lifts, long lines of the cattle at various distances, but within easy reach of the camp. The horses, now driven in by the boy, Sydney Ben, and the 'young man from the Tindaree,' arrive. The cattle are soon put together. It seems improbable that any stragglers had left the main body. Mr. 345
Elms, after looking through them, gives it as his deliberate opinion that he didn't miss any of the 'walk-about mob.' We take the trail that faces the dark woods and frowning ranges of the south, and the grand array moves on. It would be hard to find a more bitter day, except on a Russian steppe in a snowstorm. The unsheltered, stony downs over which we pass seem to invite the whirlwinds of sleet which ever and anon sweep over them. The cattle refuse to face their course from time to time, only to be forced on as regularly in the very teeth of the blast. The stage is comparatively long, so we toil on, drenched to the skin and cold to the very marrow, in spite of oilskins and wraps. Still 'the day drags on, though storms keep out the sun,' and nightfall find us at the appointed halting-place. We do not propose to 'chance' the cattle to-night, so a camp is made. First of all the drove is permitted to graze peaceably to the particular spot selected. This is either a dry knoll or the angle of a creek, fence, or whatever boundary may help to confine the cattle at night and lessen the labour of watching. This being accomplished, they are gradually driven up into such a compass as gives room for comfort without undue extension of line. Fires are as quickly as possible lighted around them. The horses are unsaddled, hobbled, 'belled,' and turned loose. For all night purposes cattle can be managed on foot, always excepting when they have been recently brought from their native pastures, in which case a relay of fresh 'night horses' is always kept ready for a rush or other emergency. Regular watches now are allotted to the different members of the party, changing, of course, every night. On this occasion Mr. Jones, who is on the first watch, is informed by the cook that his tea is ready, a piece of information which he receives with the keenest gratification. He seats himself between the tent and the camp-fire upon his rolled up gutta-percha ground-sheet and bedding, and thinks he never enjoyed anything so much in his life as the boiled corned beef, fresh damper, and quart-pot tea. Monaro Jim, who is his companion on watch, is also partaking after a deliberate and satisfying fashion, volunteering from time to time his impressions about the weather, the road, and the state of the cattle.

Mr. Lodbroke and the rest of the party are at this time fully engaged in lighting fires, and 'steadying 346
the cattle.' Their turn for luxury, tea, and improving conversation will come at a later period.

'Terrible hard they seem to camp to-night,' quoth Jim, taking off a wedge of beef with his clasp-knife, and looking approvingly at Mr. Elms, who is rushing frantically after an old cow with a fire-stick in his hand. 'One comfort is, some of it'll be out of 'em by the time we're on watch.'

'Surely we two won't be able to keep them on the camp?' queries Mr. Jones, alarmed at the responsibility about to devolve upon him and his companion, and picturing cattle escaping into the darkness in all directions.

'Dessay we'll do well enough, after a bit,' said that experienced person reassuringly. 'Just you keep walking round 'em till you come to me. I'll be t'other side. If two or three sneaks out, rush at 'em and keep a fire-stick handy to throw. If a string makes for goin', holler for me. But they ain't fond of leavin' one another, nor yet travellin' in the dark. We'd as well go on now.'

Supper having been concluded without unnecessary hurry on his part, Monaro Jim walks forth, filling his pipe as he goes. He explains to Mr. Jones the position of the fires he is to guard, and departs to his post. As they advance, the rest of the party make for the main camp-fire with considerable alacrity, leaving Mr. Jones nervous but sternly determined. For the first half-hour he paces rapidly from fire to fire, anxiously peering into the darkness and driving back straggling animals. Rather to his surprise they rush back to their companions in the herd directly they see him or hear his voice, in preference to what he supposed to be their obvious course, viz. to disappear in the darkness and elude pursuit.

Finding that Jim did not think the same activity necessary, and observing that the cattle, with few exceptions, remained stationary, even commenced to lie down, Mr. Jones moderates his energy and lights his pipe. He finds time to smoke in peace by the middle fire. As the night wears on he

employs himself in replenishing the fires on his side, and occasionally carrying or dragging heavy logs of wood. Happening to look at his watch after doing all this, he finds to his astonishment that 347
half his vigil is over. He feels refreshed by his late heartily-eaten meal. He warms himself from time to time by the blazing fires which he has piled up. Once every half-hour he walks round his watch and ward. The night is calm and starlit. The cattle have mostly lain down, and are apparently not disposed to stir. When another hour has passed, Mr. Jones begins to realise a treacherous inclination for slumber.

He has been up early, has worked hard all day, and after the third hour of watching begins to feel as if he would give all the world for a good, careless sleep. However, he combats the feeling, and it passes off. Great comfort comes from the thought that when his watch is over at ten o'clock, he can have unbroken rest till breakfast-time.

The last hour dies hard, but comes to its end in due time, and then Mr. Jones, with secret joy, veiled under a careless manner, shakes the feet of the pair who are to relieve him and his mate, telling them to keep moving as the cattle are troublesome on the far side. Having seen them drowsily dressing and finally on their way to his outside fire, Mr. Jones betakes himself to his cork mattress, ground-sheet, and blankets, where under five minutes he is sleeping that sleep which comes to the just and the unjust alike if only they be sufficiently tired.

At half-past five A.M. Dan, the cook, is roaring out unfeelingly, 'All aboard!' It seems but a few minutes to our tired hero, but on reference to his watch the fact is fully borne out. So ends his first night's watching.

Another day, with its difficulties to be surmounted and its dangers to be risked. We have said farewell to the cold uplands of Monaro proper, and are entering a mountain land, amid deep ravines and narrow gorges, sunless glens, dense forests, and precipitous ranges. We become aware that our droving difficulties are commencing. The subsoil, saturated with the rains of the most severe season known for thirty years, gives under the heavy trampling of the leading bullocks. In the vain struggle to pass quickly many of the stronger cattle only succeed in getting deeper and deeper into the treacherous hillsides.

It is even difficult to ride, and Mr. Jones more than once finds himself confronted by a bullock of forbidding aspect, who, unable to advance or retire, glares as if too happy to have the chance of 348
'skewering' him, and keeps, with the defiance of despair, turning his horns instead of his heels towards Mr. Jones' person.

However, by patience and strategy, these difficulties are disposed of and the camp is reached, in the darkest and most gloomy of forests. No more easy days, no more 'lazy-ally' for us. We have entered the 'big timber,' *crede* Monaro Jim, and it will be all hard work and 'slogging' till we sight the parks and meadows of Gippsland. So we fare on, gradually ascending the forest hills which are to bring us to the celebrated pass by which we shall surmount the grand alpine chain. Sometimes we pass through darksome forests, where the scanty vegetation tantalises the hungry drove; now we stand upon the brow of rocky pinnacles and see stretching before us a cloud-world of mountain peaks and glaciers, rosy in the flush of dawn. We dine by the side of clear, cold, alpine streams, which ripple and gurgle through long summer days, full-fed as now. By such a brook, it chances one day, as we round a rugged promontory, that the unwonted appearance of a settler's hut startles us; an inhabited dwelling too, with smoke issuing from the chimney, a real woman, and (ever so many) children. Shy and wondering, they stand gazing at us as if we were Red Indians, while their mother civilly offers milk and potatoes—luxuries both.

'Her husband was away,' she explained in answer to our inquiries. 'He was nearly always out on the run, and sometimes away for weeks at a time, mustering.'

'Was she not afraid?'

'Oh no; who would harm her? And there was not much to steal.'

'Wasn't she awfully dull?' (This from Mr. Jones.)

'Well, it was rather quiet, but there—the children, and the cows, and the garden,—she always had something to do.'

'Her husband was handy if he made that water-wheel, eh?'

'Oh no. Yankee Jack, the digger, made that one summer he was prospecting about here.'

'However did they manage to get the dray here?'

'Well' (rather proudly), 'it was the only dray for many a mile round; her father gave it to them—and Joe, he packed it on the old horse, up the range, bit by bit.'

'Did she think the mountains fine?' 349

'Oh yes. They were very well, but she wished they wouldn't rise just out of their back-door like.'

We said farewell to the kindly, simple dame and her sturdy brood of Anglo-Saxons—blue-eyed and rosy-faced as if they had come out of Kent or Devonshire—true types of a race which claims the waste places of the earth for a heritage and which creates thereof New Englands and Greater Britains.

We wander slowly on with our sauntering, grazing herd, this rarely mild, calm winter day. We look back as the cottage grows dim in the distance—the little garden, the water-wheel, the patient wife listening ever for the hoof-tramps of her husband's horse, fade in the darkening eve. But we do not forget the little home picture, this floweret of tender bloom beneath the melancholy alp.

'We'll have to look out pretty sharp to-morrow, Mr. Jones,' says Monaro Jim. 'We've got rather bad country before us.'

'Bad country? Why, what do you call this?' hastily returns that gentleman.

'We're only just a-comin' to it,' calmly explains the saturnine stock-rider. 'You'll see what the sidelings is like; why, this here's a plain to it—cattle slipping and perhaps killing theirselves, big rocks falling fit to knock yer brains out; there ain't hardly a yard fit for a horse to carry you. Them boots of your'n won't look very fresh to-morrow night.' Here Jim took a soothing draw at his pipe, and glanced pityingly at Mr. Jones' neat elastic-sided boots, apparently absorbed in pleasing thoughts of evil which the morrow night will bring forth.

'Is there much more "sideling," as you call it?' inquired Mr. Jones, rather overcome by this terrific description, and almost prepared to arrive in Gippsland like a barefooted friar, if indeed he ever reached that far and, as he is beginning to believe, fabulous country.

'Not more'n a week of the wust of it,' answered the hard-hearted Jim. 'I wish we was well over it. I've known a-many accidents in the sidelings in my time.'

The dawn is still grey as we ascend a green peak, at the summit of which commences the first of the dreaded sidelings. The peculiarity of the track here is, that while on the upper side the mountains through which the Snowy River cleaves its rugged path rear themselves heavenwards with a gradient of about one foot in three, on the lower side there is not an inch of level ground between the track and the foaming waters of the river. Where the river shore should have been is a mass of granite crags and boulders. The trails of the many herds which have preceded us are deeply-worn ruts, along which it is just possible for men to walk in single file; if slippery with recent rains, or if any confusion occurs, they are all but impassable. If the cattle, as was their constant endeavour, manage to climb upwards, it is difficult and dangerous to force them down. If they slip or fall downwards towards the river, it is a forlorn hope to get them up.

THE AUSTRALIAN NATIVE-BORN TYPE

Numberless speculations, dogmatisms, and prophecies have found utterance, in and out of Australia, touching the characteristics and destiny of the Children of the Soil. Colonial critics sitting in judgment upon their own and other people's offspring have chiefly felt moved to deliver a verdict of inferiority to the sacred British type. Not noticeably diverse has been that of the untravelled European philosopher or social student. In nearly all cases, the mildest judgment indicated some degree of physical or mental differentiation; another term, for degeneration. If in the former greater height and length of limb were conceded, to be neutralised by lack of muscle and vitality. Worse again, if in the latter category a savage precocity and perceptive intelligence were admitted, it was rarely if ever supported by persistency, application, or broad mental grasp.

In the very early days of New South Wales, which I am old enough, alas! to remember, my boyish experience familiarised me with various products, animate and inanimate, of the Cape of Good Hope, then a handy storehouse of necessaries, for this far and oft-forgotten continent. The mention of 'Cape' geese, 'Cape' wine, 'Cape' horses, 'Cape' gooseberries, was unceasing. Indeed I once heard the pied peewit—a bird familiar to all observing youth—referred to as a Cape 'magpie.' This was, of course, natural enough. But the logical outcome of this simple nomenclature, which puzzled me at the time, was that 'Cape,' used in that sense, was another name for almost any article resembling but *inferior* to a prized original. Thus the Cape wine was what we still, perhaps erroneously, consider that inspiriting but less delicate beverage to be; the Cape geese were smaller and marketably less valuable than their thick-necked solemn English cousins; the Cape gooseberries were sweet with a mawkish sweetness, how far below the rough richness of the English fruit! The Cape horses, not devoid of pace, were weedy and low-caste; while the Cape pigeon was not a pigeon at all, but a gull; and even the Cape magpie was held to be a species of lark, dressed up in the parti-coloured plumes of his august relative, the herald of the dawn.

Can my readers recall a period in which the adjectives 'colonial' or 'native' were not held to express very similar ideas as contrasted with 'European' or 'imported'? Along with the 'Cape' associations, I acquired, from many sources, a fixed idea that an indefinable, climatic process was somehow at work in Australia, preventing like from producing like. It applied equally to men and women, horses and cattle, sheep and goats, plants and flowers, qualities and manners. Over this anomaly, dooming the unconscious 'currency lads and lasses' to perpetual 'Cape' creolism, I marvelled greatly. My sympathies, meantime, were loyally enlisted with the 'native' party.

Years rolled on. I visited other colonies and roamed over tracts of broad Australia, far from my boyhood's home. Yet I never lost sight of the question which so troubled my youth. I neglected no opportunity of making observations, recording facts, or instituting comparisons connected with this mysterious subtle Australian degeneration theory.

I even enjoyed the privilege—of which I desire to speak reverently and gratefully—of visiting the dear old land, whence came the ancestors of all Australians, the land of the real, veritable 'old masters,' before any like-seeming but disappointing 'Cape' copies of the glorious originals were thought of. I enjoyed thus certain opportunities, of which I did not fail to make reasonable use.

I mention personal facts merely to show that, having early in life apprehended the magnitude of the question, I set myself, not without certain facilities for generalisation, or reasonable time devoted to the inquiry (about fifty years—ah me!), to do battle with the error, now as then, possessing vitality and power of propagation.

The first primary fact which appealed to my reasoning powers as subversive of the 'Cape' or degeneration doctrine was that of the high and increasing value of the fleece of the Australian merino sheep. This astonishing animal, bred from individuals of selected *cabanas* of the highest Spanish lineage, was landed in New South Wales in the early years of settlement, and tenderly cherished by the Macarthurs, Rileys, Coxes, and other leading colonists, more enthusiastic for the welfare of the land than their own aggrandisement. Kept free from 'improvement'(?) by heterogeneous imported blood, it was actually declared by Shaw of Victoria and other clear-visioned pastoral prophets to be equal, nay *superior*, to the best imported sheep. It was contended for him that the calumniated climate and pastures of Australia had in the acclimatised merino produced a fleece delicately soft, free, lustrous; withal, so highly adapted for the finer fabrics that nothing European could compare with it. That from the type, now securely fixed, and capable of reproducing itself illimitably, had been evolved the most valuable fleece-producing animal, reared in the open air and under natural conditions, *in the whole world*. That so far from the infusion of the best Spanish and Gascon blood improving the Camden merino, as it commenced to be called, marked deterioration followed. Horror of horrors! *imported blood* injurious—what heresy was this? Yet, incontestably, the prices of the Havilah, Mount Hope, Larra, and Ercildoune clips would seem to have triumphantly established Mr. Shaw's daring proposition.

As to horses, slowly and yet surely it began to be asserted, if not believed, that any stud-master in possession of a family of Australian thoroughbreds, originally imported and bred uncrossed for generations beneath the bright Australian sky, reared on the crisp Australian pastures, had probably better pause before he introduced English blood, *unless he knew* it to be absolutely superior and likely to assimilate successfully. Later on men were found to say that, given pure pedigree, speed, and soundness on the part of sire and dam, Australian blood-horses, though reared for generations under the *fibre-relaxing climatic influences* of the Great South Land, were as grandly grown, as speedy, as sound in wind and limb, as full of vigour and vitality, as any of the 'terribly high-bred cattle' which at Newmarket represent the *ne plus ultra* of equine perfection.

To this latter-day heresy, speculations as to what might have come to the reputation of the race-courses of the land if evil hap had chanced to the son of Cap-à-pie and Paraguay, lent considerable force. 354

Gradually, also, uprose a bucolic, protesting party, who denied that the unqualified supremacy of the British-bred shorthorn was to last for all time. Second Hubback cows and bulls of the blood of Belvidere and Mussulman, Favourite and Comet, had landed here before the rival names of Bates and Booth were household words, from the Hawkesbury to the Sylvester. Careful breeders, enthusiasts for pedigree, had jealously kept the blood pure. Size and beauty, hair, colour and handling, constitution and flesh-amassing power were equalled or even exceeded in their descendants. Though sorely trammelled by the 'Cape' orthodoxy, these even at length ventured to raise their flag and proclaim a revolutionary epic of fullest colonial brotherhood, other things being equal. Following them came the champions of Devon and Hereford cattle. Lastly, the Suez mail brought news that certain Bates' Duchesses, born and bred in America, in the United States, where the 'Cape' theory as regarding man and beast to this day doth flourish luxuriantly, were re-exported and sold in England for dream-prices before an idolatrous audience. 'So mote it be,' argued the bolder reasoner—'even yet in Australia preserve we but our pure tribes inviolate!'

It irks one to recall how rigidly comprehensive was the elastic network of the 'Cape' theory. By no means would the bulldog fight, nor die in battle the close-trimmed cock, nor sing the bird, nor flower perfume the breeze in Australia, as did their prototypes in 'Merrie England.' Long years since this prejudicial indictment has been laid to rest amid the limbo of forgotten absurdities. Man, the most highly-organised animal, suffered of course the most injurious disparagement; he has but slowly been able to clear himself from these damaging aspersions.

Yet, methinks, old Time, his 'whirligigs and revenges,' is even now uplifting the personal character of the Southern Briton, no longer forced to resent the damaging accusation. In the lower forms of the great School of Effort our champions have arisen and done battle with many a dux of the Old World. They have abundantly demonstrated that they could 'make the pace' and yet exhibit the 'staying power,' which is the great heritage of the breed. Lofty of stature and lithe of limb as they may be—though all are not so—they have shown that they inherited the stark sinews, the unyielding muscles, the indomitable, dogged energy of those 'terrible beef-fed islanders' from whom we are all descended. In the boat, on the cricket-field, at the rifle-targets, and in the saddle, the Australian has shown that he can hold his own with his European relatives. 355

It remains to be seen whether in the more æsthetic departments he has exhibited the same power of competing on equal terms with his Northern kinsmen. I now venture to assert, considering the limited number of families relatively from which choice could be made, that a very large proportion of Australian-born persons, of both sexes, have exhibited a high degree of talent, and, in some cases, unquestioned genius in the literary, forensic, or scientific arena. That small and distant English-speaking population, which in a single generation produced such men as Wentworth, Robertson, Martin, Dalley, Stephen, Forster, Halloran, Deniehy, Kendall, and Harper—Australians by birth or rearing—may fairly lay claim to the highest intellectual proclivities, to a moral atmosphere favourable to mental development. It is inexpedient to mention names in a limited community, but I may assert, without laying myself open to that accusation of boasting for which a colonial synonym has been adopted, that in the learned professions Australians may be found, if not at the acknowledged pinnacle, so near as to be worthily striving for pre-eminence. Among the fair daughters of the land we know that there are numbered singers, painters, musicians, histrionic artists, and writers, of an eminence which fits them worthily to compete with European celebrities.

Pledged to observing, with deep interest, the native Australian type, so far as it has been presented to me, I have rarely missed an opportunity of testing not only the general characteristics of the individuals examined,—I have even pushed my inquiries almost to the verge of rudeness as to the nationality of parents and grandparents; from the Parramatta River to the Clarence, from the Moyne to the Murrumbidgee, from the Yarra to the Mataura, I have noticed 'natives' of all ranks, ages, and sexes. The eager ethnological reader will naturally require my conclusive opinion—a prosaic, possibly a disappointing one. Australian-born persons, with trifling exceptions, are very like everybody else, born of British blood, anywhere. So far from all being run into one mould, as it pleases strangers to believe, they present as many instances of individual divergence from the ordinary Anglo-Saxon or Anglo-Celtic types—mentally and physically—as are to be found in Europe or elsewhere. Then the heat, the constant eating of meat, the locomotive, speculative habit of the land—do these not produce a variation of type? How *can* they be like people born in the green Motherland? is eagerly asked. My answer is—that 'race is everything.' A little heat more or less, a little extra wayfaring, the prevalence of the orange and banana, of abundant food—these things do not suffice to relax the fibre and lower the stamina of the bold sea-roving breed which has never counted the cost of the deadliest climate or the wildest sea where honour was to be satisfied, thirst for adventure to be slaked, or even that lower but essential desideratum, a full purse to be secured. If the air be hot, there sighs the ocean breeze to temper it withal. On the great interior plateaux, the pure, dry atmosphere, which invigorates the invalid, rears up uninjured the hardy broods of the farmer, the stock-rider, and the shepherd. Stalwart men and wholesome, stirring lasses do they make. The profusely-used beef and mutton diet, due to our countless flocks and herds, though it does not tend to produce grossness of habit, is a muscle-producing food, best fitted for those who are compelled to travel far and fast. The ordinary bush-labourer, reared on a farm or a station, is generally a tall, rather graceful personage. He may be comparatively slight-looking, but if you test or measure him, you will find that the spareness is more apparent than real. His limbs are muscular and sinewy; his chest is broad; his shoulders well spread; he is extremely active, and, either on foot or horseback, can hold his own with any nationality. Wiry and athletic, he is much stronger than he 356

looks. He will generally do manual labour after a fashion and at a pace that would astonish a Kent or Sussex yokel. If he have not the abnormally broad frame of the English navvy or farm-labourer, neither has he the bowed frame, the bent back, the shorter limbs of the European hind. With all his faults he is much more as Nature made him, unwarped by ceaseless compulsory labour, and more capable of the rational enjoyment of life. 357

With regard to mental characteristics. It has been the fashion to assert that a certain want of thoroughness is observable in the native Australian youths. 'They will not fag at their books to the same extent as a Britisher. They are superficial, light-minded, unstable, what not.'

I well believe this to be an unfounded charge. When will people cease to talk of 'Australians' doing this and that, or permit colonists to differ among themselves from birth, as elsewhere? Here, under the Southern Cross as under Ursa Major, are born the imaginative and the practical, the energetic, the dreamy, the slow and the brilliant, the cautious and the rash, the persevering and the fickle. As the inscrutable human unit enters the world, so must he or she remain, I hold, but partially modified by human agency, until the day of death. Change of abode or circumstance will not perceptibly alter the mysteriously-persistent entity. The eager British or other critic sums up the inhabitants living in five hundred different ways as typical colonists. 'The Australian' (saith he) 'does this, or looks like that, dislikes formality, or abhors uniformity. He is quick, but not persevering; he is not so profound, so long enduring, so "thorough" as the Englishman.' Such reasoners surely assume that all Australians 'to the manner born' were hewn out of one primeval eucalyptus log, instead of, as I had the honour to remark before, possessing in full abundance the endless differentiations and divergences from the parent type, and from each other, so noticeable in Great Britain.

Know, O friendly generaliser, that there be tall Australians and short Australians, lean Australians, and those to whom the increase of adipose tissue is a sore trial. There be fair-haired and dark-haired, brown-and auburn-haired youths and maidens, and ever, as the outward man or woman ripens diverse under the same sun, do the invisible forces of the mind wax faint or fierce, feeble-clinging or deathless-strong. There are speculative, rash Australians; also cautious, *very wary* Australians. Some to whom gold is but dross, peculiarly difficult to 'pocket' in life's billiard-table, and woefully given to the losing hazard; others to whom pence and half-pence are dear as the rarest coins of the collector, prone to fight for or hoard them with desperate tenacity. 'Natives' who are 358 ready to accept the gravest charge without a grain of self-distrust; 'natives' to whom responsibility is a misery and a burden. Some there are who from childhood to old age scarcely glance at any literary product except a newspaper. Born on the same stream, or tending the same herds, shall be those whose every waking thought is more or less connected with books; to whom the unvisited regions of the Old World, through such glorious guides, are rendered common and familiar. There is *no* generic native Australian definition, such as we carelessly apply to Englishmen, Americans, Frenchmen, or Germans, when we call the first practical, the second 'go-ahead,' the third gay, the fourth solid. The Australian, perhaps, more nearly resembles the Briton, from whom he has chiefly sprung, than any other sub-variety of mankind.

There may be a slight but noticeable tendency to variation, but it smacks of progressive development rather than of retrogression. Let it be remembered that the inhabitants of the principal subdivisions of Britain have mingled and intermarried in Australia to a greater degree than is possible in the mother-country. Doubtless English and Scotch, Scotch and Irish, and so on, continuously form alliances in Britain; but there scarcely can have been such a thorough sifting up together, such intermixture of blood there, as where the three divisions, having been imported in rateably even quantities, have intermarried, for nearly a century. The thorough welding of Celt and Saxon, Dane and Norseman, Ancient Briton, Scoto-Celt, and Hiberno-Saxon strains, is hardly possible except in a colony. Hence Australia may eventually produce a type of the highest physical and mental vigour possible to the race. It has been conceded that borderers—presumably mixed—have always excelled in stature and mental calibre the pure races. As much may be asserted in days to come of Australians. As it is, instances are not wanting of a type of manhood combining harmoniously those qualities of which English, Irish, and Scotch have from time immemorial been accustomed to boast.

I conclude this outline of a deeply-important question by recording my deliberate conviction, that in the essentials of character, the Southern British race truly resembles and in none falls short of the 359 parent stock. Apparent physical peculiarities may be explained, as the results of a higher average standard of living, a less stationary habit, and the unshared freshness of a glorious atmosphere.

The Great South Land, in extent and variety of climate and soil, offers a more fruitful field for the development of the root-qualities of the race than did any former abiding-place of the great Aryan stock. And though the average stature be exceeded, and the rugged lineaments, no longer ocean-striving, but fanned by softer airs, approximate more closely to the chiselled features of the Greek, ever and for ever more will Australia 'keep unchanged the strong heart of her sons'; for ages yet to come jealously claiming the proud title of 'Britons of the South,' and as such, when the world's war-dogs bay around the sacred standard of the Empire, eagerly emulous to be enrolled among the 'Soldiers of the Queen.'

It savours of the improbable to assert that the life-careers of my school-comrades have proved to be mainly in development of their boyish traits of character; yet in the majority of instances such has been the case.

Sir James Martin, late Chief Justice of New South Wales, was always *facile princeps* among us—in every class, in every subject. He may not have posed as a too industrious worker, but, whatever his method, he mastered every department of knowledge which he essayed with unvarying success. That he, in common with most of the 'old boys,' wrote with ease and effectiveness was due, perhaps, to the care bestowed upon the study of English composition. It was a speciality of the school. Hugh Ranclaud once produced an essay so polished and scholarly that suspicion of plagiarism was aroused. A subject was given to him, 'Marauders by land or sea,' to work out under supervision. He emerged triumphantly from the ordeal. The first numbers of *Pickwick* appearing about that time, in green covers, if I mistake not, Martin commenced a tale, embodying a similar style of incident. I forget the title now, but some numbers were printed. It was a boy's audacious imitation, but even at this distance of time I recall the undoubted ability of his performance. Part of the action was laid in London, a city, strangely enough (though he knew more of its history and topography than many a dweller within sound of Bow Bells), that he was never destined to behold.

William Forster was much the same kind of boy as he was a man: obstinately honest, uncompromising, detesting the expedient; clever at classics and mathematics, yet with a strong leaning to poetry. He left us to go to the King's School at Parramatta, then in charge of the Rev. Mr. Forrest, Hovenden. Hely, Whistler and Eustace Smith, Moule, the Rossi Brothers, Walter Lamb, and a large contingent of Stephens were contemporaries. Alfred of that ilk and I were great chums. He was a steady worker, as were most of that branch of his family. Consett (Connie) was then a handsome, clever boy, who could learn anything when he liked, but was not over-fond of work. Matthew Henry (now a Supreme Court judge), on the other hand, was an insatiable acquirer of knowledge, and bore off a bagful of prizes, so to speak, at every examination. Frank, his cousin, was not over-eager about draughts from the Pierian spring, which led to misunderstandings between him and our worthy master; but he was famous for tenacity of purpose and indomitable resolution, qualities which served him well in after-life. Among the boys who came comparatively late was George Rowley. He must have been fourteen, at least, and by no means forward. In two years he was not far from the head of the school. The Brennans—John, the late sheriff, and his brother Joseph—David Moore, a Minister of the Crown in Victoria in days to come, David Forbes, the present judge, and George Lord were the Spofforths, Bannermans, and Massies of that long-past day—old fashioned, perhaps, in a cricketing sense, but prophetic of triumphs to come.

There were fights now and then, and 'what for no?' But these necessary conflicts were conducted with all proper decorum at the bottom of the playground. Mr. Cape, very properly, did not discourage them as long as there was no unfairness. I reminded Mr. William Crane, stipendiary magistrate, years since, of an obstinate engagement between us, in which his superior science gained the victory. I 'knocked back' or put out a knuckle of my right hand (as our schoolboy phrase was) in that or some other desperate fray. Dr. Parsons, a medical friend whom I met in the street, reduced the swelling for me. The worthy stipendiary showed a similar displacement, attributable to the same cause, as we compared notes.

Ronald Cameron was one of our leading champions, being ready to fight anything or anybody at short notice. He challenged to the combat Cyrus Doyle, a long-limbed native, big enough to eat him, with the assurance of a gamecock defying an emu. He lost the fight, of course; but no other boy of his size in the school would have thought of commencing it. He had been at sea for a year, and was thereby enabled to tell us wonderful tales of his adventures among the South Sea Islands—much after the fashion of 'Jack Harkaway,' who, however, like gas in the time of Guy Fawkes, 'wasn't then inwented.' In after-years a report was current among us that he was lost at sea. Whether true or not I am unable to say. He certainly was, with the exception of Carden Collins, the most utterly fearless boy I ever saw.

Of course, with so large a school, under masters were required. These gentlemen were excellent teachers and conscientious disciplinarians. First came Mr. Murray, the English and arithmetical master; then Mr. O'Brien, writing master and teacher of mathematics. He had a way of saying, when arrived at the Q.E.D. of a problem in Euclid, 'And the thing is done.' How well I remember his desk and the pen he was always mending! No steel pens in those days. We had to learn to mend our own quill pens and keep them in good order. If the pens were bad and the writing suffered thereby, we suffered in person. This led to the careful preparation of the obsolete goose-quill—now a figure of speech, a thing of the past.

The Rev. Mr. Woolls was for a year or more classical master. He afterwards went to Parramatta and established himself independently. A fair-haired, ruddy-faced, Kingsley-looking young Englishman was he when he first came to Sydney College. He was the ideal tutor, and most popular with us all: strict in school, but full of life and gaiety when lessons were over.

The late Reverend David Boyd, afterwards of East Maitland, a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin, succeeded him. He was an accomplished person if you like: a first-rate classical scholar, with a fair knowledge of French, German, and Italian—possibly Hebrew, for he knew pretty well everything, from astronomy to single-stick, fencing to comparative philology. He rode, drove, shot, fished, painted, was musical, mathematical—a mesmerist doubtless. 'Omnibus rebus et quibusdem aliis' ought to have been his motto. We boys looked upon him as a successor of the Admirable Crichton,

and revered him accordingly. I was very glad when he 'followed the rush' to Port Phillip in 1842, and gave the Hammonds, Howards, myself, and a few other ex-Sydney College boys our last year's teaching. We ought to have made the most of it, for, as none of us got any more, we had to rely upon those early years of conscientious grounding for the foundation of any edifice of learning we should elect to place thereon. It has proved extremely useful to all of us, and it was no one's fault but our own if we did not imbibe every form of useful knowledge short of what university training alone could have supplied.

Besides these gentlemen we had drawing and French masters. Mr. Rodius was a German artist, a painter in watercolours and a limner of likenesses in crayon. Many of the early celebrities will owe whatever immortality they may secure, to his industrious pencil. Still linger in old colonial mansions a few portraits, not obtruded perhaps, but too life-like to be lost sight of, bearing the signature 'C. Rodius.' In our family scrap-album several water-colour sketches are to be seen, showing perhaps more than the portraits—which were necessary 'pot-boilers' in that material age—the true artistic touch. He used to scold us, his pupils, for our indifference and inattention: 'Ven I was yong I did rone a whole mile every day so as to be in dime vor my bainding lezzon; I belief you would all rone a mile do esgabe it.' I don't know that he succeeded in forming artists of that generation, but possibly we may have been rendered more appreciative of the paintings which most of us were to behold in the Galleries of Europe. Mr. Stanley, our French master, knew his Paris intimately, I doubt not. He had the Parisian accent, too, very different in quality from the provincial French which, when spoken fluently, enables so many professors of the language to pass muster. He was a man of distinguished bearing and 'club' form, resembling curiously in appearance, and in some other ways, a late fashionable celebrity. Why he had come to live in a colony and teach French at a boarding-school we might wonder, but had no means of ascertaining. His life, doubtless, contained one of the romances of which Australia was at that time full. He was generous to all his pupils. No unkind word was ever said regarding him. He imparted to us a thorough comprehension of the genius of the language; and if we never fully probed the subtle distinctions of irregular verbs, it was no fault 364
of his. Long afterwards, when at the Grand Hôtel de Louvre, or the 'Trois Frères Provencaux,' I was able to make my wants known, surrounded by British and American capitalists, sitting mute as fishes, I recalled with gratitude Mr. Stanley's faithful monitions.

One of our school games was, of course, that of 'fives.' We played against one of the high gables of the college building, where the ground had been partially levelled; but it was rather rough still. A road-party was doing something to the present College Street when a master suggested that I should ask my friend Mr. Felton Mathew, then Surveyor-General and Chief Road-superintendent, to allow the men to complete our 'fives' court. Mr. Mathew was our neighbour at Enmore; he bought the ground from my father on which he built Penselwood. My request was granted, and a party of men under an overseer soon made another place of it.

A tragical incident connected with the game occurred about this time. Some of the boys were playing in Sydney against a high wall in a court built for the purpose. It was not properly supported, for it fell suddenly, killing poor Billy Jones, who was one of the players. I don't think I remember any other accident. There was an epidemic of influenza, precisely like the 'fog fever' of recent years in symptom, cause, and effect. It was universal, severe, and troublesome, but we all recovered in due time. Even 'fog fever,' therefore, is no new thing. A certain school of weather prophets is convinced that, as they state their proposition, 'the seasons have changed; since the old colonial days they have become drier or cooler, even hotter, sometimes.' After a pretty clear recollection of most of the seasons since the 'three years' drought' of 1836-7-8, I am opposed to that belief. What has been will be again. People were justified in surmising about the time of last autumn that it had forgotten how to rain in New South Wales and part of Queensland. In this year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and eighty-seven that theory may be said to have exploded.

What was a really exceptional, even phenomenal, form of weather, however, did take place in and near Sydney in one of the dry years mentioned, which was a fall of snow. We made snowballs at Enmore and enjoyed the usual schoolboy amusements connected therewith. It must have been 365
nearly as cold a day as last Monday week. There was snow on all the hills around Albury, but I did not hear of any snowballing quite so near Sydney as I refer to. If the Messrs. Chaffey Brothers succeed in their irrigation scheme, and make the Mildura salt-bush wilderness to bloom as the rose, we may attain partial security from droughts at least. Nevertheless let us pray to be delivered from the legendary visitations which grey-headed aboriginals have described to pioneer settlers. Such an one, unbroken for *seven years*, is now laying waste Queensland.

The sons of Sir Thomas Mitchell—Livingstone, Roderick, and Murray—were among the denizens of that old enclosure of learning, where, as Hood so truly sings—

Ay! there's the playground—there's the lime,
Beneath whose shade in summer's prime
So wildly I have read!
Who sits there now and skims the cream
Of young romance and weaves a dream
Of love and cottage bread?

Who, indeed! and how few are left of all that joyous crew that ran and leaped, shouted and whooped with the delight of abounding animal spirits? Besides the Mitchells were the sons of Colonel Snodgrass; the Dowlings, the present worthy judge and his brother Vincent; the Ritchies; the Nortons, James and John; George Wigram Allen; the Mannings, Arthur and Henry. These with others might be considered the aristocratic section, but there were no divisions founded upon social inequalities. We learned and fed, played and lived generally, in generous and hearty fellowship.

William Wentworth the younger, who afterwards distinguished himself at Cambridge, but died early, was intellectually a loss to his native land of no trifling extent.

John Lang, whose name to this day is well remembered in the Madras Presidency, was a Sydney College boy. Known to be clever, no one was surprised to hear that he distinguished himself at Cambridge, and passed as a barrister with credit. He made a short visit to Sydney afterwards, where, politically, he followed the banner of Mr. Wentworth. But he preferred to quit Australia for the exciting life and larger fees with which Indian barristers are credited. There, thanks to an unusual facility for acquiring languages, he acquired legal celebrity and a brilliant forensic 366
reputation. He gained the historic case of Jootie Persaud, a native contractor, against the Government, which involved half a million of money. His fee, it was said, paid by the grateful plaintiff, was the royal one of a *lakh of rupees* (£10,000). A brilliant companion, a more than popular society man, whose promising career was cut short by an early death, he found time to write several Anglo-Indian and an Australian novelette or two. *Will He Marry Her?*, *The Forger's Wife*, *York; you're wanted*, are still in constant demand, judging from the number of cheap editions issued. But to my mind *Wanderings in India* is one of the best of the lighter descriptions of Eastern life ever published. The mingled realism and pathos of the style have been rarely excelled.

Our worthy master was fully aware that moral suasion was by no means wholly to be relied upon for the steady stimulation of his troop along the high-road of knowledge. Yet did he make from time to time appeals to the higher nature, attributed to boys in improving works of fiction.

'Bear in mind,' he would say on these occasions, 'that you are to be the future leaders and guides of society in this new country, which is destined to develop into such a great and important one. Out of your ranks, from among those who stand before me in this hall this day, will be chosen the judges, the magistrates of the land, the clergymen, the lawyers, the legislators and civil servants. These high positions and responsible offices must be filled by you, or boys of like age and training, when grown to be men. Should you not, therefore, strive earnestly, resolutely, to fit yourselves to discharge the duties to which in the course of nature you are to be called, intelligently, efficiently, honourably? And is there any probability that such will be the case unless you apply yourselves lovingly, perseveringly, to the tasks set you by me, your teacher and your friend, for which purpose and no other you are placed here by your worthy parents? Master Jones will now commence the Latin lesson of the day—the second ode of Horace, if I mistake not, etc.'

Portions of this wise, thoughtful advice were probably retained mechanically, as an exercise of memory, though not seriously reflected upon. Much passed 'in at one ear and out of the other,' 367
unheeded and soon forgotten, with the incredible heedlessness of early youth. Yet how strangely accurate has been the fulfilment of these long-past warnings. Among us then stood in embryo a Chief Justice, since eminent among high legal authorities, dying in proved possession of a massive intellect, a wide-reaching grasp of principles, a rapid faculty of generalisation which will ever cause his memory to be revered and his decisions to be quoted; three puisne judges, all of whom have earned the respect of men for legal attainment and unswerving impartiality; a Right Honourable Privy Councillor of our Gracious Sovereign, whose Jubilee (now that half a century has rolled by since Hugh Ranclaud and I, arms crony-like about each other's necks, heard the Proclamation of her majority read under the oaks of Macquarie Place) received a world-wide celebration. A Privy Councillor, moreover, whose privilege it was, by one act of statesmanlike inspiration, to nationalise Australia and to immortalise himself.

Alfred Stephen became a clergyman, always a hard-working, conscientious parish priest, beloved by his parishioners. He died in harness. Poor Connie, when I saw him many a year after his schoolboy days, was no longer handsome and careless, but as an eminent solicitor, and thus chained to the Bench, a galley-slave of the law, comparatively war-worn of visage. And pray what are we all in middle life but the bond-slaves, scarcely disguised, of some form of ownership which we dignify with the name of Circumstance? He and his brother Matthew Henry were in the House of Assembly at one time, thus justifying the prophecy as to the school being the nursery of future legislators.

Sir James Martin was Her Majesty's Attorney-General, and afterwards Chief-Justice William Forster was in more than one Ministry. Allan Macpherson was for many years regularly returned to Parliament. Sir George Wigram Allen, the steadiest of workers at school, again kept close to Hood's humorous declaration—

Each little boy at Enfield School
Became an 'Enfield's Speaker.

He, with the Honourable James Norton, his neighbour and class-fellow, but continued unchanged the steadfastness and success of his school record. With one's schoolfellows the physical proportion 368
seems to alter strangely and, in a sense, unnaturally in the aftertime. The big boys, the eldsters of one's early days, when met with in other years, appear unaccountably shrunken; while the 'little boys' of the same period seem to have developed abnormally and assumed the gigantic. For instance, a small orphan creature was brought to the school very young. He seemed unable to face the strangeness of his surroundings. When, years afterwards, I met at the race-ground of another colony an athletic six-foot manager of a cattle-station, mounted on a fiery steed, and by repute the show stock-rider of the district, I could not reconcile it to credibility that he should be the 'Bluey' (such was his sobriquet) of our school days. He was, nevertheless.

The Broughtons of Tumut, Archer and Robert—now no more—were among the elders of the Sydney College. During the last two years I have visited their homes in that romantic corner of New South Wales. All this time I had a curiosity to explore their ancient town of Tumut under the shadow of the Australian Alps, with its rushing river, green valleys, and romantic scenery. I shall always feel

thankful that my desire has been gratified.

We were not permitted to go boating in the harbour unless in charge of relatives. And very properly. But we were allowed to bathe in the summer afternoons, after applying for formal leave.

Our greatest treat was, on the Saturday half-holiday, the picnic to Double Bay. We chose this as being a quasi-romantic spot. Some one had commenced a mansion there and had not completed it. There was a deserted vineyard, which looked like an amphitheatre; an artificial fish-pond too—an object of deep interest. In those golden summer eves we gathered bagfuls of the native currant—a small fruit capable of being converted into jam in spite of a startling acidity of flavour—and having eaten our lunch, 'sub Jove,' used to fish, bathe, and scamper about the beach till it was time to return. Still runs the tiny creek into which we used to dash 'like troutlets in a pool'; still ebb and flow the tides of the little bay; but the neighbourhood is crowded with buildings, incongruous to the scene, and the glory of youthful adventure, which then pervaded all things, like the *genius loci*, has, with the long-past years, fled for ever.

Soon after we went to live at Enmore, I being then nine or ten years old, my first pony was presented to me by my father. A tiny Timor mare was little Bet; Dick Webb, the well-known horse-dealer and livery-stable keeper, being the intermediary. Cargoes of these small Eastern horses, degenerate in size only, from scant feeding and crowded pastures, were then imported from the islands of Timor and Lombok. Disrespectful remarks have been written touching the quality of these early Australian hackneys. They were accused of spoiling the breed of our horses. Spoiling, forsooth! Nothing better ever trod on turf than these miniature Barbs, for such they undoubtedly were. Clean-legged, long-pasterned, bright-eyed, lean-headed, mostly with well-placed shoulders and well-bent hocks, each with pluck enough for a troop of horse—where could one get a better cross than these wonderful little 'tats,' with legs and feet of iron, and though only ranging from ten to twelve hands high, able to carry a heavy man a long day's journey?

The Shetland pony, grand little chap as he may be, is a degenerate cart-horse, nothing more; he can trot, walk, and carry a burly gamekeeper up a steep hillside, but he has no pace. The Timor ponies, on the contrary, with light-weights, could make very fair racing time, were high-couraged and untiring, in or out of condition, bequeathing to their offspring the fire and speed of the Eastern horse, with a quality of legs and feet difficult to find nowadays. My little mare was a trotter, a jumper, a clever all-round hack. A colt of my next Timor mare I used to ride when I was a man grown, nearly twelve stone in weight, the which impost he could carry like a bird, and even bolt with occasionally. 370

More than one fashionably bred racehorse of the present day has the blood of a Timor ancestress in his veins, and though the fact is not obtruded, doubtless owes the staying power and undeniable legs and feet to that infusion. In those early days whole cargoes of them were brought through the streets of Sydney by the sailors, the manner being thus—half-a-dozen were tied neck to neck with strong short ropes, a halter attached to the one on the near side of the string, the which a couple of stalwart sailors tugged manfully, another encouraging the line from the rear. They were half-covered with hieroglyphs in the shape of brands. Prices ranged from five pounds to ten, according to quality. The sons of well-to-do people were to be seen mounted upon them. When fed and groomed they were as showy and fast hackneys as a light-weight would desire.

While dwelling upon these incidents of an earlier day, the hours and limits of school deserve notice. At the Sydney College we were expected to attend at nine o'clock in the morning. At mid-day an hour's recess was granted. In that interval the boarders dined; the day-scholars having disposed of their lunches hurriedly, went in for as much play as the time would admit. From 1 o'clock till 3 P.M. was occupied by afternoon school; the day-scholars departing then whithersoever they listed. The boarders dispersed to play cricket, went for a walk or into town—after applying for leave in the latter cases. On Saturday we worked from nine till twelve, when the half-holiday set in. There was no whole holiday in my day. And three morning hours, multiplied by the weeks in a year, should account for a fair measure of work.

After the country had become fairly prosperous and it was seen that tens of thousands of men could find work and room for their energy in the virgin waste of the interior, immigration was encouraged by the Government of the day. A bounty was paid to each emigrant or to the agent who recommended or persuaded him to come to the far, unknown land.

It was curious, even then, to find a class which held that they had a vested labour interest in the colony—which disapproved strongly of assisted, unrestricted immigration. They complained that other persons should come out at the expense of the State to compete, as they alleged, with them and lower the price of labour. 371

'It was the prisoners' colony,' asserted the demagogues who formulated this view. 'Free men had no right to come here, subsisted and helped by the Government.'

Enmore, being about three miles from the Sydney College, was rather far for a daily walk before the advent of little Bet, but with the aid of a drive now and then (of course there were no omnibuses) I managed it pretty well at first. The only house at all near us was tenanted by Mrs. Erskine, with whose sons I used to beguile the tedium of the road. Once we asked a wood-carter for a lift, whom not acceding to our request, we pelted with stones. He complained to the authorities, and we suffered in person accordingly. Then an adventure befell which led to grief and anxiety. It might well have been serious. I had started on the home-track in the afternoon, when one of the tropical storms not unknown in Sydney to this day commenced. The rain came down as if to repeat the deluge, an inch apparently falling every ten minutes. The low lands near the Haymarket were flooded. I was drenched. Streams and torrents coursed down every channel. The drains burst up. Things looked bad for a long walk with creeks to cross. At this juncture a tidy-looking old woman (she sold milk) invited me to enter her dwelling. I did so, and found myself in a neat and cleanly cottage. The rain not abating, she invited me to stay for tea, exhibiting most excellent bread and butter. Finally, discovering that I had so far to go and the waters being still 'out,' she prevailed upon me, nothing loth, to remain all night.

Unluckily, as it turned out, my father was in town, and had called at the school to take me home. He was told that I had left shortly before. Driving rapidly, being eager to overtake me, he reached home to find that I had not turned up. After an anxious interval, during which fears obtruded themselves that I had fallen into a creek or water-hole and so got drowned, he rode back into town, searching vainly of course for my extremely naughty self, then calmly reading by the light of a tallow candle, my aged hostess meanwhile knitting. When he again visited the College on the off-

chance of my having concluded to return, and was told to the contrary, he gave me up for lost. Mr. Cape, however, stated his belief that R. B., though of tender years, was a boy exceptionally capable of taking care of himself, and probably would be found even now in a place of safety. 372

This, however, was accepted by my anxious parent merely as an amiable attempt at consolation, whereupon he rode home again through mud and mire in despairing mood. A restless early riser by habit, he was in the saddle before dawn, with a view to having the creeks and hollows searched, when happening to pass my old woman's cottage, I recognised the horses first (Australian fashion), my stern Governor and the groom next. I called out. He turned and saw me. Anger would have been natural and deserved. But he was too overjoyed at my return from the dead, as he doubtless considered it. 'God forgive you, my boy, for what you have caused us to suffer,' was all that he said. I rode home behind the groom, and was received, I need not say, with what transports of delight. Ah me, how ungrateful are we all for the care and tenderness lavished upon us in childhood!

'All's well that ends well' is a comforting and satisfactory proverb. The good old dame was duly thanked and rewarded. Matters soon returned to their former footing. But one mischance, directly proceeding from the demoralisation of the household on that night, was of a serious and melancholy nature. Our inestimable Alderney cow took advantage of the open door of the feed-room to assimilate part of a truss of Lucerne hay; then, 'acting with no more judgment than to take a drink,' died from excessive inflation. An irreparable loss, and one remembered against me at intervals long afterwards.

Promoted to the Timor mare, I used to make pretty good time down Brickfield Hill and so round Black Wattle Swamp and Mr. Shepherd's garden. She was a good trotter, and I have owned a performer in that line—fast, extra, or only moderate, but always a trotter—from that time to this. A trotter is generally a good animal otherwise. I have seen few exceptions.

Mr. A. B. Spark, a mercantile magnate of the day, was our neighbour at Cook's River. I was sent with a letter early one spring morning to Tempé. There I found the good old gentleman in his garden. 'Can you eat strawberries, my boy?' was his prompt inquiry. It is unnecessary to repeat my answer. 'Then set to, and we'll have breakfast afterwards.' That is the way to talk to a boy! I could have died for him; I respect his memory now. At breakfast he told me that the pretty freestone, white-columned house had been built on the model of a Greek temple in the Vale of Tempé. Hence its classical name, which it still retains. The fresh eggs, laid by pure Spanish hens, were the largest I had ever seen. When he showed me some lop-eared rabbits after breakfast and promised me a pair, my heart was almost too full. I rode back the happiest boy in the land, and never forgot the old gentleman's amazing kindness. 373

It may be that kindly memory, eliding the darker shadows of the past, presents the colonial period which I am recalling, from 1831 to 1840, as almost Arcadian in peaceful simplicity, in steadfast industry, in freedom from atrocious crime, compared with later developments. And yet New South Wales was then to all intents and purposes a convict colony. Shiploads of prisoners arrived from time to time. Expirees from Tasmania no doubt made their way to a land where wages were comparatively high, and where new country offered a refuge from close official inspection. Whether the old-fashioned rule—strict, vigilant, unrelaxing—was better suited to the natural man, free or bond, than the present mercy-mongering management, may partly be judged by results.

'The bush'—a vast and trackless wilderness—was gradually being occupied and reclaimed by that strange lover of the waste places of the earth, the wilful, wicked, wandering Anglo-Saxon. Tragedies from time to time doubtless occurred. Bushrangers were not unknown, but what were they to the Kellys, the Halls and Gilbert, the Clarks and Morgans? Aboriginal blacks were shot occasionally; more than one cruel murder was brought home to the perpetrators, for which they justly atoned. At the same time a lonely hut-keeper or shepherd was often found prone and motionless, speared or clubbed as the case might be; many a stock-rider's horse came home without him. Yet, in a general way, life and property were far more secure under the modified martial law of the period than they have been known to be under a constitutional Government and quasi-democratic rule. When it is considered that for half a century the worst criminals of the old country, as well as the more ordinary rogues, had been sent to Australia, it says much for the management or for the material that so orderly and improvable a society was evolved. 374

If there were occasional crimes of deepest dye, who could feel surprise? The wonder was that they were so few in comparison to the population. Captain Knatchbull, ex-post-captain R.N., knocks out the brains of a poor washerwoman for the sake of eight pounds sterling, ending on the gallows a life of curiously varied villainy, which had included attempted poisoning, mutiny, and betrayal of comrades. There was the memorable 'Fisher's Ghost' tragedy, in which a supernatural agent was alleged to have led to the discovery of a deed of blood. There were crimes, doubtless, that cried aloud to heaven for vengeance, but which never will be fully known till the Great Day. But discovery, arraignment, and trial followed close on the heels of wrongdoers. In a general way—I assert it unhesitatingly—Sydney was as quiet, as peaceful and orderly in appearance as any town in Britain, save in the purlieus of that half-recognised Alsatia, 'The Rocks'; more decent, sober, and outwardly well-behaved than George Street and Pitt Street in 1887.

It may truly be suggested that one of the great dangers of modern civilisation—certainly of Australian national life—would appear to be the crowding of an unreasonable proportion of the inhabitants into the cities and larger towns.

An increasingly dangerous class is there encouraged to grow and multiply, averse to the honest and well-paid toil of the country, preferring to it a precarious employment in a city, with the accompaniment of the baser pleasures; clamouring at every interval of employment for relief works, subsisting but for *panem et circenses*, like the profligate populace of old Rome, the pandering to

which eventually sapped the grandeur and glory of the Mistress of the World. *Absit omen!*

At the corner of Elizabeth and King Streets might have been seen a provisional lock-up, used for the temporary detention of criminals about to be tried at the adjoining courts. A rudely-hewn pillar of sandstone had been deposited there, and served as a seat for wayfarers or persons more immediately concerned. We schoolboys were chiefly interested in the stocks, that old-fashioned detainer in which drunken and disorderly persons were securely placed for such periods—a portion 375
of a day—as the magistrates might consider expedient. In such fashion was Hudibras fast imprisoned when the lady and her steward coming by gazed on him bowed to the earth with shame. In this ancient engine of distraint upon the human property, in default of other, did the malcontents of the day sit, stolid and defiant, upon a more or less uncomfortable seat, 'fast bound in misery and iron.' One doubts whether it would not be more effectual now than the short sentence served in a comfortable, secluded establishment, which the modern offender boasts that 'he can do on his head.'

During the whole period of the time embraced in my reminiscence, I cannot recall a week while we lived in Sydney or near to it, that the Domain and Botanical Gardens were not a joy, a solace, a luxury to us and to the society with which we were acquainted. What a priceless boon was thus bestowed upon the inhabitants of Sydney then and for all time by the dedication of this lovely natural park to the public! What walks—what drives—what merry bathing parties—what lingering in summer eves—what early morning saunters has not this precious primeval fragment, this art-adorned yet beauteous wilderness, witnessed? The pleasure then enjoyed by the toil-worn citizen, the stranger, or the invalid was more exquisite and intense, from an assured freedom from that modern pest, the larrikin. All who were met with in the gardens were courteous and well-mannered persons for the most part; for whomsoever conducted themselves otherwise there was a short shrift, and if not a ready gallows, an effectively deterrent punishment.

The early formation of William Street, now the great arterial highway to Darlinghurst and the aristocratic suburbs, was then progressing. In its straight course it carved away a few acres of the Rosebank suburban property then owned by Mr. Laidley. On the triangular portion so excised were three white cedars, the most graceful of our shade trees. No doubt the proprietor was compensated for the severance and resumption, though not at the prices ruling in favour of latter-day claimants.

What fortunes might have been made by judicious, or even injudicious, purchasers of suburban land in those days! No one foresaw that any notable rise in value would take place in less than a century 376
or two. That land purchased by the acre would sell for such prices in the life of the buyer, by *the foot*, entered not into the mind of man. Wharves, street frontages, building sites, allotments all passed under the hammer of the Government auctioneer of the day at curiously low prices. Who was to foresee that gold, silver, copper, iron, lead, and tin were all to make their appearance in peaceful, pastoral New South Wales and her erstwhile appanage the Port Phillip District, afterwards the Colony of Victoria?

The great public schools of that day were our College, the King's School at Parramatta, and the Normal Institution, this last organised by Dr. Lang—that eminent colonising clergyman. The Reverend Robert Forrest was the Principal of the King's School. He was understood to have been a strict disciplinarian, as indeed he needed to be. We of the Sydney College thought ourselves superior in scholarship; but doubtless good work was done then as now at the Parramatta school.

Mr. Carmichael—Scottish, of course—presided at the Normal Institution, which was situated on the northern side of the Racecourse, or Hyde Park as at present named. We were near enough to play cricket together sometimes; also to fight, indeed, as occasions of strife will arise among schoolboys. Roland Cameron, a boy by nature warlike in the earlier stages of life, had then his celebrated combat, having challenged an oldster of the Normal, a head taller than himself. He didn't come off victorious, but he walked forth with an apparently calm consciousness that he couldn't be really conquered, which I have rarely seen paralleled among later and more tragic experiences.

OLD TIME THOROUGHBREDS

When the sons of Woden are admitted into Valhalla, it will be an incomplete Elysium for some of us, maugre the perennial flow of ale and the æsthetic fancy of the goblets, unless the good steed Hengst, whom we have so loved on earth, be permitted resurrection. Alick and Jimmy Hunter would miss Romeo. Could Cornborough be excluded from any realm of bliss which contained 'Dolly' Goldsmith? How superior were those grand horses, not to mention The Premier and Rory O'More, in all their attributes to the average human individual, about whose title to such noble immortality there is no question. I cannot believe that they are doomed to extinction, to eternal oblivion. They are dead and gone, doubtless. But lest any reader of these memories should lack future opportunity of feasting his eyes upon those wondrous equine shapes, I essay faintly to recall their leading characteristics.

Romeo, son of Sir Hercules and Pasta, was a golden chestnut, with a narrow blaze and white hind legs. Originally imported to Tasmania from England, he was in 1842 located at Miamamaluke Station on the 'Devil's River' in Victoria, then the property of the Messrs. Hunter. He died in my possession some years later, and, as I used to look at him for at least half an hour every day for the first few months of ownership, I may, without presumption, attempt a pen-and-ink portrait.

Not a large horse—he might almost be classified as small, indeed, compared with modern fashionable families, but of superb symmetry and superfine quality. 'A head light and lean,' though scarcely equal to The Premier's, his neck was of moderate length, with a delicately-marked crest. But his shoulder! Never have I seen mortal horse with such another. It was a study. So oblique was it; so graceful and elastic was the fore-action in consequence, that you wondered how horses of less perfect mechanism got on at all. His back was short, his croup high. The finely formed, silken-haired tail, which after his death hung in my room, was set on like that of an Arab. He might easily have been ridden without a girth to the saddle. Though his back appeared to be hardly the length of one, he stood over more ground than horses that looked bigger in every way. His barrel was rounded and well ribbed up. Below the knee and hock the legs were admirably clean and flat-boned, with pasterns just long enough to give the elastic motion which so peculiarly distinguishes the thoroughbred.

In those days (I was young, to be sure) I occasionally relieved my pent-up feelings by the perpetration of verse. In an old scrap-book are traced certain 'Lines to a Thoroughbred' which must have been inspired by Romeo. They commence—

> Is he not glorious, in the high beauty proud,
> Which from his desert-spurning Arab sires
> To him was given? Mark the frontlet broad!
> The delicate, pointed ear, and silken mane,
> Scarce coarser than the locks which Delia boasts,
> Attest his stainless race, etc.

Allusion was also made, if I mistake not, to a problematic ancestor, the well-ridden steed of the poets, who after

> Children's voices greet the rescued sire,

became 'a cherished playmate, loving and beloved.' Though high-tempered enough, Romeo was a good-humoured horse in the main, but the companionship of grooms and stable-boys had partly rubbed off the inherited *gentillesse* of the desert. Notably in one particular.

Whether he had been in some way teased or troubled, or that some mischievous groom had been at the pains to teach him the specific trick, I cannot say; but the fact was notorious that if any one—in or near the stable—made a noise with the mouth, like the drawing of a cork, the old horse fell into a paroxysm of rage and went open-mouthed at all and sundry being within reach at the time.

The knowledge of this peculiarity was turned to account more than once as a practical joke, sometimes with results more or less unpleasant to the unsuspecting bystander. But the joke occasionally recoiled. I happen to know of one instance. A well-known veterinary surgeon of those days, one Mr. Robertson—afterwards drowned in the Goulburn, poor fellow!—happened to be paying a visit of inspection, when a thoughtless friend made the cork-drawing signal. It was Romeo *versus* Robertson, with a vengeance. Like a wild horse of the prairies, he charged the astonished vet, a resolute active man, who had all he could do to protect himself with a heavy, cutting whip which he fortunately carried at the time. He got out of the box unharmed, but seriously ruffled and demoralised.

The first thing which occurred to him, however, on banging the door of the loose-box behind him, was to lay his whip with hearty goodwill and emphasis across the shoulders of the humourist. Robertson was a burly Scot of more than average physique. His blood was up, and I do not recall the fact of the author of this unusually keen jest making effective resistance. He probably was cured of that particular form of joking, and learned practically that horseplay is one of the games in which two can engage. I never knew the old horse to commit unprovoked assaults, and think that some unusual experience must have led to the tendency described.

Though ordinarily well-behaved, it will be noted that there was a savour of dangerous dealing when aroused, and, as might be expected, a few of his progeny were not famous for the mildness of their tempers. They were, however, handsome and distinguished-looking, good in every relation of equine

life. They supplied for many years a regular contingent to all the races in Victoria, and, indeed, within a widely extended radius round Kalangadoo and beyond the South Australian border. Few indeed were the meets, metropolitan or provincial, in which a Romeo colt or filly did not figure in the first flight. Latterly he became the property of Mr. Hector Norman Simson, from whose stud the celebrated Flying Doe and other cracks were evolved.

Young Romeo, Baroness, Countess, and Clinker had all won reputations on the Flemington race- 380
course—which then presented a somewhat different appearance—before 1842. Young Romeo, a handsome, upstanding, dark chestnut horse, then the property of Captain Brunswick Smyth of the 50th Regiment, was raffled, in 1843, I think for a hundred and fifty guineas. We took a five-guinea ticket, but my drawing, innocently young as I then was, did not carry the proverbial gambler's luck. Oberon, a sweet little white-faced chestnut that Dr. David Thomas used to drive somewhat unprofessionally as tandem leader about Melbourne in 1851, was one of the later offspring. The worthy doctor, ever ready for a lark, delighted in getting Oberon's head over the shoulders of stout old gentlemen in the street before they were aware of him or his chariot.

It was somewhere near the end of the 'forties,' those pioneering years paving the way to the golden era which set in for Australia shortly after their decease. I happened to be in Melbourne upon a cattle speculation. At Kirk's Bazaar after breakfast I saw my ideal steed in a loose-box, apparently for sale. After feasting my eyes upon him for a reasonable period, I interviewed Mr. Dalmahoy Campbell, and sought particulars.

The old horse by this time had grown hollow-backed, and was evidently on his last legs. Still at a moderate price he would not be unprofitable, and the value of his blood distributed amid my stud could hardly, I thought, be over-estimated. The main thing to be considered by a prudent young pastoralist (I really was one in those days) was the price. This turned out to be under £50. Money was not abundant in that particular year. Stock were ludicrously cheap. For some reason his owners had decided to sell the dear old horse. His age and growing infirmities were against him. Still here was a chance I might never get again. I had just made a largish offer for the store cattle referred to. There was no use talking, however. I felt like a man who had been offered the Godolphin Arabian by a sheik hard-pushed for a ransom. I *must* have the horse; that was all about it.

There was another slight difficulty. I had not ten £5 notes in my pocket. Far otherwise. I stated facts in the office. I can see old 'Dal's' kind face as he said, 'We'll take your bill at three months, my boy; that will give you time to turn round.' I gratefully assented, and Romeo—intoxicating thought—was 381
mine. That was my first bill. Never before did I write 'Rolf Boldrewood' across the face or back or below any of those insidious substitutes for ready money. Would that the negotiable instrument had been my last. Well impressed on my mind was the look of the worthy gentleman who managed the financial department of the firm which had the privilege of 'keeping my account' when I exultingly informed him of my transaction. He had grown grey in commerce, not altogether successfully. Doubtless memory carried him back for a moment over years of high hope, guarded enterprise, succeeded by wearing anxiety and dull despair. Looking into my youthful, sanguine countenance, he said, 'Take my advice, and never sign another. I wish *I* had never seen one.'

I did *not* take his advice, it is hardly necessary to say. It was many a year before the application came in. Such is the general course of events. But if every future acceptance had been as anxiously considered, as punctually paid, and as profitably contracted as Number One aforesaid, no great harm would have been done.

I rode proudly out of Melbourne next day, leading my valued purchase, duly muzzled and sheeted, along the western road. Travelling by easy stages, only varied by a swim across the Leigh River, 'where ford there was none,' I got on well. It was an anxious moment for me, though, when the strong current swept my precious steed round in midstream; but he fought gallantly for a landing, which we finally gained. A slip, a stagger, and we were safely over. At Dunmore he received the admiration which was his due, while I was congratulated on my enterprise and good fortune.

When I reached home the illustrious stranger was treated with deserved attention. A roomy loose-box was specially dedicated to his use. Boiled food, ground corn, every delicacy of the season was lavished upon him. A revival of constitution apparently took place. But he only lived a year, leaving behind him, however, at Dunmore the beautiful, graceful Pasta, half-sister to St. George, and also to The Margravine and Track-Deer; and at Squattlesea Mere, Bonnie Dundee, Ben Bolt, Fairy, and a few other notable nags. 'He owed me nothing,' as his groom said when I sorrowfully attended his 382
burial in the capacity of chief mourner. He lies under a blackwood tree on an 'island' in the mere, where the close-spreading clover blossoms climb and struggle amid the tussock grass of the marshes. He was accorded respectful interment, and my grief was more sincere than that which accompanies more ostentatious funerals. He had not perhaps the opportunity which another year would have furnished of leaving an illustrious progeny in the Port Fairy district, but some of his offspring made their mark.

Dundee, being my principal hackney and stock horse, was a wonderful performer. An admixture of Clifton blood gave him height and 'scope.' He had the sloped Romeo shoulder, with propelling machinery of unusual power. He was fortunately just short of racing speed. But he was a grand 'camp horse'; could be ridden without flinching right into the shoulder of the worst outlaw of the herd, carrying a fourteen-stone weight over any three-railed fence, and stay for a week. He lived to make a trans-Murray reputation, and still the wild riders of the mallee remember the powerful chestnut that was so well to the front with Sylvester Browne and the brothers Beveridge in more than one 'moonlighting' foray.

Ben Bolt, his half-brother, was a bright chestnut, with four white legs, a broad blaze, and a considerable quantity of white in the corners of his eyes, with which he had an uncanny way of

regarding his rider. He was truly illustrious in more ways than one. There is no record of any white man (or black one either) having seen him tired. At the end of the longest day, or the most terrific 'cutting-out' work, Ben's head was up, his clear eyes watchful, his uneasy tail, switching slowly from side to side, like a leopard not fully agitated. He had been known to leave Melbourne after a trip with fat cattle (his rider had a young wife on the station certainly), and late on the second day the marshes of the Eumeralla were in sight. A hundred and eighty miles—winter weather too! I can state from personal experience that as a hackney he was deliciously easy, fast, and free. But the luxurious sensation of being so charmingly carried was modified by the ever-present thought that he could 'buck you into a tree-top' whenever it so pleased him; and at what minute the fit might take him no one had ever been able to foretell.

Sprung from a daughter of the Traveller line, Ben inherited the dire resolution of that potent blood, with a fervent intensity peculiar to the descendants of Romeo. The 'nick' was therefore only a partial success. If one had required, as do certain Indian rajahs, a horse warranted to distinguish himself in combat with a tiger, Ben Bolt was the very animal. Once let him get his heels into position and no living tiger would have had a show. He might as well spring at a mitrailleuse. But under saddle he was distinctly unreliable. 383

I used to break my own colts in those days, and in the course of events Ben was duly haltered and enticed into the stable. Though sensitive certainly, he was not overtly rebellious until the third day, when he kicked at me in what I held to be an unfair and treacherous manner. I gave him a tap in requital with the butt-end of a hay-fork, upon which he deliberately kicked down the partition between his and the next loose-box. He hardly left a slab standing, and generally conducted himself as if he was not sure whether he would not smash the whole building while he was about it.

I avoided contention after this, and in every way applied myself to calm his fears and inspire confidence. It was all in vain. When approached he would contract every muscle till his flesh felt like a board, glaring the while at you with his strangely bright, white-rimmed eyes, in a blood-curdling homicidal way. However, at the end of a week I backed him, looking to every strap and girth, and picking a good soft spot to fall on. He was led, as was the fashion then, along by the side of another horse, and, to every one's surprise, walked away like an old stager. No irregularity took place the next day or the one following. His mouth was good; he held his head up. I was charmed, and rode him proudly about by myself. Next morning he was queer and sullen, and in the middle of the day, for no earthly reason apparently, reared, plunged, bolted, and commenced to buck like a demon. I 'stuck to him' until he gradually got way on, and being apparently temporarily insane, ran into a paling fence, against which he fell down. I came off, of course, but remounted, when he did nothing further.

I rode him daily afterwards, until he passed into the second stage of breaking, being comparatively handy and pleasanter than many older horses, but we never seemed to get nearer to confidential relations. He took me unawares again ('underhand,' as Mr. Paterson's native young man hath it) while out on the run, and kicked savagely at me while falling. I began to think—having certain responsibilities—that it was hardly worth while to run such risk of life and limb only for the sake, too, of twenty or thirty pounds, and the strictly local reputation of 'being able to ride anything.' 384

So I relinquished the task of Ben's education to Frank Lawrence, my stud groom, than whom no better rough-rider ever sat in saddle. Plucky, patient, and a fine horseman generally, he gradually brought the rebel round. The reformation was apparently complete. Kept in regular work, he ceased to be fractious, and acquired a decent character in the neighbourhood. He even carried the black boy without protest.

Months passed. The stock-riders were mustering up for the morning's work—neighbours and station hands. Frank was sitting carelessly on Ben Bolt, now regularly 'made' and recognised as a stock-horse. Suddenly, without a moment's warning he 'exploded'—there is no other word for it. Before any one could offer a remark, Frank was catapulted on to the crown of his head, and Ben was tearing down the paddock, kicking at his bridle-reins and trying to send the saddle after the man. Frank arose slowly, and after a careful examination of his neck had convinced him that it was not really broken, as might have been surmised, said, 'I believe Ben means to finish me yet.'

'I would shoot him now if I thought that, Frank,' I answered; 'the treacherous brute. Better take another horse to-day.'

Frank, of course, would not hear of this, and remounted the ungrateful one, led up as he was in a few minutes, with eyes like burning coals and nostrils quivering in anything but a reassuring manner. He made no sign, however, and came in, after about fourteen hours' galloping and camp work, as fresh as a daisy.

When the station changed hands I passed our mutual friend over to Frank, who sold him at a profit. Our paths lay thenceforward apart. Years afterwards, my brother and I walked into the stables of Cobb and Co. at Hamilton, by candlelight, while awaiting a start in the mail. The team which interested us stood harnessed and ready. 385

'Did you ever see that chestnut leader before?' I queried.

'Great Jove! there he stands—white legs and all—the dear old tiger. To think that we should ever come *to sit behind Ben Bolt!*'

'Looks like it.'

'Nice horse that chestnut with the white hind legs, ostler.'

'Pretty fair, sir. Depends on 'ow 'e's 'andled, in a manner of speakin'.'

'So I should think. How did you get him?'

'Well, he chucked Mr. Jones sky-high; broke his back-ribs, like; so he took and swapped him to the Company.'

'How does he go?'

'Well, he *goes* right enough when you get him in, but we drives him a double stage every day, just to stiddy him. He's been a year on this piece, and we don't care how soon we get shut on 'im.'

As the day broke, the cry of 'all aboard' was sounded; the passengers took their seats in the coach as the horses were led out. The leaders were not 'hitched' till the last moment; Ben Bolt having a second helper told off to him as he came out with head up and waving tail, the old fashion. *Very* quickly and noiselessly was he attached, and as the driver drew his reins tight the coach moved on, without a word or whip-touch, Ben demonstrating by the way in which he went into his collar that he was ready and willing to undertake the whole contract. At the end of our stage of twenty-two miles, done in quick time, three horses only were taken out. Ben Bolt, after having run true and level for every yard of the distance, and never once having slackened his pace, was treated to another twenty miles in the company of the fresh team.

'Good horse, that near-side leader,' I remarked to the driver tentatively.

'He's the devil on four legs, if you want to know,' gruffly answered that official; 'takes me all my time to watch him. He'll smash some of us yet, if he don't kill himself first.'

I returned a year after to find the prediction verified. Ben Bolt was no more. True to his name and reputation, he had broken away from the helper while being put to, and after a headlong gallop was discovered to have injured himself beyond hope of recovery. He died a soldier's death. But for the 'accidents and offences' resulting from his demoniac temper, I shall always hold his maternal ancestor, Traveller, mainly responsible.

THE FIRST PORT FAIRY HUNT

The cattle were pretty well broken to their new run at Squattlesea Mere. Little more was necessary than to go round them daily and discourage explorers. The heathen were temporarily at rest, brooding (like the Boers) over fresh ambuscades. A suspicion of monotone pervaded the 'eucalyptine cloisterdom,' when, neither by telegram nor newspaper—our Arcadia knew neither brain-disturber in 1844—word came orally, personally transmitted, that the Mount Rouse Hounds were to throw off at Port Fairy, with races to follow, the whole to wind up with a ball.

These astonishing tidings so affected me that I became unable to settle down to daily details. A meet with *real* fox-hounds, races, and—temptation overwhelming—a ball! I have resisted things in my day, have exhibited Spartan virtue in sorrowful altruism, economies, mortifications of the flesh, what not. But this special attraction was complicated, ingenious, subtly alluring 'in the brave days when we were twenty-one.' I lacked a year or so of that romantic period, and consequently was more prudent, more intolerant, and more abstemious than in the aftertime. People may talk as they like, but youth is the time for wisdom. That riper years bring prudence, steadfastness, circumspection, indeed any improvement of mind or body, is a widespread error. It is a fable of the wary ancient. The real sage, the true philosopher, the consistent disciple, is the ingenuous youth. The Greeks knew this. Contrast Telemachus with that old humbug Ulysses, far-travelled, much experienced in war; council, battle, and peace alike familiar to him. How reprehensible was his conduct, flirting with Calypso and other beguilers, poor lonely 'Griselda Penelope' doing her worsted work and tatting from year to year, the excellent Telemachus meanwhile looking after the 'selection' at Ithaca. However, this is miles away from the scent. 'Get in there, Fancy.'

In the solitude of my slab-hut this announcement stirred my blood. I considered the pecuniary aspect of the question, and was nearly not going at all. Coin was scarce in the forties, credit shy and difficult. More prudent by far it seemed to remain quietly at home. And yet it *was* hard. A glimpse of Paradise to be had scarce thirty miles away. A brilliant idea flashed, meteor-like, through my brain. The expense would not amount to more than a bullock. One bullock! The herd was increasing. And I could work so much harder afterwards. My conscience was salved. I made the modest preparations befitting that pioneer period. The valise was packed, the black mare was run in, and proudly mounting that fast, clever hackney, I took the track to the crossing-place of the Shaw River, singing aloud for pure joyousness of heart, like a mavis in springtime.

When I arrived in Port Fairy, and took up my quarters at the Merrijig Hotel (the southern aboriginal predicate signifying 'good,' and thus equivalent to the 'Budgeree' of the Kamilaroi), what news and marvels were afloat! The town was full. Everybody was there or coming; also everybody's favourite horse. All the world and his wife were 'on the march for Rome.' Mr. James Lord had arrived from Tasmania with a draft of hounds for John Cox of Werongurt; had also brought with him The Caliph as a present to the same gentleman from his old friend Sir Richard Dry. The Caliph was a hunting celebrity; I was naturally anxious to see him. The Dunmore people were not down, but were coming of course, with Neil Kennedy and Bob Craufurd, Fred Burchett, the Aplins, Captain and Mrs. Baxter, the Hunters (Alick and Jimmy), George Youl, and the Kemps, Claud Farie, and his partner Rodger—in fact, everybody, as I said before. Old Tom, the stock-rider, had managed to trap a fine dingo. To-morrow the hounds would throw off near Archie M'Neill's farm, across the Moyne. There were to be races the day after, including a steeplechase, for which Richard Rutledge was going to ride Freedom, a well-known blood hackney. Mr. Rodger had bought the grey racing pony Skipjack, a winner on the Melbourne turf. The ball was to be in the big room of the Merrijig Hotel. Could imagination have devised anything more ecstatically delightful?

The *table d'hôte* dinner that night was a thing to remember—a score or two of men, none of whom had passed 'the golden prime,' while the greater proportion had but lately entered manhood. One or two might have been described by a cynic as beardless boys. I was the youngest squatter in the district. I then exhibited more discretion than has always characterised the mature individual. However, *nemo omnibus*. We had few misgivings about the future in those days. We said to the present 'Stay, for thou art fair,' disturbing not ourselves about autumnal tints.

Such laughter, such jests—keen and incisive enough in all conscience! Such horse-talk—when every man was an owner, a breeder, a connoisseur more or less, of the noble animal; moreover, always possessed a favourite hackney, which he held to be a combination of all the equine virtues. The flowing bowl of the period was not disregarded—claret and champagne were the weaknesses of the day; Dalwood and Cawarra, Yering and Tahbilk, were all to come; even whisky had not made good its footing in society. But for the preponderance of the 'kindly Scot' in Victoria, the 'real Donald' would have been traditionary. However, then as now, the clans mustered strong in the rich pastures west of Geelong. Our host, Archie M'Neill, a stalwart, sinewy Highlander, was a horse-breeder too, Archie's colt being a promising sapling Traveller. The old hereditary feelings had by no means died out. A neighbour of his was wont, when 'the maut gat abune the meal,' to formulate thus his tribal antipathies: 'I'm Macdonald frae Glencoe! D—n the bloody Campbells of Glenlyon!'

Although there were necessarily differences of opinion—as will arise even among friends on such topics at such times—we enjoyed ourselves in all proper moderation. There was far more talking, laughing, and indeed singing, than steady drinking. In those days it was wonderful how musically inclined were all honest revellers. Just before the finale a messenger came to say that 'Old Tom' had made the usual miscalculation, and was then lodged in the Port Fairy lock-up. It was not to be endured that the purveyor of the quarry which was to furnish our entertainment for the morrow, should languish in a dungeon. We arose and in a body marched to the watch-house, where any amount of bail was proffered to the astonished constable. The cell-door being opened, the veteran

came forth, bent and humbled, looking not unlike an old dog-fox himself, as he sought his couch unobtrusively, vowing supernatural sobriety for the morrow.

The morning broke—a lovely sight;
The sun flashed down on armour bright,

wrote Hugh Ranclaud in his Marmion period. Slightly altered, this description might have suited our array, which, owing to circumstances, exhibited more variety and good intention than uniformity. A pink or two, a good many black cut-aways, with a green riding-coat worn by John Cox, the uniform of a Tasmanian hunt club. His tall figure as he reined The Caliph, a grand half-Arab grey sixteen-hander, up to any weight over any country, looked workman-like. Cords and tops were tolerably plentiful, though 'butcher boots,' such as most of us affected for ordinary stock-riding, were in the ascendant.

One frolicsome youngster, indeed, in default of a pink, resolved to conform as nearly as possible to the fashion of his forefathers. To this end he possessed himself of a bright red serge shirt, such as was occasionally donned by all sorts and conditions of men in those days of sincere effort. This he persuaded the village tailor to fashion into the form of a coatee, and thus arrayed, he rode proudly amid the front-rankers, congratulating himself, with perfect correctness, upon having added a fresh sensation to the entertainment. Fred Burchett had two chestnut hackneys, one a neat cob named Friendship. This day he rode the other, which he had christened Love, being, as he explained, 'very like friendship, only nicer.' Bob Cox (Robert Clerk's brother-in-law—not related to the Clarendon family) might have been there on Bessborough. I am not certain whether he did not join our band of heroes later on. But, if so, the hunt missed that day a joyous comrade, a handsome face with bright dark eyes, never unwelcome in hall or bower; one of the boldest yet most artistic horsemen that ever sat in saddle. Poor old Bob! I used often to think how I should have enjoyed mounting him 391
'regardless,' and pitting him against the best men with the Quorn, the Pytchley, or wherever the unrivalled English sport in the ancestral isle still holds sway. What nice things a Monte Cristo might do—in that and a few other ways!

The hounds were to throw off on the Warrnambool side of the Moyne, where a broad flat was bounded by farms and the line of sand-dunes, which ran parallel to the sea. A variety of jumping was ensured by this choice of country, the farm fences being of every shade of height, breadth, and solidity. Sound and springy was the turf. If the dingo, when turned down, took the cross country line towards Tower Hill, he was likely to lead us a dance, unless he found refuge in one of the wombat holes with which the ferny slopes, breast high in bracken, abounded.

It must have been ten o'clock or thereabouts when Mr. Lord, arrayed in the well-worn pink, cords, tops, and hunting-cap complete, conducted the spotted beauties across the ford of the Moyne. Within an hour all the Port Fairy world—among which half-a-dozen riding-habits showed that the ladies were not willing to be left out of the excitement—was gathered around. The Australian Reynard, all-ignorant that his imported compeer was, in after-years, to be a prize for scalp-hunters, had been liberated previously, with a due allowance of law, and on a line which involved a reasonable share of fencing. After a preliminary cast or two, the leading hounds hit off the scent, and with a burst of melody which caused more than one of us to anticipate the sensations of Mr. Jorrocks, away went the flower of the horsemen of the western district, riding rather jealous, it must be admitted, but not to be stopped by anything under a six-foot stock-yard fence.

It was a scene to be remembered. The blue sky, the green sward, sound and springy as a cricket-ground, the limitless ocean plain, the long resounding surge, the eager hounds, the medley of horsemen now slightly tailing off, as the pack raced with a breast-high scent towards the volcanic crest of Tower Hill.

Many were the falls, various the fortunes, of those who followed hounds that day. Every man rode as if the honour, firstly, of his station, of the district afterwards, were centred in him personally. It 392
was before the Traveller days, so that the Dunmore triumvirate were mounted on steeds that, though good of their kind and well-bred (for they always went in for blood), were not quite up to the form of St. George and Trackdeer, Triton or Jupiter. William Campbell rode a roan, Houndsfoot, five years old; and Macknight, I believe, his grand old mare Die Vernon—one of those brilliant all-round goers that you couldn't put wrong.

I rode my favourite black mare Tanny, the dam of Hope, Clifton, Red Deer, and Comanchee—the first three winners in the aftertime either on the flat or 'over the sticks.' She could both jump and gallop, as I must show when I have time.

I regret that I cannot supply details anent this almost prehistoric run. I recall The Caliph sailing over everything and taking all manner of fences, from 'chock and log' to stiff three-railers, in his stride. Freedom would probably be running away as usual, being a horse that no mortal man could hold for the first mile. Alick Hunter and his brother, doubtless, were there or thereabouts; and Robert Clerk of Mummumberrich (the M.F.H. in time to come) was forward enough with Rocket in spite of weight over the average. It was pretty straight going. We were used to risks by flood and field. Ordinary stock-riding was hardly safer than this or any other run with hounds. Matters were prosperous, and everybody was looking forward to a first-class run, when 'the devil or some untoward saint' put it into our quarry's head to double back as nearly as possible along the line upon which he had come.

We had the satisfaction of taking nearly the same jumps over again, when, lo and behold! dingo, apparently bent on self-destruction, made across the hummocks, and charging the Pacific Ocean as if he meant to cross over to Tasmania, swam gaily out to sea. As he reached the surf the desperate pack raced down to the beach, where they sniffed and circled in unwonted doubt and desperation.

Eventually Reynard found the enterprise disproportionate to his powers, and, swimming back, reached the beach in a state of exhaustion. The hounds were whipped off, however, and Old Tom and his bag being again called into requisition, the sheep-killer was reserved for another and perhaps a straighter run.

The day but half done. We had therefore leisure as we rode homeward for a considerable amount of 393
general chaff and criticism, which resulted, as usual, in wagers and a match or two.

Now my friend James Irvine of Dunmore had been riding the racing pony Skipjack, a very perfectly-shaped grey with a square tail, such being the mistaken fashion of that day and, I grieve to say, of the later one. He was an acknowledged flier, and having won races at Flemington (or the Melbourne Course as it was then called) was thought too good for anything in the provinces. I had always considered my black mare to be fast, but as she was wholly untried it might have been only the fond fancy which a man has for his favourite. Still I believed in her. It ended in my challenging the redoubtable Skipjack for a mile spin on the following day, present riders up.

The odds were against me, inasmuch as the mare was off grass and, excepting on this occasion, had not seen oats for months. She was not even shod, whereas her antagonist was, if not in training, in hard stable condition. Like many of the best hacks of those days he had been bred in Tasmania. He showed Arab blood, and probably owed his speed and strength to that ancient race. Tanny, on the other hand, was a Sydney-sider by extraction, her dam being brought over in 'Howie's mob,' one of the earliest lots of horses driven overland. I saw them sold in a cattle-yard, then standing at the corner of Bourke and Swanston Streets. Mr. Purves senior afterwards occupied the cottage built there, for I remember him showing me Banker in the stable. Dr. Campbell lived there afterwards. A similar sale in the same spot would excite astonishment now in any given forenoon.

So it was an intercolonial contest. More than this, it was all Eumeralla against the Hopkins, inasmuch as Mr. Rodger abode at Merang, while the Dunmores and I rode home towards the setting sun from Port Fairy. Old Tom, a veteran in the pig-skin and a judge of pace, told his friends that 'Tanny was the divil's own mare to pull, but if the masther could hould her the first half mile, she'd give Skipjack his work to do at the finish.' A trifle of speculation resulted, the odds being tempting. James Irvine was a well-known workman on the flat and a light weight. Bets were taken accordingly, and a book or two made in a small way. When on the morrow the entire population of 394
the district turned out to see the races, and when, ours being the first, we did the customary pipe-opener, the leading artists at Goodwood or Ascot felt less pride, possibly less desperate determination.

Down went the flag and off went we. With much ado mastering the mare's wild impulse to bolt, as she had done many a time before in company, I lay well up to my friend, but allowed him to make the pace. He made it a cracker accordingly, hoping to run me out—his obvious line with a slower or untrained horse. But I bided my time. The mare knew me well and gradually steadied down to the work, and when a safe distance from home I made my effort and landed the good, game animal a winner by a neck, I felt, amid cheers, congratulations, and smiles, as if earth had no higher glories to offer, life no brighter joys. 'Bedad, she's a great mare intirely,' said Old Tom as he led her away. 'I wouldn't say but she'd win the Maiden Plate if we thrained her. There's an iligant course at the Native Dog-Hole.' This suggestion was not followed up. Though passionately fond of horses, I was a practical person in those days, eschewing all connection with public racing on principle.

There were other races, a Hack Scurry among them, then a highly-enjoyable picnic lunch, after which the principal event of the day, the steeplechase, was to come off. A fair hunting line had been marked, including among others a solid 'dead-wood' fence. For this race there were a dozen starters more or less, and great was the excitement. The black mare and I were among them, I know—the morning's exercise not being considered of sufficient importance to keep us out of it.

The Caliph was thought too good for the company, and was therefore not entered by his owner. Macknight and Bob Craufurd, Fred Burchett and I, Neil Kennedy and Dick Rutledge, with some others of the old set, were duly marshalled in line and started. It was on that occasion, during some preparatory schooling, that Neil made his famous reply to Norman M'Leod, who, himself a fine horseman and steeplechase jock, scandalised at Neil's loose riding, thus expostulated—

'Look here, Kennedy, why don't you lift your horse at his fence?' 395

'Lift be d—d,' returned Neil in desperation; 'I've quite enough to do *to hold on*.'

Neil was utterly fearless, a sort of Berserker horseman, ready to ride any sort of horse at any manner of leap, of any height, breadth, or stiffness; but he was not famous for adherence to the pig-skin. Falls, many or few, made no difference in his willingness to try his luck again. If he did not break his neck, practice would make him perfect in time. So, accordingly, Neil faced the starter on a hard puller, full of faith in his star, and confident in future triumphs.

The first fence was wide and high, composed of brush-timber and more or less negotiable, so we sailed over in line in a gallant and satisfactory way. The next was reasonable. Then came our rasper, the dead-wood fence, a kind of wooden wall, raised to nearly five feet, and composed of logs, stumps, and roots of trees, piled horizontally after a compact and unyielding fashion.

Freedom, with Dick Rutledge up, leading by a dozen lengths, flew it without altering stride. Bob Craufurd was over next. Neil Kennedy and I racing for a place charged it, when his horse, hitting it hard, performed a complete somersault, balancing himself for a moment on the broad of his back, and sending Neil flying so far ahead that there was as little danger of his being crushed as likelihood of his being in the race afterwards.

The majority were fairly up at the finish: three made a creditable struggle for second place; but

Freedom, a fast two-miler, won the race from end to end, and taking all his leaps without baulk or mistake was never challenged.

So ended the second day's sport. Sport indeed, was it not? How little the faint copies of recreation, misnamed pleasure, resemble it nowadays! As we went home the tide was in, the ford deep, with a fair swim in the midstream, which was the reason I chose to take the short cut I suppose, thus letting off the exuberance of youthful spirits as well as directing certain bright eyes towards myself and the mare as we breasted the broad water.

The remainder of the day but sufficed to see all the horses properly looked to, after their exciting day, in the loose-boxes or improvised stabling which 'The Merrijig,' when put on its metal, was 396
enabled to supply; afterwards a dinner, which, if the cooking was not quite equal to that of the 'Trois Frères Provencaux' or the Café Riche, was more thoroughly enjoyed. Lastly came the needful preparation for the ball. The ladies who had come into town specially for the affair were accommodated at Mr. Rutledge's hospitable mansion or other private houses. This was just as well, as the modified communism which extended to shirt collars, ties, boots and shoes, indeed to all wearing apparel whatever, involved so much rushing in and out of rooms that awkward *contretemps* must inevitably have occurred.

The music was that of a piano—a really good one—lent for the occasion, and the new dining-hall of the hotel, then constructed by way of addition, properly draped and lighted, made a commodious and effective ballroom.

Would that I could have photographed the costumes displayed that evening—among us men of course. Ladies always manage to be becomingly arrayed under whatever contradictory circumstances. It was not so easy in our stage of civilisation—recently emerged from the pioneer epoch—to provide irreproachable raiment. Few possessed the accredited articles; fewer still bore them about when travelling.

I can hear the waltz now, and see the lady who played, as with one rapt glance I took in the situation on entering the room, for I had my toilette troubles to overcome, and was a trifle late. What did we dance in those days, more than fifty years agone? The *trois temps* and hop waltzes, the galop, quadrilles, lancers; I think there must have been reels, Scots being in the majority. But no polka, no *deux temps* or 'military' waltz, no Highland or other schottische, certainly no Washington Post. That sounds a tame programme, doesn't it? Still we danced and talked, nay, even flirted, very much as people do nowadays, and enjoyed ourselves generally, more, far more, than the comparatively languid moderns. It must have looked something like a hunt ball, though a slightly unconventional one, inasmuch as those who were conscious of correct riding toggery elected to sport it. Every variety of rig, in coats, shirts, collars and ties, boots and shoes, from tops to feminine stuff-boots (and not bad things on a pinch), adorned the main body. The supper was welcomed as the crowning glory of the evening. Healths were proposed, speeches were made, dancing was 397
resumed with additional spirit, and daylight found us still unsated—ready, indeed, to begin the programme *da capo*. Prudence and the counsels of the aged, as represented by the infrequent paterfamilias, however prevailed, and the patriotic melody having sounded, there was an end to joy unconfined for the present. Everything had been a triumphant success. No awkwardness of any sort had occurred, if we may except an impromptu *tableau vivant*—a pretty housemaid fleeing Ariadne-like into the ladies' dressing-room, closely pursued by an enterprising youngster, who did not discover, until too late, the awful presence which he had invaded. A wrathful senior declined to see the classic appositeness of the incident, and muttered threats of vengeance dire; but upon Bacchus being adroitly suggested to be in fault, as of old, he was gradually appeased. And so with laugh and jest, and many a pleasant memory to cherish, we fared homewards next day from the First Port Fairy Hunt.

BENDEMEER

That bower and its music I never forget,
But oft when alone, in the bloom of the year,
I think—Is the nightingale singing there yet?
Do the roses still bloom by the calm Bendemeer?

The æsthetic pioneer who bestowed this romantic name upon the New England village between Tamworth and Uralla probably realised a hazy similarity. Yet roses must have been few and far between, eminently suitable as are soil and climate; and the nightingale awaits the millennium of acclimatisers. The sparrow—wastrel of Europe that he is—doth first appear. The clear stream of the Macdonald, winding through the green hill-encircled valley, renders the comparison faintly apposite. On the whole, the name of Bendemeer will sound as well to our federal successors as Curra-wohbo-lah or Murra-munga-myne; and if it sets young Australia to reading *Lalla Rookh*, it may act as a counterpoise to overmuch devotion to wool and horse-racing—may even tend to the cult which *emollit mores*.

These slight incongruities notwithstanding, I would counsel any Australian Beckford, in want of a site for the antipodean Fonthill, to realise the poet's dream in the vale of Bendemeer (Great Northern Railway line, New South Wales), and so immortalise himself in the minds of generations of grateful compatriots.

As I stand in front of the little hostelry in the sweet moonrise of this summer night and gaze around, my heart sympathises with the unknown sentimental sponsor. I feel constrained to admit that he had the true poetic insight, piercing the measureless spaces of the future—

Far as human eye can see.

It is the last month of the year, in the hour for a 'midsummer night's dream' (antipodean); the fervent noonday glare has given place to the fresh, delicious temperature which in this elevated region succeeds sunset; the heavens are cloudless. As the moon's orb is slowly lifted, the grand mountain-chain which lies beyond the head waters of the river shows clearly defined in majestic gloom and ebon shades.

On the hills which enclose this fair green valley, each tree-stem, bough, and frond is traced with pre-Raphaelite distinctness. Fronting the inn, on the river-terrace, hang the pendent branches of an aged willow-tree, the umbrageous spread of which has caused its utilisation as a shade for the horses of customers and wayfarers. A round dozen of these have just been released from durance, as their owners, warned of the closing hour, ride off into the night. The equestrian habit principally differentiates the tavern of the new country from that of the old. Otherwise, in the matter of civility, cleanliness, and quietude, this particular inn and some others I affect in my rambles closely resemble the snug roadside retreats of Old England.

As I pace slowly over the thick green sward which carpets the river-meadow, the thought pursues me of what changes the future Lord of Bendemeer would find requisite. Aided by the Genius of Capital, they could not be wholly impracticable. And what a delicious Palace of Summer Delights, a charmed refuge from the world's woe and the clamorous chatter of society, might he rear amidst these cloistered shades! Important alterations, not in accordance with latter-day legislation, would be first effected. The acquisition of the freehold for leagues around, the disestablishment of stores, telegraph-and post-offices—pernicious contrivances these last for bringing unrest into remotest solitudes; the closing of schools and churches; the abrogation of the utilities; the suppression of trade; the exile of industry; I include with regret the old-fashioned, reposeful hostelry. Happy thought! It would probably be spared until the army of workmen required for the erection of the palace had been disbanded; as also, for similar reasons, the police-barrack which dominates the district, whence issues the man-at-arms of the period, 'native and to the manner born,' but soldierly and erect of bearing—a sleuth-hound in pursuit of horse-thieves and highwaymen, mounted and accoutred proper upon the good steed which he alone can rein.

The railway-line has been averted by good genii or through the *laissez aller* tone of thought which characterises the inhabitants of the vale. It clangs and thunders through a gorge on the head waters of the river, thus avoiding desecration by scrambling tourists and irreverent sons of commerce; but a huge, white, staring wooden bridge, the financial goal and triumph of the local tradesfolk, disfigures the rippling moonlit water. At a wave of the magic wand it disappears. A fairy-like structure arises in its place, delicate with marble tracery of pillars and arches, where the elves may flit love-whispering through the long sweet nights, may beckon to the Lorelei as she combs her tresses and warbles the fateful song on the rock which guards the midstream above the shimmering whirlpool.

The passes are guarded; the river-course on either side securely barricaded against the conditional purchaser and the drover—sole survivors they of the raider and moss-trooper, which a too considerate civilisation permits. Deer alone are permitted to crop the herbage of the park-like slopes; under the heavy shadows of the mountain, the leaping trout and lordly salmon, the ancient carp with silver-gleaming sides, would flash through stream and pool (this last no visionary image) as the shadows lengthened and the twilight stole tremulously forward. When the day was done, on such a full-orbed night as this, 'the harp, the lute, the viol's cry' should awaken the echoes as a most fair company (for would not all gallant knights and *gracieuses*, dames and damsels—whether summoned from afar or dwelling near at hand—with attendant poets and troubadours, be free of

right to the enchanted vale?) flee the hours with song and dance till bright Cynthia paled at the approaching dawn, or, wandering through cedarn alleys and rose-thickets, listen to the nightingale's song as it blended with the murmur of silver-plashing fountains. The gnomes that dwell in the mountain passes, where they pile undreamed-of heaps of ore, steal forth to watch the enchanted revels. The river elves and fays float through mazy measures in fairy rings, or recline, 'neath starry fragrant blossoms, on rose-leaf couches. Even the unseen genius of the Austral wild— 401
no malign, amorphous terror, but a benignant sylvan deity—might peer through the forest leaves and smile wonderingly at the fantasies of the 'coming race.'

Hark! Is that the grey owl? With strange, unmelodious cry he stirs the stillness. I turn to watch him, as he swims the night air with moveless wing—dropping, like the emissary of an evil witch, on the willow branch between me and the moon. Bird of ill omen, thou hast shattered my dream! The Palace has disappeared, the lutes are silent, the fair company dispersed; the nightingale, that sang of 'love, and love's sharp woe,' is mute for another century. Only the faint plash of the river, rippling over its sand-bars; only the mountain shadows beneath the waning, gibbous moon; only the unbroken silence of the Austral woodland, brooding, majestic, as of one watching through the eternities for the birth of a nation. 'The light that never was on sea or land' fades rapidly, and with the sigh that greets the evanishing of the undersoul's fair fantasies I seek my couch.

An early *réveillé* comes Duty, with reason-compelling Circumstance; a deputation demanding answers to questions, of which due notice has been given. 'Enterprises of great pith and moment are imminent.' We must to horse and away, not betaking ourselves to pilgrim's staff, as is customary with us; time permits not. What bard—was it the sweet singer of a Brisbane Reverie, 'The Complaint of the Doves,' the laureate of Royalty (black), the minstrel of the desert steed, that in a lighter hour proclaimed—

For I am bound to Stanthorpe town,
And time with me is tin?

We are not journeying quite so far as the stanniferous stronghold; yet is our errand not unconnected with the metal that the Silures and Phœnicians delved for in Cornwall long before Julius Cæsar, without reference to the susceptibilities of king, kaiser, or chancellor, established his protectorate of Britain.

The stern Roman, the world's master, has vanished from among the tribes of men. His descendant, an ignoble *fainéant*, a stolid peasant, or a hired model, sells the right to mould the heroic form 402
which has survived the heroic soul. The wide-ranging, sea-roving Anglo-Saxon, descendant of the fiercer races, has succeeded to his heritage of universal empire.

But can it be that the mother of nations is sinking into senile decrepitude, with selfish querulousness evading responsibility, only to lapse into deserved decay of power, and well-merited insignificance in the council halls of the world?

Oh for one hour of Wallace wight,
Or well-skilled Bruce to rule the fight!

sang Scotland's bard, in the lament for the fortunes of the field which sealed his country's fate. May not the modern Briton make the application, and in mingled wrath and despair regret the lost leader, who trod firmly, if warily, who drifted not, irresolutely weak, from peril to disasters, and delayed not the call to arms until the foe was at the gate of the citadel?[2]

2. Written in 1884.

But this savours of the digressive. Where are we? Whither is this plaguey, many-sided, chiefly unnecessary, or wholly superfluous, mental apparatus, as some hold (being rarely serviceable in the muck-rake or money-storing business), leading us? To fairyland but yesternight; anon to Albion, Germany, Rome, amid Liberal Ministers even, to their Austral countrymen all too illiberal, stepfatherly, stern, repressive. Prose and the present to the rescue! So we fare on, the trooper and I, along the course of the Macdonald, in the fresh purity of this New England summer morn. How blithe and gladsome are all things! Hard is it to believe that disease, death, and unforeseen disaster can exist in so fair a world! The river ripples merrily onward, or sleeps in deep pools under o'erhanging oaks, whence the shy wild-duck floats out with dusky brood, or the heron rises from the reedy marge and sweeps along the winding stream. Masses of granite overhang the water. The everlasting hills rear themselves, scarped and terraced, at dizzy altitudes on either side. The late rains have lent a velvet, emerald tinge to the thick-growing matted sward. Marguerites, dandelions, white and yellow immortelles, the crimson bunches of hakea, fringed violets, with bright purple 403
masses of swainsonia, diversify mead and upland. Tiny rills and springheads show a well-watered country—'a land that drinks the rain of Heaven at will.' Ever and anon the willow, with foliage of vivid tender green, contrasts with the sombre filaments of the river oak.

My companion is an active, intelligent young fellow—a native-born Australian, whose fair hair and steadfast grey-blue eyes show that the Anglo-Saxon type is not likely to alter materially in Southern Britain.

He and his horse are well suited—the latter a well-bred bay, fast at a finish, and ready to stay for ever. He has done a hundred miles on end before now, and been ridden twenty hours out of the twenty-four. In more than one skirmish, when revolvers were out, he has proved steady under fire, and is the very model, in appearance, in condition, and pace, of what a charger should be in a troop

of Irregular Horse. As he stretches along with smooth, fast, easy stride, he looks as quiet as a lamb, and what superficial critics call 'properly broken in.' None the less will he refuse to let a stranger bridle, much less ride him; he would in such case snort and plunge like an unbacked colt.

I have had no experience of the metropolitan police, against whom it is occasionally the wont of a section of the press to say hard things. These may be true or false, for what I know, though I am disposed to believe the latter. But for the last twenty years I have had much knowledge of the mounted portion of the New South Wales force in the towns and districts of the interior, and I willingly record my testimony—not being in official relations with them at present—that a more efficient, well-disciplined, well-behaved body of men—smart, serviceable, and self-respecting—does not exist in any part of the world. In old days they were sometimes at a disadvantage against outlaws, who could ride and track like Comanchee Indians, the police being chiefly of British birth and rearing. But the mounted troopers are now largely recruited from natives of the colony, or men who have lived here from their youth. In one of these, as in my guide of to-day, the cattle-thief or other criminal has a pursuer to contend with as well mounted as himself, and fully his match in all the arcana of bushcraft.

But good as the white Australian may be at following a track, his sable compatriot is a degree 404
better. A tamed preadamite, either borrowed for the occasion from a squatter, or attached by pay and cast-off uniform to a police-barrack, makes a matchless sleuth-hound. Such a one, I am told, helped to run down a notorious party of horse-thieves in these very mountains, following with astonishing accuracy the marauders, who travelled *only by night*, using every artifice as well to blind tracks and divert pursuers.

We cross the river once more, and note an island, upon which in floodtime a leading pastoral proprietor was washed down and nearly drowned. Another mile discovers a picturesquely-situated homestead, overlooking the river, where, winding round a granite promontory, it turns westward on its way to the great plain beyond the 'divide.' The roses proclaim their vicinity to the famed Bendemeer, the decomposed granite having a special chemical affinity; while the violets, large of leaf and profuse of bloom, seem as if prepared to found a new variety, so widely do they differ from the ordinary floweret.

For half a century or more has the venerable pioneer dwelt hard by the river-brim, where now, handsomely lodged, garden-surrounded, he dispenses hospitality, with all the concomitants of successful pastoral life around him, save and excepting only the wife and bairns, the stalwart sons and bright-eyed daughters, with which so worthy and energetic a colonist should have strengthened the State. But 'non cuivis contingit adire Corinthum'; it is not every man's lot thus to wind up life's tale. And it may be conceded that he who at an advanced age, retaining every faculty unimpaired, is permitted to view the work of his hands, conducted from the stage of the untamed wild to smiling prosperity, who can look forward cheerfully to end his days among a population entirely composed of friends and well-wishers, has secured a large proportion of the good which is permissible to mortal man.

Onward, still onward, ride we, for many a mile must be passed ere sunset. Onward through rugged defiles and rock-strewn passes, over which the sure-footed steeds are constrained to clamber like chamois. Indeed we are nearly blocked in consequence of adopting one very tempting 'cut,'—by the way, in bush parlance, the old English predicate has been eliminated, and with reason; one does not 405
speak of a 'long cut,'—for we find ourselves in the centre of a rock labyrinth locally termed a 'gaol.' The path, however, amid the huge boulders eventually conducts us to a grand granite-floored terrace, apparently constructed by one of the Kings of Bashan. Here we have a wide, extended view of the varied landscape, 'valley and mountain and woodland,' but it does not otherwise serve our purpose.

Speedily recovering lost ground, we strike the creek and the tin mines thereon located, which had been the cause of the exploration. The sanguine, undaunted prospectors are as usual delving and ditching, felling the forest, constructing dams, and generally committing assault and robbery upon patient mother Hertha.

We see the stream tin being washed out everywhere, like dark-coloured pebbly gravel. We note where the same rivulet has been formerly ravaged by the wandering mining hordes. We thread the gorges which lead into a rock-walled alpine valley, not inaptly named the 'Giant's Den,' and there meet with tin—more tin—*toujours* tin. For this fastness of the Titans has been turned into the Grand United Sluicing Company—no liability, let us say—and for the ten thousandth time, more or less, we admire the indomitable pluck and sanguine confidence of the miner proper. Here steam engines, pumping machinery, iron piping by the mile, dams, houses, men and material, are all found, in different stages of adaptation to an end. Evidently the shareholders, some of whom are practical men of transcolonial experience, have faith in the venture. The energetic Victorian captain beguiles us into a long, hot, pedestrian tour of inspection. He, always in advance, shovel on shoulder, prospects from time to time, and 'pans out,' with invariable success, the stanniferous gravel. Sooth to say, we have reached at length the mystic region where there is no 'want of tin.' It occurs everywhere in abundance—in new ground, in old workings, in mullock, in trenches, in each and every conceivable place. At the end of our bit of training, which mentally places us on a footing with Weston and other 'peds' of fame, we express our opinion that, with a steady supply of water for ground-sluicing, the Company should pay handsome dividends for years to come. The energetic captain, 'bred and born in a briar patch,' that is, on a goldfield, so that he is a 'legitimate miner' in 406
every sense of the word, smiles appreciatively. We thankfully resume the saddle, and bid farewell to the 'Giant's Den.' 'It may be for years; it may be for ever.'

SPORT IN AUSTRALIA

Very early in a land peopled by the roving Englishman did sport of one kind or another begin to put forth those shoots which have since so grown and burgeoned. For some years there must have been so few horses, that racing contests were difficult if not impossible. The first cattle were herded without horses, some of the pedestrian stockmen acquiring thereby extraordinary speed of foot. It was customary for early Australians to make longish journeys on foot, and legends are yet rife in colonial families as to the distances performed then by the seniors—tales which strike with astonishment their descendants, who rarely walk, much less run.

We doubt not, however, that as soon as the colts and fillies began to grow up, their young riders, with or without leave, commenced to ascertain their relative speed.

Parramatta has, it is said, the honour of holding the first race meeting in 1810, the example being followed by the officers of the 73rd Regiment, then in Sydney, who utilised the reserve now known as Hyde Park for the purpose. From that time annual races commenced to be held there. The country towns, as they arose, were only too eager to follow the example of the metropolis. Favourites of the turf acquired fame which was trumpeted abroad through the restricted sporting circles of the day.

Sir John Jamison's Bennelong—named after a well-known aboriginal—was one of the early racing celebrities. He ran against Mr. Lawson's Spring Gun in 1829 for a heavy wager as they went then; and the old-world system of heats finishing up Spring Gun, he won easily. He carried off the principal turf events in Parramatta in 1832. In the same year Mr. H. Bayley's imported colt, Whisker, won the great races at the Hawkesbury meeting. Trotting was not entirely overlooked. It appears that a Mr. Potter's horse trotted twelve miles within the hour for a bet of £30, winning by fifteen seconds.

In May 1834 the Sydney Subscription Races were held on the New Course, Botany Road, for the first time. This course was new as compared with Hyde Park, but came to be called 'the old Sandy Course,' in relation to Homebush, the next established convincing-ground. At this meeting, Mr. C. Smith's Chester, a son of Bay Camerton, won the Cup; Whisker the Ladies' Purse. This grand horse won the Town Plate of £50; also the Ladies' Purse, £25, again beating Chester. Whisker, for whom £1400 had been offered three days previously, died within the week. I was present at that same old Sandy Course in the autumn of 1835, when Chester beat his half-brother Traveller—the latter fated to belong to my old friend and neighbour, Charles Macknight, at Dunmore, Victoria, in years to come. The well-known Emigrant mare, Lady Godiva, ran at the same meeting, and won her race for the Ladies' Purse, containing the modest sum of £30. The Town Plate was £50.

The celebrated horse Jorrocks, 'clarum et venerabile nomen' in turf annals, belonged to that period. A son of Whisker from Lady Emily (imported), he inherited some of the best racing-blood in the world; the dry air and nutritive pasturage of his native land did the rest. A horse of astonishing speed, stoutness, and courage, his record covers a longer list of victories than that of any other Australian racehorse. In those days of three-mile heats, he might not win the first, but rarely lost the succeeding ones. It used to be said that when the 'native' lads began to cheer, Jorrocks seemed to comprehend the situation, and would win on the post or die in the attempt. I saw him once, a retired veteran, and can never forget his shape, almost symmetrically perfect. A long forehand, with light, game head and full eye, grand sloping shoulders, cask-like back-rib, muscular quarter and Arab croupe, legs like iron, as indeed they needed to have been; a long, low horse, scarcely exceeding fifteen hands, I should say, in height—such was Jorrocks.

Intercolonial races began in 1849. Without railways there was a difficulty in transporting horses; but it was overcome. Petrel, the property of Mr. Colin Campbell, a popular Victorian squatter, ran a great race on the Melbourne Course with Mr. Austin's Bessie Bedlam, a beautiful daughter of Cornborough.

Dark brown, with tan muzzle.

Gordon's description might have been written for her. She was, to my thinking, the handsomest mare ever stripped on an Australian course. Petrel won, and Mr. Campbell gave a ball at the Prince of Wales' Hotel in Melbourne on the strength of his winnings, at which I was a guest—and a very good ball it was. The same year saw Emerald and Tally-ho (from New South Wales), Coronet and Hollyoake (of Tasmania), beaten by the Victorian horse Bunyip, a big powerful bay. He won the Town Plate, Publicans' Purse, and Ladies' Purse at the same meeting; and starting for fourteen principal races that season, won them all—a truly phenomenal animal.

By this time the gold 'boom of booms' had occurred. There were no more £50 Town Plates. In 1856 Alice Hawthorn won £1000 for Mr. Chirnside, beating Mr. Warby's Cardinal Wiseman; in her turn losing the three-mile race with Veno—an intercolonial duel—for £2000. In 1859 I saw Flying Buck win the Champion Melbourne Sweepstakes for £1000, eighteen starters, and may have heard the late Mr. Goldsborough offer a thousand to thirty against him after the start, and Roger Kelsall call out 'taken.'

The pageant of Flemington on Cup day was yet a visionary forecast. Mr. Bagot had not appeared above the horizon. First King, Briseis, Archer, and Glencoe—much less Carbine and Trenton—were in the dimmest futurity. I was to see Adam Lindsay Gordon win the steeplechase of '69 upon Viking, with Babbler half a length behind. Glencoe the same year bore the coveted Cup trophy to New South Wales.

What a wondrous change had taken place in a few short years between the primitive racing and rude surroundings of the old Botany Course and the shaven lawns, the flower-beds, the asphalt walks, the immense grand-stands, the order, comfort, and perfect organisation of Randwick and Flemington—exceeding indeed, in these respects, the race-courses of the old country! What a 410
difference in the size and quality of the fields of running horses, in the amount of money wagered, in the multitude that attends, in the facilities of rail and road by which the tens of thousands of spectators are safely, comfortably disposed of in transit!

In these and other astounding developments of the era we cannot but mark the transition stage from a colony to a nation, from a collection of humble towns and hamlets to a cluster of cities commencing to take rank with the world's important centres. An Anglo-Saxon dominion unmatched, for the period of its existence, in wealth and culture, population and trade, in progress in all that constitutes true, steadfast, abiding civilisation.

With respect to sport other than horse-racing, the men who had left 'Merrie England' so far away across the Southern main, conscious that in many cases they had looked their last upon that earthly paradise of the angler, the huntsman, the fowler, and the deer-stalker, began to cast about for substitutes and compromises. Hares and rabbits there were none (did we catch a cheer, or was it a groan?); but the active marsupials which then overspread the land afforded reasonable coursing, and led to the formation of a breed of greyhounds, stronger, fiercer, in some instances hardly less fleet, than those of the old country. Reynard was still absent, but Brer Dingo was fast across the open, and a good stayer, while his insatiable appetite for mutton and poultry rendered him beyond a doubt the fox's natural successor. Even as a 'bagman' he was fairly serviceable.

Thus at an early date in Tasmania, a land of farms and small enclosures, and later on in Sydney, the old-world rural recreation, with pinks and tops, horn and hound, huntsman and whipper-in, 'accoutred proper,' was welcomed and supported. In Victoria there are now home-grown foxes in abundance, with hares, and, alas, rabbits in still greater proportion for them to subsist upon; while as to the fields, no straighter goers are to be found in Christendom—*moi qui parle*—than our young Australians, men and maidens, married or single—let the stiff three-railers of Petersham and Ballarat, Geelong and Rooty-hill testify; no better horses—fast, well-bred, clever, and up to weight. It seems hard that distance, expense, and long voyage should stand in the way of members of 411
Australian hunt clubs trying their own and their steeds' mettle in 'the Shires.'

Now for the gun. Wild-fowling has obtained always on the inland lakes and rivers, on marsh and lagoons, with quail and snipe, more or less, still extant; yet it must be confessed that it has chiefly partaken of the nature of 'pot-hunting.' In marshy localities snipe are abundant in the season—I have known a bag made of twenty-five couple in Squattlesea Mere in old days; but the quail, the brown variety of which more nearly resembles the partridge, has a way of disappearing from haunts too much disturbed. Unlike the partridge, it will not return to the same cornfields year after year. The native pheasant is a shy bird, for the most part inhabiting the thickets of the interior and the forests of the main range—localities where sport can hardly be carried out under proper conditions. The wild turkey is a grand bird, both as to size and flavour, but wary and a dweller on plains. He is only to be approached by stratagem.

In New South Wales, Victoria, and Tasmania, the partridge and pheasant, though often imported—my old friend Mr. Yaldwyn brought out both to his station near Macedon early in the 'forties'—have never thriven in the bush proper. Edible seeds and berries are scarce, while natural enemies are plentiful. In New Zealand, a virgin Britannia of the South, the converse obtains. There are in that priceless possession, obtained by pluck and luck (before we got into the habit of advertising for the colonisation of our territory by foreigners), no eagles, no crows, no dingoes or dasyures. Partridges or pheasants turned loose in the woods of the North Island multiply apace, and a tremendous bag of the former was made to my knowledge by a Sydney proprietor on a visit there, walking in breast-high fern, but a few years since. As to introduced game, a herd of red deer, led by a 'stag of ten,' may be seen on the grassy slopes of Laverton, within easy reach of Melbourne, and near enough for an occasional hunt, while fallow deer are plentiful, both there and in other Australian localities. Among the farms they have grown to be somewhat of a nuisance indeed; hence a trifle of justifiable poaching no doubt occasionally takes place. In a general way no great harm has been done by the introduction of European game. Hares have increased amazingly, while greyhounds of stainless 412
pedigree, with coursing matches to suit all comers, are plentiful in every country district.

But the 'werry important and particlar' exception to this comfortable doctrine has been the rabbit. Alack! and alack! What evil genius, hostile to the good South Land, prompted the importation of that fiend in a fur-jacket? 'Brer Rabbit' has amply revenged upon us the sufferings of his kind in bygone ages, and left a balance yet unpaid. What have we spent on him? What tens of thousands of pounds sterling are yet to be disbursed by suffering squatters, o'erburdened tax-payers, even by the humble 'retrenched' civil servant, against whom appears to be the hand of every man in the hour of financial need!

But the subject is too painful. Far removed from any description of sport. Sport? Ha! ha! Death, indeed, is the closer designation. However we may have been deceived as to certain results 'on this behalf,' let us not forget that our enemy is, like most of his congeners, excellent eating—good alike on the table of the poor man and the rich. In time, as population advances and smaller enclosures become necessary, his doom of extermination will be fulfilled, while the more harmless ministers of sport will be protected and encouraged.

About cricket it seems unnecessary to dilate. It has been taught sedulously to the Australian boy, by precept and example. No denominational bias has hindered *that* lesson being learned thoroughly—a fair argument, by the way, supposing the national reputation and existence to depend solely upon

cricket, in favour of the secular system. How all our boys love it! Did I not see a youngster, of say seven or eight, yesterday, leading two small brothers, with one cry of 'Cricket match!' dash up to the engraving of the Gentlemen of England and 'Our Boys' in London, on the cricket-ground, now on view in a bookseller's window in George Street? How they gloated over it!

Many a good match have I seen in the old Hyde Park, when the Sydney College boys had a right of occupation there for a special purpose. His Honour Judge Forbes, then a crack bowler at one wicket, with Mr. William Roberts senior performing the part of the historic veteran of Dingley Dell with the bat. William Still looking out for a catch, George Hill or Geoffrey Eager, or Moule or Hovenden Hely, alert at cover-point or slip, mid-wicket or long-stop. 413

Ah me! those days have gone, and how many of those who then ran and shouted in all the glee of youthful spirits and health! Those who remain are growing old, if not in the 'serious and yellow' stage, and the young ones are coming on, doubtless to fill their places, 'in arms, in arts, in song.' When Hugh Hamon Massie made that 206 score for the Australian team against Oxford, our British cousins were probably of the same opinion. His triumph on that occasion was by no means a solitary one, and successive teams have demonstrated that in Australians our kin beyond sea will always find foemen worthy of their steel. Long may the friendly rivalry last; and in the deadlier contests to come—as surely they *must* come—may they always stand, like Highlanders, 'shouther to shouther.'[3]

3. Written in 1885. A prophecy fulfilled in February 1900.

Next to the outside of a horse—even, perhaps, as regards the coast towns, before that instinctively natural position—your true Australian is most at home in a boat. Those who watch the appearance of Sydney Harbour on a holiday must come to the conclusion that as a nursery for seamen it is excelled by few sea-boards in the world. Gay is the sea-lake with every kind of sailing craft, from the fifty-ton yacht, brand new and not launched under a cost of £2000 or £3000, to the canvas dingy flying along, bows under, with a big sail, and the youthful crew perched like seagulls on the weather gunwale. When a capsize occurs, which with these craft is a matter 'quite frequent,' they dive like a brood of wild-ducks, as they right their frail craft, and are soon bowling along as reckless as ever.

With such aquatic habits, small wonder if we have bred or trained the men who have beaten with the sculls not only old England but the world—ay, the world!—at this particular sport. Not only is it now demonstrated that we possess equal skill in all the manlier exercises—the boast of the island Briton, and at which he was long held to be unrivalled—but that in strength, stature, and the desperate courage which prolongs the contest to the last dangerous degree of exhaustion and afterwards, our men, Australian-born or reared, are equal to the best Briton that ever trod a plank, or to the best transatlantic colonist, himself superior in that special section of sport to his British kinsmen. 414

All Sydney boys, of whatever degree, take naturally to the boat. And when I saw a young friend but the other day, in a Masaniello rig, expand his broad chest and glide into stroke with one stretch of his bronzed muscular arms, I hummed instinctively as I watched the retreating skiff, 'Rule Britannia, Britannia rules the waves.'

The 'incomplete angler' necessarily commenced by deep-line fishing in Botany Bay, where he discovered the highly-edible schnapper, that moderately-boned fish of comfortable size and toothsome flavour. To him all honour therefor. Also the rock and other cod-fish, whiting, bream, mullet, trumpeter, flounder, sole, and many others (not forgetting yellow-tail for bait)—all these for sea-fish are not to be surpassed. It was some years before the lordly Murray Cod was handled with the help of rod and line, by reason of the Murray, our Australian Mississippi, not being then discovered.

Since then we have made piscatorial advance, and doubtless shall make more. If we have not finally settled the question as to the acclimatisation of *Salmo ferox* in Tasmania, we have the best of all evidences of the existence of trout of exceptional size in Australian waters. Fly-fishing is still in its infancy, though the *thymallus* of the Yarra Falls rises eagerly, and gives good sport. Trout and herring furnish many an hour's enjoyment to the disciple of Izaak Walton in Tasmania. Huge lake-trout are to be found in the erstwhile eel-tenanted deeps of New Zealand. A salmo-appearing fish, weight 27 lbs., was killed in Tasmania in 1893.

In time—only give us time—and rest assured, my Australian brethren and English kinsfolk, that we shall have such sport in the South Land generally as shall do no discredit to our race—the best all-round sportsmen in the world. And so, fully aware that this is a bald and incomplete sketch of the rise and progress of sport in Australia, but promising to do better (if spared) at the next Centennial, and wishing us all good fun and fortune at this, one Australian hunter's horn must cease 'blowing' and sound the recall.

OLD STOCK-RIDERS

So poor old 'Flash Jack' is dead, says the *Port Fairy Gazette*, drowned in a creek—a stock-rider's not unfitting end. We remember him, young, *debonair*, tall, sinewy and active, with longish, curling brown locks of which he was rather proud, as also of the cabbage-tree hat of the period. But every one seems to be old nowadays except a crowd of juniors so painfully young that one wonders they are permitted to take life seriously. His sobriquet was acquired more through the ebullitions of a harmless vanity than from any of the offensive qualities which the well-worn colonial adjective is wont to imply. There was a certain amount of 'blow' about Jack, doubtless, but never in undue proportion to his attainments, which, as a stock-rider, horse-breaker, and mailman, were admitted to be creditable. His introduction to the Port Fairy district was through the Messrs. Carmichael, while before taking service with them he had reached Melbourne from England in the *Eagle*, Captain Buckley—both ship and commander favourably known in the early days.

A rumour prevailed that Jack was the scion of a good family; had been sent to sea as a midshipman, possibly to cure the malady of 'wildness,' for which a voyage to or residence in Australia is (erroneously) held to be a specific. It did not answer in Jack's case, for he quitted his ship, 'taking to the bush' (in a restricted sense), and never afterwards abandoning it. Uncommunicative about such matters generally, he threw out hints from time to time that he was not in the position for which his early associations had prepared him.

'My name's not Crickmere, Mas'r Rolf,' he said to me once, as we were riding through the Eumeralla marshes. (He always adopted the fiction that he was an old retainer of our family.) '*Far from it.*' But after this dark saying he relapsed into his usual reserve on the subject and enlightened me no further. One trait of character which was in keeping with his presumed social past he was well known to possess.

'You seem mighty independent, my man,' said an employer to him on one occasion.

'Yes,' replied Jack proudly, 'and I can uphold it.'

He was in my service before and after 'the gold' as stock-rider, horse-breaker, and road-hand, both at Port Fairy and Lake Boga. Not the man to save his wages; unlike many of his contemporaries, who are now men of substance, Jack varied but little in his non-possession of the world's goods. But there were many homesteads in his old district where he was always sure of a welcome, a glass of grog, and a week's lodgings, so that when out of employment he was never in any great straits.

With one influential class of the community he was especially acceptable, and a favourite to the last. He had a natural 'Hans the boatman' faculty for amusing children, whom he delighted by making miniature stockwhips and other bush requisites, while they never tired of listening to his wondrous tales of flood and field.

In the matter of stockwhip-making he was a second 'Nangus Jack,' and, moreover, an extraordinary performer with that weapon in the saddle. I have seen him cantering along with a steady stock-horse, standing in the saddle and cracking a brace of stockwhips, one in either hand—a feat which any young gentleman is free to try if he wishes to ascertain if it be easy or otherwise. He had been through the rougher experiences of bush life, and mentioned casually, once, having been speared by blacks in Gippsland. The company being disposed to treat the statement as 'Jack's yarn,' he gave ocular proof by exhibiting a cicatrice, far from trifling in dimensions, where the jagged spear-point had been cut out above his hip-bone.

He was a reliable horse-breaker, for several reasons. Being long and loose of frame, he rode a good deal 'all over his horse'—unlike some breakers, who are so still and noiseless in their method that any unwonted cheerfulness of manner is apt to startle their pupils into 'propping,' But as Jack on his excursions was always singing, shouting, and whistling; leaning half out of his saddle to greet a friend, or leaving his colts tied up at a public-house; by the time he had done with them they were safe for anybody, and would be difficult to alarm or astonish on account of these varied experiences.

As a road-hand Jack was quite in his element, and a decided acquisition to any overlanding party. He would have been invaluable in South Africa. Always in good humour, he kept every one alive during the monotonous days of driving and dreary nights of watching with his songs and stories, his 'quips and quiddities.' He was also of signal service to the commissariat, making frequent *reconnaissances* where the country was inhabited, and returning with new-laid eggs, butter, and other delicacies, out of which he had wheedled the farmers' wives or daughters.

At one time or other Jack had been in the employment of all the principal stockholders in the Port Fairy district, including Mr. John Cox of Werongurt, the Messrs. Rutledge, Campbell, and Macknight, Kennedy, Carmichael, and others. His never staying very long in one place was less due to any fault of his own than to an inherent restlessness and love of change. A born roamer, with strong Bohemian proclivities, Jack had wandered over a considerable portion of the colony. With commendable taste he latterly elected to make Western Victoria his habitual residence; and, strangely enough, he was fated to finish a roving life as nearly as possible at the place where he first took service, more than forty years since, on his first arrival in the district.

A fellow-worker and in a sense a companion of my youth, he 'was a part of those fresh days to me.' Many a day we rode together in the heaths and marshes, the forests and volcanic trap-ridges which lie between the lower Eumeralla and the sea. At many a muster have I heard Jack's cheery shout, and enjoyed with others his drolleries at camp and drafting-yard. Now poor Jack's whip is silent; his songs and jests are hushed for evermore. A man with few faults and no vices. 'Born for a protest' (as Mrs. Stowe says somewhere) 'against the excessive industrialism of the age.' Many a dweller in the

Port Fairy district must have felt sincerely grieved at the news of poor old Jack's ending, and deemed that 'they could have better spared a better man.'

Peter Kearney, who came to Port Fairy first with Mr. Frank Cobham from Monaro (a good specimen of the old race of stock-riders), was one of Jack's earlier contemporaries. With Tom Glendinning, generally known in the district as 'Old Tom,' he was employed for a time on the Eumeralla station. Irish by birth and 'Sydney-siders' by residence, these last had served apprenticeship to every grade of colonial experience. The naming, indeed, of the Eumeralla station and river was due to 'Old Tom' and his mates, who brought from New South Wales the J.T.H. cattle (formerly the brand of John Terry Hughes), with which the station was first 'taken up' by Mr. Hunter. From some fancied resemblance to the Umaralla (spelt differently, by the way), one of the streams which mingle their waters with the Snowy River near the Bredbo, the men christened the new watercourse after the old one. There is no special resemblance, rather the reverse, inasmuch as the Port Fairy river, if such it be, runs mostly underground, percolating through marshes and trap dykes, and generally pursues an erratic course, while the Umaralla of New South Wales is a merry, purling, snow-fed stream, which nearly attained celebrity by drowning Mr. Tyson, who crossed it ahead of our cattle in 1870, unobtrusively travelling, as was his wont, on horseback to Gippsland. 418

While on the subject of stock-riders, it is noticeable how many different nationalities and sub-varieties there were among them. Peter and Old Tom were, as I said before, Irishmen, both light weights, first-rate riders, and extremely good hands at 'breaking-in cattle to the run'—that lost or almost unnecessary art, except 'down the Cooper, where the Western drovers go,' or thereabouts. I may stop here to state that 'Clancy of the Overflow,' quoted by a writer who signs himself 'Banjo,' which appeared lately, was, in my opinion, the best bush-ballad since Lindsay Gordon. It has the true ring of spur and snaffle combined with poetic treatment—a conjunction not so easy of attainment as might be supposed. When charged with the responsible duty of breaking-in store cattle freshly turned out, Old Tom was ever mounted and away by daylight. He disregarded breakfast, knowing that the early morn is the time for getting on the tracks of wandering cattle. Carrying his quart-pot with him, a wedge of damper and a similar segment of cold corned-beef, after he had gone round his cattle and satisfied himself that none of the leaders were away, then, and not till then, he lighted a fire, made his tea, and settled to his breakfast with a good appetite and a clear conscience. He came with me from Campbell's farm, in order to point out Squattlesea Mere, then unoccupied, somewhere about May 1843. We stayed at Dunmore for lunch. The members of the firm were absent, but good, kind Mrs. Teviot provided me with such a meal of corned-beef, home-baked bread, fresh butter, short-cake and cream, that, as I told my guide, I was provisioned for twenty-four hours if needful. As it happened, by some mischance, we *were* very nearly that precise time before we had the next meal. 419

'Jemmy' White, Mr. John Cox's stock-rider at Werongurt, and Joe Twist, his assistant, a native-born Tasmanian, had both followed Mr. Cox's fortunes from Clarendon in the lovely island. 'Jemmy' was a solid, elderly man of considerable experience, and under his management the Werongurt Herefords were kept in admirable order. He, like his fellow-servant Buckley, was assisted by Mr. Cox in the purchase of a run adjoining his master's station, where, with a flock of sheep to start with, he became independent and comparatively rich. After marrying and settling down, he built himself a comfortable brick house at Louth, and died the possessor of beeves and pastures, horses and sheep, in patriarchal plenty.

Joe Twist—now, doubtless, 'old Mr. Twist,' and a substantial burgess of Macarthur—was a boy when I first came to the district, but growing up in the fulness of time, was promoted to be head stock-rider, *vice* White retired. He had by that time developed into one of the smartest hands in a yard that ever handled drafting-stick, as well as a superb horseman in connection with cattle-work. He would stand in a stock-yard among the excited, angry cattle (and those that came out of the Mount Napier lava country were playful enough) as if horns were so many reeds, even waiting until the charging beast was almost upon him before stepping out of the way, with the cool precision of a Spanish toreador.

With all due respect for the ancestral Briton, whom every good Australian should reverence, I hold that the native-born artist, while equal in staying power, far surpasses him in dexterity. What Britisher could ever shear as many sheep—ay, and shear them well—as the 'big blow' men of the Riverina sheds? Natives they of Goulburn, Bathurst, the Hawkesbury, Campbelltown—all the earlier Sydney settlements. Can any imported 'homo' even now pilot twenty bullocks, with the wool of a small sheep-station on the iron-bark waggon, along the roads the teamster safely travels? And similarly for 'scrub-riding,' drafting, and camp-work, though many of the old hands, grown men before they ever touched Australian shores, became excellent, all-round bushmen, yet the talent, to my mind, lies with their sons and grandsons, who are as superior when it comes to pace and general efficiency as Searle and Kemp to the Thames watermen. 420

Well remembered yet is the first typical Australian stock-rider I ever set eyes on—a schoolboy then out for a holiday. I was riding to Darlington, our Mount Macedon Run, early in the 'forties,' with a relative. From Howie's station a young man, detailed to show us a short cut, rode up, furnishing to my delighted vision the romantic presentment of a real stock-rider of the wild, such as I had longed to see. Tall, slight, neatly dressed, with spur and stockwhip, strapped trousers and cabbage-tree hat, 'accoutred proper,' he joined us, mounted upon a handsome three-parts bred mare, in top condition. She shied and plunged playfully as she came up.

'Now, Miss Bungate,' he said, with mock severity of tone, 'what are you up to?'

This was one of the mental photographs, little heeded at the time, which were of use in days to come. Tom or Jack, 'Howie's Joe' or 'Ebden's Bill'—the rider's name cannot be guaranteed by me,

but that bay mare I never can forget. 'Wincing she went, as doth a wanton colt.' The summer leaves may fall, and that dreary season, the winter of age, come on apace, but Miss Bungate will be enshrined among the latest memories which Time permits this brain to register and recall.

The stock-riders of the past were a class of men to whom the earlier pastoralists were much indebted. Placed in positions of great trust and responsibility, they were, in the main, true to their salt and loyal to their employers. If they occasionally erred in the wild confusion of strayed cattle and unbranded yearlings, presumably the property of the Government (was there not a celebrity thus claiming all estrays humorously designated 'Unbranded Kelly'?), their temptations were great. Without their aid, living lonely lives on the remoter inland stations, the cattle herds, often menaced or decimated by the blacks, and roaming over vast areas of natural pasture, would never have enabled their owners to amass fortunes and create estates. They were, as a rule, fearless sons of the wilderness, having some of the vices but many of the virtues which have always honourably distinguished pioneers.

MOUNT MACEDON

In the later days of 1842 I paid my first visit to Macedon, beyond which mountain our sheep-station, Darlington, had been formed in 1838. The overseer, on a business visit to Melbourne, whether in recognition of personal merit, or as desiring to do the polite thing to his employer's son, invited me to return with him. I jumped at the proposal. The paternal permission being granted, the following day saw me mounted upon a clever cob named Budgeree, a survivor of the overland party from Sydney to Port Phillip in 1838, fully accoutred for my first journey into Bushland—the land of mystery, romance, and adventure, which I have well explored since that day—that Eldorado whence the once-eager traveller has returned war-worn and pecuniarily on a level with the majority of pilgrims and knights-errant.

And o'er his heart a shadow
Fell as he found
No spot on ground
That looked like Eldorado.

We reached Howie's Flat, spending the night at the solitary stock-rider's hut near Woodend. I still recall the keenness of the frost, which came through the open slabs and interrupted my repose. Macedon was the first mountain I had encountered in real life, familiar as I was with his compeers in books. I regarded his shaggy sides, his towering summit, with wonder and admiration, as we rode along the straggling dray-track of the period.

Walls of dark-stemmed eucalypti bounded the narrow road; shallow runlets trickled across the rock ledges; while the breeze, strangely chill even at mid-day, but rippled the ocean of leafage. Gloomy alike seemed the endless forest ways, the twilight defiles, the rough declivities. At one such place my companion remarked, 'This blinded gully is where Joe Burge capsized the wool dray last shearing.' I thought it would be a nice place for robbers. German stories of the *Bandit of the Black Forest* and such-like thrilling romances, which ended in the travellers being carried off into caverns or tied up to trees, began to come into my head. I was glad when we sighted the open country again.

We arrived at Darlington next day, not without adventures, in that we lost one horse. He slipped his head out of the tether rope, so we had to double-bank old Budgeree, who proved himself a weight-carrier, equal to the emergency.

What a change has passed over the land since then! Mr. Ebden was at Carlsruhe; Mr. Jeffreys close by; the Messrs. Mollison at Pyalong; and Coliban, Riddell, and Hamilton at Gisborne. Hardly any one else in the direct line of road. What waving prairies of grass! what a land of promise! what a veritable Australia Felix, was the greater portion of the country we rode over!

A decade has almost rolled by. What motley band is this which faces outward, from Melbourne, along the selfsame road on which old Macedon looks grimly down, as they ramble, straggling past under his very throne? They are gold miners, actual or presumptive.

Both worlds, all nations, every land
Had sent their conscripts forth to stand
In the gold-seeker's ranks.

Mother Hertha has for once hidden her treasures so carelessly that the most unscientific scratching shall suffice to win them. A hundred deeply-rutted tracks now cross or run parallel with the once sole roadway. Wild oaths in strange tongues awaken the long-silent echoes. All ranks and orders of men are mingled as in the old crusades. Different they, alas, in purpose as in symbol! Watch-fires gleam on all sides. Night and day seem alike toilsome, troubled, vulgarised by noise and disorder, strangely incongruous with the solemn mountain shadows and the old stern solitude.

Again the years have passed. The lurid, early goldfields are no more. Order reigns where crime and lawless violence once were rife. Handsome towns have succeeded to the crowded, squalid encampments where dwelt the fierce toilers for gold, the harpies, the camp-followers, the victims. I am seated in a commodious stage coach, which behind a well-bred team bowls along at a creditable pace over a well-kept, macadamised road. We are *en route* to Sandhurst, now a model town, with trees overshadowing the streets, a mayor and a corporation, gaols and hospitals, libraries and churches. Yet, as we pass Macedon, tales are told of mysterious disappearances of home-returning diggers, which recall my early association of brigands with the dark woods and lonely ravines.

'Tempora mutantur et nos mutamur in illis.' Shade of Mr. Cape, is the quotation correct, or are we doing dishonour to that great man's memory,—'building better than he knew,'—and the careful heed of quantities, inculcated by personal application to our feelings, in the days of heedless boyhood? Times have changed with a vengeance. Again in Melbourne! It is changed, I trow. Great, famous, rich, one of the known and quoted cities of the earth. *We* have helped to produce this triumph. But at what a price? Our youth has gone in the process. When we look at all the fine things that fill one's vision by day, by night, within its lofty halls, amid its crowded streets, we feel like the man in the old story, who for power and wealth sold himself to the Fiend. 'All that's very fine, my friend,' an unkind sprite whispers to us. 'You may or may not enjoy a part of this splendour, but you are not so young as you were. I won't mention the D—— in polite society, but the demon of Old Age

will leave his card on you before long.'

Yes, we are still extant, not wholly invalided, in this year of grace 1884. Instead of sitting on the box of Cobb's coach in Bourke Street at 6 A.M., while the punctual Yankee driver is waiting for the Post-office clock to strike, my old friend and I, *en route* for his well-known hospitable home on the spurs of Macedon, enter a comfortable railway carriage at mid-day. As we are whirled luxuriously through the grassy, undulating downs and wide-stretching plains which surround Melbourne on the north-east, we have ample leisure to enjoy the view. Macedon is visible from the outset, dimly shadowed, kingly as of old, raising his empurpled bulk athwart the summer sky. Passing the towers of Rupertswood, the thriving towns of Gisborne and Riddell's Creek—did I not know them in their earliest 'slab' or 'wattle-and-daub' infancy?—in two hours of extremely easy travelling, relieved by conversation and light literature, we see 'Macedon' on the board of the railway station, and find ourselves at the village so named, built on the actual mountain slope. Piles of timber of every variety, size, and shape, which can be reft from the *Eucalyptus obliqua* or *amygdalina*, show that the ancient trade of the mountain foresters has not diminished. The chief difference I suppose to be that the splitters and sawyers are no longer compelled to lead a lonely, half-savage life, bringing the timber laboriously to Melbourne by bullock dray, and, one may well believe, indulging in a 'sdupendous and derrible shpree' after so rare a feat. They now forward their lumber by rail, live like Christians, go to church on Sundays, and read *The Argus* daily for literary solace.

We relinquish here the aid of steam, and trust to less scientific means of locomotion. We are in the country in the sweet, true sense of the word—component portions of a company of wisely-judging town-dwellers, who by their choice of this elevated habitat have secured a weekly supply of purest mountain air, unfettered rural life, and transcendent scenery. Various vehicles are awaiting the home-returning contingent. Buggies and sociables, dog-carts, pony-carriages, and phaetons with handsome, well-matched pairs—the reins of the prize equipage in the latter division being artistically handled by a lady. Our party and luggage are swiftly deposited, a start is made along the rather steep incline—the lady with the brown horses giving us all the go-by after a while. Half an hour brings us to our destination. We leave the winding, gravelly road; turning westwards, a lodge gate admits us through the thick-ranked screen of forest trees. Conversation has somehow flagged. What is this? We have all in a moment quitted the outer world, with its still, rude furnishing—tree stumps, road metal, wood piles, and bullock teams—and entered into—shall I say it straight out?—an earthly paradise!

Prudence here nudges me. 'Come now, don't overdo it; you're really too imaginative.' Well, there may be just the least *soupçon* of idealism, Prudence dear. I never was there, or if in a former state of existence, have forgotten details; but if aught mundane can furnish a partial presentment of Eve's favourite nook in that lost glory of our race, surely it is the dream-garden which now opens before our wondering vision.

On the lip of the forest hollow, taking studied advantage of every point of natural conformation, has been created a many-acred, garden landscape, absolutely perfect in growth, harmony, and sustained beauty of composition. The natural advantages, it must be admitted, are great, perhaps unequalled. 'The dark wall of the forest,' but partially invaded, forms a highly effective background to the cultured loveliness and delicate floral brilliancy which it overshadows. On either side, the sheltering primeval groves make effectual barrier against the withering north wind of summer, the winter's southern sea-blasts.

Cooler air and a lowered heat-register are consequent upon the altitude, when on the plain below, plant and animal nature alike suffer from the unpitying sun. Here rarely frost is seen or rude gales blow. Proudly and secure may the dwellers on Darraweit Heights look from their mountain home, across the unbroken stretch of plain and grassy down, relieved but by copses, around farm-steadings and cornfields, where the harvest sheaves are now standing in thick rows. In the dim distance are the gleaming waters of the Bay. That cluster of far-seen lights, when the shades of night have fallen, denotes the position of the metropolis. Can that misty, pale-blue apparition be a mountain-range—the austere outline of the Australian Alps? Westward lie the broad plains which stretch in unbroken level, well-nigh to the coast, two hundred miles from Melbourne. Around are companion heights and forest peaks. Still regal as of yore, though his woods have been rifled and his solitudes invaded, Macedon rears his majestic summit. The house—roomy, broad verandahed, luxuriously comfortable, more commodious than many a pretentious mansion—overlooks the 'pleasaunce,' to use the old Norman-French nomenclature, here so curiously appropriate. Grounds of pleasure they, in every sense of the word. More spacious than a garden, less extensive than a chase, the reclaimed wild is unique in form and design as in floral loveliness. It combines the colour-glories of the garden proper with the freedom, the 'fine, fresh, careless rapture,' of a mountain park.

Now for a closer description. We confess to have hung off, involuntarily, in despair of giving even a fairly accurate sketch of this adorable creation. What then does it comprise? Nearly all things that man has lacked since the primal fall. A collection of longed-for luxuries, for which the o'ertaxed heart of world-wise, world-wearied man so often sighs in vain. An abode of rest where, from morn till dewy eve, the eye lights on nought but 'things of beauty,' which are 'a joy for ever'; the ear is invaded by no sound but those of Nature's harmonies. Here, if anywhere on earth, may the soul be attuned to heavenly thoughts; here may this fallen nature of ours be purged from all save ennobling ideas, so truly Eden-like are the surroundings. Rare flowering shrubs developed by soil and irrigation into forest trees; masses of choice flowers, exhibiting in this our fiercest summer month a freshness and purity of bloom as astonishing as exquisitely beautiful.

The natural features of the locale have doubtless been exhaustively considered. Yet few horticultural artists would have seized so unerringly upon the difficult compromise between Art and

Nature which has here been achieved. The winding walks through the mimic forests are lonely and sequestered as those of an enchanted wood. The sultry heat of the day's last lingering hour is effectually banished. The musical trickle and splash of the tiny waterfalls is in your ear as, book in hand, or lost in the rare luxury of an undisturbed day-dream, you saunter on. Half-hidden recesses appear, where great fronds of foreign ferns show strangely in the 'dim religious light'—'beautiful silence all around, save wood bird to wood bird calling.' Out of the sad, sordid, struggling world, far from its maddening discords and despair-tragedies, your soul seems to recognise a purer, more sublimated mental atmosphere, nearer in every sense to the empyrean, and freed from the lower needs of this house of clay. A half-sigh of regret tells of fair visions fled, even though you emerge on the lower, wider lawns gay with ribbon-borders and yet brighter flower-fantasies in newer unfolding beauty. 428

For lo! in this region of glamour and the long-lost kingdom of the sorcerer, the wandering knight has fallen upon a fresh enchantment. Proudest of all the engineering triumphs, the prize must be accorded to the lakelet which glitters in the lower grounds. How the calm water sleeps beneath the heavy foliage of the farther shore! How the shadows reflect the tracery of the willow tresses, the feathery shafts of the bamboo clump! How freshly green the bordering turf! There is even an island and a wooded promontory. More than all—or do my eyes deceive me?—a shallop, light as that in which

> The maiden paused as if again
> She thought to catch the distant strain;
> With head upraised and look intent,
> And eye and ear attentive bent.

By my halidome! stands she not therein—the 'Ladye of the Lake' herself,—fair as her prototype, though modernly arrayed, gracefully poising her light oar. With a smile that might lure an archangel she beckons us to embark with her on this magical mirrored water, under the charmed shadows of the golden summer eve.

Surely all this is a dream. It cannot be but illusion. We shall wake on the morrow, or next week at the farthest, to feel again the hot dust-blast as we ride across the desert plain at midnight, to mark the red moon glaring wrathfully upon the pale-hued, ghostly myall tree, that sighs despair amid the death-stricken waste.

Even so. Yet let us dream on and be happy, if but for a little space. Glide smoothly, O bark; shine tenderly, O stars, soft glimmering through the o'erhanging, rustling leafage; fan this sun-bronzed cheek, O whispering breeze, this careworn brow, till each fevered pulse be cooled. Short is our mortal span at most. How weary distant the ever-lengthening goal! But wherever Fate may guide, however stern the fray, how faint soe'er our footsteps in the onward march, this fair remembrance shall have power to refresh and reanimate our soul.

Yet another joy ere the evening, bright with songs and music, with cheerful converse and pleasant reminiscence, comes to an end. We sit amid the happy household group on the broad verandah-balcony, inhaling the cool night air, and watching the wondrous effects of light and shade produced by the late arisen moon. Masses of shrubbery stand picturesquely gloomed against the moonlit lawns; odours of invisible flowers pervade the still, pure atmosphere. Opaque as to their lower bulk, the turreted tree-tops stand in clearest illumination to their most delicate leafage against the cloudless firmament. There is no wind or any faintest breeze to stir the tenderest leaflet. All nature is so still that the tinkling murmur of the tiny rivulets, which thread the lawns and flower-beds, falls distinctly on the ear. In faint but rhythmic cadence they drip and ripple, gurgle and splash, the summer night through. The flowers in the near foreground alone border on individuality. Rose clusters and a few lily spikes are recognisable. Unlike their human kalotypes, they await the dawn to recommence their fascination. And then, in calmest contemplation, or enjoyment of low-toned interchange of thought, ends the restful, happy day. On the lower levels, in the country towns and around the metropolis, as we were subsequently assured, it was felt to be sultry and oppressively heated, while on these happy heights of Darraweit—the Simla of Victoria—the air was at once cool and fragrant, subtly exhilarating as the magic draught which renews the joys of youth. 429

Only a month to midsummer—A.D. 1883—when on this verge of the great north-western plain-ocean we fall across a section of the railway to Bourke in course of construction. Nature is here hard beset by Art. What a mighty avenue has the contractor's army cut through the primeval forest! The close-ranked trees taper, apparently, to nothingness until the horizon is reached. In the twelve miles that your sight reaches, there is not the smallest curve—no departure from the mathematically straight line. If you could see a hundred and twenty miles, you would find none greater than is visible now; for this avenue is something over that length, and is said by railway men to be one of the longest 'pieces of straight' in the world.

The still incompleted work is even now being ministered to with the strong, skilled hands of hundreds of men. All the same, the inspecting overseer is a necessary personage in the interests of the State. He it is who descries 'a bit of slumming,' however minute; who arrests progress, lest bolts be driven instead of screwed; who compels 'packing' and other minute but important details upon which the safety of the travelling public depends.

How efficiently is man aided by his humbler fellow-creatures, whom, for all that, he does by no means adequately respect or pity. See those two noble horses on their way to be hooked-on to a line of trucks! They are grand specimens of the Australian Clydesdale—immense creatures, highly fed, well groomed, and, it would appear, well trained.

They have no blinkers, and from the easy way in which, unled, they step along the edge of the embankment, where there is but a foot-wide path, lounging through the navvies without pausing or knocking against anybody, they seem fully to comprehend the peculiarities of railway life. They are attached by chains hooked to the axles of two of the six trucks, weighing some fifty or sixty tons, which require to be moved. Once in motion, of course, the draught is light, but the incline is against them, and the dead pull required to start the great weight is no joke. At the word they go into their collars with a will, the near horse, a magnificent dark bay, almost on his knees, and making the earth and metal fly at the side of the rails in his tremendous struggle to move the load. He strains every muscle in his powerful frame gallantly, unflinchingly, as if his life depended upon the task being performed and all at a word; he is neither touched nor guided.

> He knew his duty a dead sure thing,
> And went for it then and there.

His comrade lacks apparently the same high tone of feeling, for his efforts are stimulated by an unjustifiable expression on the part of the driver, and a bang on the ribs with a stout wattle. The line of trucks moves, however; then glides easily along the rails. When the end of the 'tip' is reached both horses stop, are released, walk forward a few paces, and stand ready for the next feat of strength and handiness. This happens to be pay-day on the line, which agreeable performance takes place monthly. The manner of personal remuneration I observe to be this: the paymaster and his assistant, with portentous, ruled pay-sheets, take their seats in a trench. The executive official carries a black leather bag, out of which he produces a number of sealed envelopes variously endorsed.

Different sections are visited, and the men are called up one by one. Small delay is there in handing over the indispensable cash. 91. William Jones, £9: 12s.; 90. Thomas Robinson, £9: 4s., one day; 89. John Smith, £8: 16s., two days. Smith acquiesces with a nod, signifying that he is aware that the two days during which he was, let us say, indisposed after the last pay-day have been recorded against him, and the wage deducted. There is no question apparently as to accuracy of account. The envelopes are stuffed into trouser-pockets, mostly without being opened. A few only inspect their contents, and gaze for a second upon the crisp bank-notes and handful of silver. Some of the sums thus paid are not small—gangers and other minor officials receiving as much as twelve and thirteen shillings a day; the ordinary pick and shovel men, eight. Overtime is paid for extra, which swells the amount received. One payment for fencing subcontractors exceeded eighty pounds. Sixteen hundred pounds, all in cash, came out of the superintendent's wallet that day.

I noticed the men for the most part to be under thirty, many of them almost boyish in appearance. They were cleanly in person, well dressed and neat for the work they have to do, well fed, and not uncomfortably lodged considering the mildness of the climate. One and all they show grand 'condition,' as is evidenced by the spread of shoulder, the development of muscle, with the lightness of flank observable in all. As to nationality they are pretty evenly divided; the majority are British, but an increasing proportion of native-born Australians is observable, I am told. With regard to pre-eminence in strength and staying power the home-bred English navvy chiefly bears the palm, though I also hear that the 'ringer' in the pick and shovel brigade is a Hawkesbury man, of Cornish parents, a total abstainer, and an exemplary workman.

With such a monthly outflow of hard cash over a restricted area, it may be imagined what a trade is driven by boarding-house keepers and owners of small stores. The single men take their meals at these rude restaurants, paying from 18s. to £1 per week. The married men live in tents or roughly-constructed huts in the 'camps' nearest to their work.

I fear me that on the day following pay-day, and perhaps some others, there is gambling and often hard drinking. The money earned by strenuous labour and strict self-denial during the month is often dissipated in forty-eight hours. The boarding-house keepers are popularly accused, rightly or wrongly, of illegally selling spirits. Doubtless in many instances they do so, to the injury of public morals and the impoverishment of the families of those who are unable to resist the temptation. A

heavy penalty is always enforced when proof is afforded to the satisfaction of justice; but reliable evidence of this peculiar infraction of the law is difficult to obtain, the men generally combining to shield the culprits and outswear the informer. 433

A few miles rearward is the terminus of this iron road that is stretching so swiftly across the 'lone Chorasmian waste.' Here converge caravans from the inmost deserts. Hence depart waggon-trains bearing merchandise in many different directions. What a medley of all the necessaries, luxuries, and superfluities of that unresting, insatiable toiler, man! They lie strewed upon the platform, or heaped in huge mounds and pyramids under the lofty goods sheds. Tea and sugar, flour and grain, hay and corn, chaff and bran, machines of a dark and doubtful character connected with dam-making and well-sinking; coils of wire, cans of nails, hogsheads of spirits, casks of wine, tar, paint, oil, clothing, books, rope, tools, windlasses, drums of winding gear, waggons, carts, and buggies all new and redolent of paint and varnish; also timber and woolpacks, and, as the auctioneer says, hundreds of articles too numerous to mention. What a good customer Mr. Squatter is, to be sure, while there is even the hope of grass, for to him are most of these miscellaneous values consigned, and by him or through him will they be paid for.

We are now outside of agriculture. The farmer, as such, has no abiding-place here. That broad, dusty trail leads, among other destinations, to the 'Never Never' country, where ploughs are not, and the husbandman is as impossible as the dodo.

Perhaps we are a little hasty in assuming that everything we see at the compendious depôt is pastorally requisitioned. That waggon that creaks wailingly as it slowly approaches, with ten horses, heavy laden though apparently empty, proclaims yet another important industry. Look into the bottom and you will see it covered with dark red bricks, a little different in shape from the ordinary article. On a closer view they have a metallic tinge. They are *ingots of copper*, of which some hundreds of tons come weekly from the three mines which send their output here. As for pastoral products, the line of high-piled, wool-loaded waggons is almost continuous. As they arrive they are swiftly unloaded into trucks, and sent along a special side-line reserved for their use. Flocks of fat sheep and droves of beeves, wildly staring and paralysed by the first blast of the steam-whistle, arrive, weary and wayworn. At break of day they are beguiled into trucks, and within six-and-thirty hours have their first (and last) sight of the metropolis. 434

In the meantime herds of team-horses, bell-adorned, make ceaseless, not inharmonious jangling; sunburnt, bearded teamsters, drovers, shepherds, mingled with navvies, travellers, trim officials, tradesfolk, and the usual horde of camp-followers, male and female, give one the idea of an annual fair held upon the border of an ancient kingdom before civilisation had rubbed the edges from humanity's coinage, and obliterated so much that was characteristic in the process.

I stood on the spot an hour before daybreak on the following morn. Hushed and voiceless was the great industrial host. Around and afar stretched the waste, broadly open to the moonbeams, which softened the harsh outline of forest thicket and arid plain. The stars, that mysterious array of the greater and the lesser lights of heaven, burned in the cloudless azure—each planet flashing and scintillating, each tiny point of light 'a patine of pure gold.' The low croon of the wild-fowl, as they swam and splashed in the river-reach, was the only sound that caught the ear. Glimmering watch-fires illumined the scattered encampment. For the moment one felt regretful that the grandeur of Night and Silence should be invaded by the vulgar turmoil of the coming day.

One of the aids to picturesque effect, though not generally regarded as artistic treatment, is the clearing and formation of roads through a highland district. Such a region is occasionally reached by me, and never traversed without admiration. The ways are surrounded by wooded hills, some of considerable altitude, on the sides and summits of which are high piled

rocks, confusedly hurled,
The fragments of an earlier world.

But here the road-clearing, rarely supplemented by engineering disfigurement, produces the effect of a winding, thickly-grown avenue. On either side stand in close order the frenelas, casuarinas, and eucalypts of the forest primeval, with an occasional kurrajong or a red-foliaged, drought-slain callitris, 'like to a copper beech among the greens.' The floor of this forest-way is greenly carpeted with the thick-growing spring verdure, a stray tiny streamlet perhaps crossing at intervals, while leaflets of the severed saplings are bursting through in pink or dark-red bunches. In the far distance rises a dark-blue range, towering over the dim green ocean of forest, and marking the contrast sharply between the land of hill and dale and the monotonous levels of the lower country. 435

With all the capriciousness of Australian seasons the springtime of this year has shown a disposition to linger—waving back with grateful showers and dew-cooled nights and mornings the too impatient summer. Still is the grass brightly green of hue, the flower unfaded. The plague of dust has been stayed again and again by the welcome rainfall. There has never been more than one day when the winds have risen to a wintry bleakness. But who recks of so trifling a discomfort from such a cause, and will not King Sol be avenged upon us ere Christmastide be passed—ere the short, breezeless nights of January are ended?

What contrasts and discrepancies Dame Nature sanctions hereabouts in the formation of her feathered families! That soaring eagle, so far above us heavenward, in the blue empyrean, how true a monarch among birds is he! Now he stoops, circling lower and yet lower still, with moveless outstretched pinion and searching gaze that blenches not before the sun's fiercest rays. The tiny blue-throated wren perches fearlessly near, and hops with delicate feet from stone to stone amid the sheltering ferns. That downy white-breasted diver, a ball of feathers in the clear pool of the mountain streamlet, now with a ripple become invisible—the devoted pelican, with sword-like beak

and pouch of portentous dimensions. Lo! there sits he with his fellows by the edge of a shallowing anabranch, or revels with them in the evil days of drought upon the dying fish which in hundreds are cast upon the shore. As I tread the homeward path, the skylark springs upward from the waving grass; trilling his simple lay, he mounts higher and yet higher, no unworthy congener, though inferior as a songster to his British namesake. In the adjacent leafless trees is a flight of gaunt, dark-hued, sickle-beaked birds. Travellers and pilgrims they, relatives of earth's oldest, most sacred bird races. Behold a company of the ibis from far far wilds. Their presence here is ominous and boding. They are popularly supposed to migrate coastwards only when the great lakes of the 436
interior begin to fail. This, however, is not an unfailing test of a dry season, as in long-dead summers I have had occasion to note. They are not too dignified, in despite of their quasi-sacred hierophantic traditions, to eat grasshoppers. As these enemies alike of farmers and squatters are now despoiling every green thing, let us hope that the ibis contingent may have appetites proportioned to the length of their bills and the duration of their journey. A white variety of the species is occasionally noted, but he is rare in comparison with the darker kind.

By the creek bank, in the early morn, the well-remembered note of the kingfisher, so closely associated with our youth, sounds close and clear. Yonder he sits upon the dead limb of the overhanging tree—greenish blue, purple-breasted as of yore. Stonelike he plunges into the deep pool, reappearing with a small fish or allied water-dweller. More beautiful is his relative the lesser kingfisher, metallic in sheen, with crimson breast—flashing like a feathered gem through the river shades, or burning like a flame spot against the mouldering log on which he sits. Of palest fawn colour, with long black filament at the back of his head, that graceful heron, the 'nankeen bird' of the colonist, is also of the company; the white-necked, dark-blue crane, and that black-robed river pirate the cormorant. While on the bird question, surely none are more delicately bright, more exquisitely neat of plumage and flawless of tone, than the Columba tribe. Ancient of birth are they as 'the doves from the rocks,' and principally for their conjugal fidelity have been honoured, by the choice of Mr. Darwin, as exemplars in working out experiments connected with the origin of species. In western wanderings I find five varieties of the pigeon proper. The beautiful bronze-wing, the squatter, and the crested pigeon. Besides these, two varieties of the dove are among the most exquisitely lovely of feathered creatures. Both are very small—one scarcely larger than a sparrow. The 'bronze-wing' is too well known to need description. The 'squatter pigeon' is a plainer likeness, with a spot of white on either cheek, and, as its name implies, is unwilling to fly up, being struck down occasionally with the whip or a short throwing stick in the act of rising. The crested pigeon, the most graceful and attractive of the family, is from its tameness and extreme cleanliness of habit 437
most suitable for the aviary. In colouring, the breast is a delicate slate-grey tinged with faintest pink as it rises towards the wing muscles, the front wings barred with dark, pencilled cross-lines, the larger feathers of the extremities a burnished green, and the last row having feathers of a vivid dark pink or crimson. A crest and elongated pointed tail give character and piquancy to the whole appearance. As they fly up, a whirring noise, not unlike that of the partridge, is heard. When the male bird swells his chest and lowers his wings in defiance or ostentation, he produces a sound not unlike that of his long-civilised congener. They will lay and hatch in captivity, and I observed in an aviary one of the females sitting on her eggs complacently in a herring tin.

FROM TUMUT TO TUMBERUMBA

It was rather too far to walk this time; besides, the days are shortening. From Tumut to Tumberumba is forty-five miles all out, and a bad road. At breakfast-time we had no earthly idea of how or where to get a horse. A friend in need tided over that difficulty. So, mounted upon a clever mountain-bred hackney, we cleared the town about 9.30 A.M., and headed for the Khyber Pass (in a small way), up which the road winds south-easterly. The time was short, but we meant going steadily, if not fast, all through, and trusted, as we have done 'with a squeeze' full many a time and oft before, to 'save the light.'

Buggies are comfortable vehicles when roads are good and horses fresh. You can carry your 'things' with you, and, in cases of entertainments, come out with more grandeur and effect than if on horseback. But give me the saddle, 'haud juventutis immemor.' It brings back old times; and certainly for people whose appearance is in danger of being compromised by a tendency to increased weight, riding is the more healthful exercise. Besides, one always feels as if adventures were possible to cavaliers. Wheels circumscribe one too narrowly. You must start early. You had better not drive late. Your stopping-places must be marked and labelled as it were. You are *affiché*, for good or evil.

Now, once started on a fine morning, on a good horse, a 'lazy ally' feeling seems to pervade the 438
surroundings and the landscape. If you meet wayside flowers, you may linger to gather them. You may avail yourself of chance invitations, secure that you can 'pull up time' late or early. As you sail away, if your horse walks well and canters easily (as does this one), you insensibly think of 'A day's ride, a life's romance.' Is that romance yet over? It may be. We are 'old enough to know better.' But still we were quite sure when we started that we should meet with an adventure or two.

First of all, we saw two young people in a buggy, driving towards the mountain land which lay eastward in a cloud-world. There was something in the expression of their backs as they passed us which suggested an early stage of the Great Experiment. The bride was fair, with, of course, a delicate complexion—that goes without saying in this part of the world. The bridegroom was stalwart and manly looking. Presently we were overtaken by another young lady of prepossessing appearance, with two attendant cavaliers, well mounted and evidently belonging to the same party. Bound for some miles along the same lonely but picturesque road, we asked permission to join the party, and fared on amicably. Together we breasted the 'Six-Mile Hill,' and at length emerged upon the alpine plateau, which for many miles lies between the towns before mentioned.

Here the scene changed—the climate, the soil, the timber, the atmosphere. Eastward lay the darkly-brooding Titans of Kiandra, snow-capped and dazzling, the peaks contrasting with their darksome rugged sides, the blue and cloudless sky. Beneath our feet, beside and around us, lay the partially-thawed snow of Saturday's fall, in quantities which would have delighted the hearts of certain children of our acquaintance.

Snow in the abstract, 'beautiful snow,' is a lovely nature-wonder, concerning which many things have been sweetly sung and said. But in the concrete, after a forty-eight hours' thaw, it is injurious to roads, in that it causes them to be 'sloppy' and in a sense dangerous to horse and rider. Given a red, soapy soil, somewhat stony, sticky, and irregularly saturated, it must be a very clever steed, the ascents, descents, and sidelings being continuous, that doesn't make a mistake or two. All the same, 439
the girl on the well-bred chestnut horse kept sailing away, up hill, down hill, and along sidelings steep as the roof of a house; the whole thing (to quote Whyte-Melville) 'done with the graceful ease of a person who is playing upon a favourite instrument while seated in an armchair.' We kept in sight the second detachment, coming up in time to bid farewell as they turned off to the residence of the bride's family, where there was to be a dance in celebration of the auspicious event. We separated with my unspoken benison upon so promising a pair.

The wedding guests having departed, we paced on for half-a-dozen miles until a break in the solemn forest, like a Canadian clearing, disclosed the welcome outline of the half-way hostelry. Here were there distinct traces of the austerity of the patriarch Winter, so mild of mien on the lower levels. Half a foot of snow lay on the roofs of barn and stable, while the remnant of a gigantic snow-image, reduced to the appearance of a quartz boulder, lay in front of the house.

A bare half-hour for refection was all that could be spared here, and as our steed ate his corn with apparently the same zest that characterised our consumption of lunch, it was time well spent. Boot and saddle again.

'But first, good mine host, what is the exact distance? The sun is low; the road indifferent rough; the night unfriendly for camping out.'

'Fifteen mile if you take the "cut"; eighteen by the road, every yard of it.'

'We mistrust short "cuts,"' say we, consulting the watch, which indicates 3.30 P.M.; 'they have lured us into difficulties ere now. But three miles make a tempting deduction from the weary end of the journey. We cannot miss it. Thanks; of that I am aware. Turn to the left, opposite the second house, cross the creek, turn to the right, and follow straight on.'

Of course. Just so. The old formula. How many a time have we cursed it and the well-intentioned giver, by all our gods, when stumbling, hours after, trackless, over an unknown country in darkness and despair. Reflected that by merely following the high road we should have been warmly housed, cheered, and fed long before. However, unusual enterprise or the mountain air induces us to try the short cut aforesaid; only this time, of course, we turn to the left, and immediately perceive ('facilis 440
descensus Averni') that the path leads into a tremendous glen, with sides like the roof of a house. We dismount, as should all prudent riders not after cattle, and lead down our active steed. At the

foot of the cañon is a hurrying, yellow-stained mountain stream. Dark-red bluffs, undermined and washed to the gravel, exposed in all directions. 'Worked and abandoned' is plainly visible to the eye of the initiated upon the greater portion of the locality; but still lingering last are miners' cottages and a garden here and there. Children, of course. Ruddy of hue and sturdy, they abound like the fruits of a colder clime in these sequestered vales.

'What is the name of this—place?' say we guardedly to a blue-eyed boy, good-humouredly nursing a fractious baby.

'Upper Tumberumba,' he returns answer proudly.

'And the road to the town?'

'Cross the creek and follow down for six mile, and there you are.'

The road on the far side of the violent little creek follows that watercourse, and is fairly made. Bridges are the main consideration, for there seem to be *trois cent milles* water-races, some too deep to fall into scathless; and 'beauty born of murmuring sound' must be plentiful, judging from the rushing, gushing, leaping, and tumbling waters before and around us.

This is a land of sluices, of head-races and tail-races, evidently, where 'first water' and 'second,' dam sites, and creek claims, with all the unintelligible phraseology of 'water diverted from its natural course for gold-mining purposes,' were once in high fashion and acceptance. As the short winter day darkens without warning, we trust that the bridges are sound, more especially as we have just cantered over one with a hole in it as big as a frying-pan.

One advantage secured by our adoption of the 'cut' is patently that of drier footing, the which causes our steed to amble with cheerfulness and alacrity. The night comes on apace, but there is still sufficient light to distinguish the roadway from obstacles and pitfalls. When the well-known sound of the water-mill breaks the stillness, light and voices betray the proximity of a township, and Tumberumba proper is reached.

When we quit Tumberumba in the early morn for the return journey to Tumut, the air is charged 441
with vapour, the mists lie heavily upon the hills. The low grey sky, the drizzle and the damp which pervade all nature, suggest 'The Lewis' or other Hebridean region. One can fully realise the sort of weather chiefly prevailing when the King of Bora uttered his pathetic farewell 'to his little Sheilah,' returning to his desolate dwelling alone, to distract himself as best he might with the company of the simple (but not vulgar) fishermen and a reasonable consumption of alcohol.

This opens up to the contemplative mind the whole vast 'Grief Question, and how people bear it.' What volumes might be written about the sorrows of the bereaved, the forsaken men or women! —'all the dull, deep sorrow, the constant anguish of patience.' How the slow torture drags on, varied only by pangs of acute mental pain—the throbs, the rackings, the utterly unendurable torment—what time the agonised spirit elects to quit its earthly tenement and face the dread unknown, rather than longer suffer the too dreadful present! So the soldier, captured by Indians, shoots himself to escape the inevitable torture. Also in this connection regarding anodynes, distractions, solaces, and medicaments, the which can be used harmlessly by one class of patients, but in no wise by others.

'An early start makes easy stages,' saith the seer. So it comes to pass that soon after mid-day we find ourselves at the Bago Cabaret, after which we incontinently dismount, fully minded to bait, after four or five hours' battling with the stony, sticky, slippery sidelings of the track. The good horse well deserves a feed. Also, thanks to the keenness of the atmosphere, we experience a steady prompting towards luncheon.

The horse is led away, and in the parlour we find a fire, a welcome, and agreeable society. We learn that the wedding dance duly took place, well attended, and a great success—our fair informants having been there and danced till daylight, after which they walked home a trifle of five miles, which, with snow still on the ground, showed, in our opinion, praiseworthy pluck and determination; a convincing proof, were any needed, that the Anglo-Saxon race has not 442
degenerated in this part of the world. 'The reverse if anything,' as the irascible old gentleman in the hunting-field made answer after a fall, when it was politely inquired of him 'whether he was hurt.'

But pleasures are like poppies spread—

fair yet fleeting in the very constitution of them; so an hour having quickly passed, much refreshed in sense and spirit, we tackle the twenty-six very long miles, in our estimation, which divide us from the fair Tumut Valley. Still lowers the day. The mists shut out the snow-crowned peaks. The forest is saturated with moisture, which ever and anon drops down like a shower-bath when the breeze stirs the leaves briskly. It is not a gala day, exactly. But oh, how good for the country!

What beneficent phenomena are the early and the latter rain! As we look downwards we can see thousands of tiny clover leaflets, none of your *Medicago sativa*, with its yellow flower and deadly burr, but the true, sweet-scented English meadow plant, fragrant in spring, harmless, fattening, and sustaining to a wonderful degree, whenever it can command the moisture which is its fundamental necessity of growth. In days to come, every yard of this grand primeval woodland will be matted with it and the best English grasses, not forgetting that prime exotic the prairie grass (*Bromus unioloides*).

We are not aware whether there has been an extensive forest reserve proclaimed hereabouts, but in the interests of the State there should be. These grand, pillar-like timber trees, straight as gun-barrels, a hundred feet to the lowest branch, the growth of centuries, should not be abandoned to

the bark-stripper, the ring-barker, the indiscriminate feller of good and bad timber alike. There is material here—gum, messmate, mountain ash, every variety of eucalyptus—to serve for the sawpits, the railway bridges, and sleepers of centuries to come, if properly guarded and supervised. And it behoves the elected guardians of the public rights to permit no private monopoly or forestalling; to see to the matter in time. For many an unremembered year have these glorious groves been slowly maturing. The carelessness of a comparatively short period may permit their destruction.

The eucalypts, as a family, have been subjected to undeserved contumely and scorn as trees which produce leaves but do not furnish shade, which are 'withered and wild in their attire' as regards 443
umbrageous covering. All depends upon the locality, the altitude, the consequent rainfall. Here the frondage is thick yet delicate in the older trees, while among the younger growth the habit is almost as dense and drooping as that of the *Acmena pendula*, which many of them resemble in the mass of pink-grey leafage. I notice, too, the beautiful blackwood or hickory of the colonists (*Acacia melanoxylon*), though not in great abundance nor of unusual size. Nothing, for instance, like the specimens near Colac, Western Victoria, or between Port Fairy and Portland. And scrutinising closely the different genera, we discovered a tree which bore a curious resemblance to a hybrid between the eucalyptus and the said blackwood. The leaves were thick, blunt-edged, and singularly like the blackwood. The bark was like that of the mimosa on the stem and branches, but roughened towards the butt. The blossom—for it was just out—was unmistakably that of the eucalyptus tribe. We had never met with the specimen before and it puzzled us. It is locally known as the 'water gum.' The true mimosa and the wild cherry (*Exocarpus cupressiformis*) were common—this last of no great size; the wild hop occasionally. The English briar was not absent—as to which we foresee, for this rich soil, trouble in the future.

Lonely and hushed—in a sense awful—is this elevated region. The solitude becomes oppressive as one rides mile after mile along the silent highway, nor sees nor hears a sign of life save the note of the infrequent wood-thrush or the cry of the soaring eagle. But lo! the ruins of an ancient stock-yard! Easily recognised as belonging to the hoar antiquity of a purely pastoral *régime*. The selector-farmers do not put up such massive corner posts or cyclopean gateways. Not for them and their slight enclosures is the rush of a hundred wild six-year-old bullocks, with a due complement of 'ragers,' given every now and again to carry a whole side of the yard away. This was the station stock-yard, doubtless, what time 'Bago Jemmy' and other stock-riders of the period acquired a colony-wide reputation for desperate riding (and equally hard drinking) amid these break-neck gullies and hillsides. They are gone; the wild riders, the wild cattle. Even the rails of the stock-yard have been utilised for purposes wide of their original intention. 'Their memorial is perished with 444
them,' all save the huge corner and gate-posts, which, embedded four feet in the ground, are regarded as difficult and expensive to remove, and of no particular use, ornament, or value when uprooted. So they remain, possibly to puzzle future antiquarians, like the round towers of the Green Isle.

IN THE THROES OF A DROUGHT

This is my last ramble for a while through the plains and forests of the North-West; would that it had been made under more pleasing circumstances. 'How shall I endure to behold the destruction of my kindred?' The quotation is apposite. All pastoralists are akin to me by reason of old memories; and if Rain comes not in this month of March, or even in April, their destruction, financially, seems imminent.

What a weary time it is in the 'plains dry country,' whither my wandering steps have strayed at present. Far as eye can see, there is no herb nor grass nor living plant amid the death-stricken waste; not even the hard-visaged shrub—the attenuated, closely-pruned twigs of the salsolaceous plant. Earlier in the season a large proportion of the stock were removed, and were agisted at a high cost. The remainder were left to live or die as the season may turn out. The station-holders have at length become reckless, and have ceased to take trouble about the matter.

How hard it seems! For years the energetic, sanguine pastoralist shall invest every pound he has made, and more besides, in stud animals of high value, in judicious improvements, from which he is reasonably certain in a few years to receive splendid interest for the capital invested. When his plans are matured, when the improvement of his stock is demonstrated, will not his fame redound to the furthest limits of Australia? Eventually he will be able to revisit or for the first time behold Europe. All imaginable triumphs will be his. Rich, fortunate, envied, he will be amply repaid for the toils, the sacrifices, the privations of his earlier years.

'Then comes a frost, a killing frost.' Well, not exactly that, though frosts of considerable severity do occur, hot as is the climate; but it 'sets in dry.' No rain comes after spring; none during summer; none in autumn; curious to remark, none even in winter—except, of course, insignificant or partial showers. That seems strange, does it not? Instead of from sixteen to twenty-six inches of rain in twelve months, there fall but six—even less perhaps. What is the consequence of all this? The creeks, the dams, the rivers dry up; the grass perishes; what little pasturage there may be, is eaten up by the famishing flocks. 445

During the summer it does not appear that the evil will be of such magnitude. The stock look pretty well. There is water; and the diet of dust, leaves, and sticks, with unlimited range, and no shepherds to bother, does not seem to disagree with them. Then the autumn comes, with shorter days; longer, colder nights. Still no rain! The sheep, the cattle, even the wild horses, begin now to feel the cruel pinch of famine. The weakest perish; the strong become weak; day by day numbers of the enfeebled victims are unable to rise after the weakening influences of the chilly night. The water-holes become muddy; defiled and poisoned with the carcases of animals which have had barely strength to drag themselves to the tempting water, over many a weary mile, have drunk their fill, and then lacked power to ascend the steep bank or extricate themselves from the clinging mud.

What a time of misery and despair is this for the luckless proprietor! He sees before his eyes the thousands and tens of thousands of delicately woolled sheep, in whose breeding and multiplication he has taken so much pains,—on behalf of which he has studied treatises, and gone into all the history of the merino family since the days of ancient Spanish Cabanas, Infantados, Escurials, what not,—converted into a crowd of feeble skeletons, perishing in thousands before his eyes without hope or remedy, save in the advent of rain, which, as far as appearances go, may come next year or the year after that.

Is it possible to imagine a condition more melancholy, more hopeless, more calculated to drive to suicide the hapless victim of circumstances, beyond his—beyond any man's control? It has had the effect ere now. The torturing doubt, the hope deferred, *has* resulted in the dread, irrevocable step. 446
And who can find it in his heart to condemn?

In a season like this, every one can realise the benefit of railways. How would these inland wastes be supplied were it not for the all-powerful steam-king? The dwellers hereabouts would scarcely have bread to eat; the necessaries of life would be enhanced in price; forage would be unattainable, except at prices which would resemble feeding them upon half-crowns. Talking to a teamster the other day about the signs of the times, I remarked that he and his comrades were compelled to carry quantities of forage with which to support their horses, while delivering loading.

'We'll have to carry a tank soon,' replied the tall, sun-bronzed Australian, 'if the season holds on this way. The water-holes are getting that low and choked up with dead stock as they're neither fit for man or beast to drink; and we lose horses too.'

'How is that?'

'Well, the heat, or the dust, or the rubbish in the chaff kills 'em. I can't rightly tell what it is; but these three teams lost five horses in one day—dropped down dead on that terrible hot Sunday.'

I did not wonder. There were the upstanding, well-conditioned Clydesdales walking along with their loads, gamely enough, but in a perfect cloud of dust. Above them the burning sun; around, the sandy, herbless waste. Different surroundings from those of the misty Northern Isles, from which their ancestors, near or remote, had come! Ponderous, heavy of hoof and hair, it seemed wonderful that they can do the work and travel the immense distances they do, under conditions so alien to their natural state. I inquired of their driver, himself an example of gradual adaptation to foreign habitude, whether the medium-sized, lighter-boned draught horses did not stand the eternal sun and drought better than their larger brethren. He thought they did. 'Wanted less food, and not so liable to inflammation or leg weariness.' I should be disposed to think that the Percheron horse, of which valuable breed several sires have lately been imported to Melbourne from Normandy, would be suitable for the long, hot, waggon journeys of the interior—a clean-limbed, active, spirited horse,

immensely powerful for his size, easily kept, and more likely 'to come again' after exceptional fatigue. But I know from experience that the Australian horse in *every class*, from the Shetland pony to the Shire, is the strongest, most active, and most enduring animal that the world can show. And I hesitate in the assertion that by any other horse can he be profitably superseded. 447

As one traverses the arid waste, from time to time a whirlwind starts up within sight; a sand-pillar raises itself, contrasting strangely with the clear blue ether. Darkly smoke-coloured, furiously plunging about the base, it gradually fines off into the upper sky if you follow it sufficiently long.

'People doubt,' said the Eastern traveller to his guide, 'what produces those sand-pillars which so suddenly appear before us.'

'There is *no doubt* about the matter, praise be to Allah!' quoth the Bedouin. 'It is perfectly well known, say our holy men, that they are (*Djinns*) evil spirits.'

Is it so? and do they come to dance exultingly amid the stricken waste, over ruined hopes, dying herds and flocks—to mock at the vain adventurer who deemed that he could alter natural conditions and wrest fame and fortune from the ungenial wilds? Who may tell? They can scarcely afford a good omen. The unimaginative boundary-rider regards them as a 'sign of a dry season.' More likely, one would say, they are its result. In a long-continued drought the production of dust must needs be favourable to the action of whirlwinds.

The oppressiveness of the summer is more felt in March, perhaps, than in any other month of the year. The hot weather has tired out the bodily power of resistance. One yearns and pines for a change; if it comes not, an intolerable weariness, a painful languor, renders life for all not in robust health hard indeed to bear. Gradually relief arrives in the added length and coolness of the nights. Rain does not come, but the mosquitoes disappear. The dawn is almost chilly; the system is refreshed and invigorated. With the first heavy fall of rain a decided change of temperature takes place. In those happier sections of the continent, where this is the first cool month, the weather is all that can be wished. 'Ces jours cristals d'automne,' so much beloved by Madame de Sevigné at Petits Rochets, are reproduced. The friendly fireside—emblem of domestic happiness—awaits but 448
the first week of April to be once more kindled. The plough is seen again upon the fallow fields. The birds chirp, as if with fresh hope, from the reviving woodlands. Nothing is needed but a rainfall for the full happiness of man and his humbler fellow-creatures. May His mercy, so often shown at sorest need, not fail us now!

From what road-reports come across me, I gather that typhoid fever is no infrequent visitor when the water becomes scarce, when sources are polluted, and the carcases of the rotting stock lie strewed over larger areas. Medical men seem to be at odds about the generation of this dire disease. Fever germs, bacilli, bacteria, water pollution, direct contagion,—all seem to have their advocates. It seems probable that towards the end of a drought the very air, uncleansed by shower and storm, becomes charged with disease germs. As to water pollutions, sometimes the disease is at its fiercest before a heavy fall of rain, to disappear almost magically afterwards. At other times the rain seems to intensify the epidemic. The dry air of the interior, however hot, has always been thought to be antagonistic to the disease. It has not proved so of late years. Occasionally there is an outbreak of exceptional virulence in some particular locality; but nothing has hitherto been elicited as to the special conditions tending to produce or to aggravate the disease.

At and around Bourke matters seem approaching a crisis. Much of the 'made' water on the back blocks has failed of late, and the stock have been brought into the 'frontage,' there to drink their fill, doubtless, but to be utterly deprived of food as represented by the ordinary herbage. If rain does not come within a month, dire destruction, worse and more extensive than in any previous drought, *must* take place; and yet since 1866 I have so often heard the same prediction, and it was *never* fulfilled. In the meantime man can do nought but hope and pray, if faith be his in the Divine Disposer of events. In days to come, a comprehensive system of water supply may alleviate much suffering and prevent misfortune; but though water may be secured and stored, the sparse herbage of the boundless plain, the red-soiled forest, cannot be so treated. Unless the rainfall be timely in these far solitudes, no human energy or forecast can avert disaster.

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A SPRING SKETCH

In the saddle once more, and away for a week's journeying o'er the wide Australian Waste! The springtime is again with us. The clouds have dispensed their priceless moisture, albeit not all too generously. The level sun-rays shine clear over leagues of bright-hued turf and greenwood free. The pale, dawn-streaked azure was cloudless; the morning air keenly crisp. All nature is now jubilant. The voice of Spring, faint in tone but wildly sweet, is audible to the lover of nature. The cry of birds, the rustling leaves in the tall trees that shade the winding river, and the green waste of dew-besprinkled herbage, awaken thoughts of long-dead years—of the season of youth—of the lost Aïdenn of the heart's freshness.

That Paradise we shall regain nevermore, ah me! But we must do our devoir as best we may in these days of the aftertime. Many a mile must be passed before nightfall, and we are a little short of time as usual; but our steed is fleet and free, the livelong day is before us, and the experienced cavalier can cover a long long stretch of woodland and plain before latest twilight without distressing the good horse either.

So we follow the winding waggon-tracks at only a moderate pace; observing as we go, in plant-and bird-life, floweret and herb, visible signs of development since our last acquaintance with them. The beautiful bronze-winged pigeon flits shyly through the thickets to her nest with its two white eggs, not unlike those of the tame congener. In the brook-ponds or marshy shallows the blue heron, the pied ibis, and the white spoonbill are wading or lounging, with the listless elegance of their tribe. The gigantic 'brolgan' or 'Native Companion,' tallest of Australian cranes, is to be seen in companies, ever and anon mirthfully conversing or 'dancing high and disposedly' before his ranked-up comrades.

For all manner of wild-fowl this is the 'close season.' Marauding teamsters, and others who should know better, now and then disregard the law; but on the whole the statute is enforced. A season of rest permits the black duck and the wood-duck, that smallest and most elegant of geese (for such is the *Anas boscha* in scientific nomenclature), the shoveller, the teal, the imposing mountain-duck, to 450
rear their broods in peace.

While we are environed by that darksome eucalyptus, the sombre 'iron-bark' of the colonists, the mournful balāh, and the cypress-seeming pine, no token of the advancing spring greets us. 'A fringe of softer green' may brighten the pine wood, but as yet the touch of the magician's wand is unheeded. But as we speed towards the noonday, and the great plains of the North-West spread limitless before us, the frondage changes. The monotony of the endless champaign is broken by clumps and belts of timber. And amid these welcome oases of leafage might a botanist hold revel and delight his inmost soul. There is a sprinkling of casuarina and pine, but these copses are crowded with new and strangely-beautiful shrubs. First in pride of place comes the wilgah, or native willow, a brightly-green umbrageous tree, with a short upright stem and drooping salicene festoons, evenly cropped at the precise distance that the stock can reach from the ground. There are few lawns or meadows in Britain that would not be improved by the transplantation of the wilgah from these untended gardens of the wild. The mogil (native orange) is a dense-growing shrub, not wholly unlike the prince of fruit- and flower-bearers; to complete the resemblance, it is possessed of a fruit resembling in appearance only, faintly perhaps in perfume, the European original. The leopard-tree, with spotted bark, has for a comrade the beef-wood, with blood-red timber, almost bleeding to the remorseless axe. The glaucous-foliaged myall, 'intense and soulful-eyed,' with its swaying arms and drooping habit, looks like a tree out of its mind. It boasts, with its more sturdy cousin, the yarran, a strangely-powerful violet perfume. These, with thorn acacias and delicate fringed-leaved mimosas, seem ready to burst into flower with the next calm tropical day. An early-blooming acacia has made a commencement; a shower of fresh, golden sprays illumines its tender greenery.

Here our pretty, pink-legged, pink-eyed flock-pigeons, with their crests raised, and their pointed tails elevated as they perch, rejoin us. The grey and crimson galāh parrots are still numerous. They have surely delegated their nursery duties. They must pair and multiply, but, like fashionable parents, manage to enjoy the pleasures of society notwithstanding.

The day is still young. The great flocks of merino sheep, running loose in paddocks enclosed only by 451
wire fences, have not arisen to commence their daily round of nibbling. About five thousand are encamped near the corner of an intersecting gate. Near them are the remnants of a leading aboriginal family, in the shape of twenty or thirty 'red forester' kangaroos, popularly called 'soldiers.' These curiously-coloured marsupials are so bright of hue that one wonders whether they gradually acquired the colour (*pace* Darwin) so as to assimilate with the red earth of the plains over which they bound. They do not trouble themselves to go far out of my way—they simply depart from the road; and in calmly crossing a track one of the flying does 'takes off' a yard before she comes to it, and clearing the whole breadth without an effort, sends herself over about twenty feet without disturbing her balance.

Early as the season is, long trains of wool-waggons, drawn by bullocks or horses, are slowly crossing the plains. They carry from thirty to fifty bales each, much skill of its kind being required to secure the high-piled loads in position. At one rude hostelry I counted not less than twelve bullock-waggons so laden. The teams—at that moment unyoked, and feeding in a bend of the creek, from fourteen to eighteen in each—made up a drove of nearly two hundred head. Their bells sound like the chimes of a dozen belfries, pealing in contest. On the waggons, drawn up with shafts towards the railway terminus, were, say, four hundred bales of wool, representing a value of not less than six thousand pounds. Each bale bore in neat legend the brand of the station, with the weight, number, and class thereon imprinted, as 'J.R., Swan Creek—No. 1120—First combing.'

The last month enjoyed at least one sufficing fall of rain, not less than two inches by the rain-gauge. It is hard to cause these salsiferous wastes 'to blossom like the rose'; but a result closely analogous invariably follows rainfall. Along the watercourses, the alluvial flats and horseshoe 'bends' are ankle high with wild trefoil and quick-springing grasses. The cotton-bush and salt-bush, perennial fodder plants often most 'wild and withered' of attire even when fairly nutritious to the flocks, put forth shoots and spikelets of a tender appearance. All Nature, strange as her vestments may be, under a southern sky, is full of the beauty and tenderness of the earth's jubilee, joyous Spring. 452

But surely we are impinging on the domain of the giant Blunderbore, falsely alleged to have been slain by the irreverent Jack, prototype of the modern 'larrikin' in his turbulent denial of authority. Yea, and yonder plain is his poultry-yard. Hither come his cochins and dark brahmas to be fed on corn as large as bullets, with tenpenny nails by way of tonic. They walk softly along, lowering their lofty heads to the earth, running too, occasionally, like dame Partlet, after a grasshopper, and diversifying their attitudes like Chanticleer. We count them, twenty-six in all, gigantic fowls able to pick the hat from your head. They are emus! See the quarry, and neither hound nor hunter! When, lo! from out the further belt of timber rides forth a band of horsemen. They are shearers, bound on a holiday excursion. The preceding day has been wet, and the supply of sheep consequently short. All are well mounted, and look picturesque as they burst into a sudden gallop, and every horse does its best to overtake the (figuratively) flying troop, now setting to for real work. The pace is too good for the majority; but one light weight, mounted on a long-striding chestnut, that probably has ere now carried off provincial prizes, is closing on the apteryx contingent. Another quarter of a mile—yes—no—by George!—yes. He has collared the leader; he crosses and recrosses the troop. Had he but a stockwhip or lasso he could wind either round one of the long necks so invitingly stretched. But he has proved the superior speed of his horse. Such a trial was said in old days to have sent to the training-stable one of Sydney's still quoted race-horses. There is no need to kill aimlessly one of the inoffensive creatures; and he pays an unconscious tribute to the modern doctrine of mercy by drawing off and rejoining his comrades.

Further still our roving commission has carried us; we have halted at the homestead of a great pastoral estate. A cattle-station in the days when small outlay in huts and yards was fitting and fashionable, now it has been 'turned into sheep,' as the phrase goes. A proprietor of advanced views has purchased the place, less for the stock than for the broad acres, and the improvement Genie has worked his will upon the erstwhile somnolent wilderness.

The change has been sweeping and comprehensive. The vast area of nearly half a million of acres 453
has been enclosed and subdivided by the all-pervading wire-fencing. A couple of hundred thousand merinos, with a trifle of forty thousand half-grown lambs, now graze at large, without a shepherd nearer than Queensland. A handsome, well-finished house stands by the artificial sheet of water, formed by the big dam which spans the once meagre 'cowall' or anabranch of the main stream.

A windmill-pump irrigates the well-kept garden, where oranges are in blossom and ripening their golden globes at the same time. Green peas and cauliflowers, maturing early, appeal to a lower æstheticism. The stables, the smithy, the store, the men's huts, the carpenter's shop, form a village of themselves; not a small one either.

A quarter of a mile northward, backed up by a dense clump of pines, stands the woolshed, an immense building with apparently acres of roofing and miles of battened floors, £5000 to £6000 representing the cost. It is now in full blast. We walk over with the centurion to whom that particularly delicate commission, the captaincy of 'the shed,' has been entrusted. It is by no means an ordinary sight. We ascend a few steps at the 'top' of the shed, and look down the centre aisle, where sixty men are working best pace, as men will only do when the pay is high, and each man receives all he can earn by superior skill or strength.

They are chiefly young men, though some are verging on middle age, and an old man here and there is to be seen. Scarcely any but born Australians are on the 'board,' as the section devoted to the actual shearing operation is termed. Though an occasional Briton or foreigner enters the lists, the son of the soil has long since demonstrated his superior adaptation to this task, wherein skill and strength are so curiously blended.

Watch that tall shearer half-way down the line. A native-born Australian, probably of the second or third generation, he stands six feet and half an inch, good measurement, in his stockings. His brawny fore-arm is bare to the elbow. Broad-shouldered, deep-chested, light-flanked, he would have delighted the eye of Guy Livingstone. You cannot find any man out of Australia who can shear a 454
hundred and fifty full-grown sheep in a day—as he can—closely, evenly, with wonderful seeming ease and rapidity. Like his horsemanship—a marvel in its way—it has been practised from boyhood, and, as with arts learned early in life, a perfection almost instinctive has resulted.

The shearers proper are all white men. The pickers-up and sorters of the fleece are a trifle mixed, the former being chiefly aboriginal blacks, some of the latter Chinamen. In the pressing demand for labour which obtains when a thousand sheds are at work, or preparing to shear, in the early spring months, over the length and breadth of the land, the inferior races find their opportunity.

A pound a week, lodging, and a liberal diet-scale, render the shearing season a kind of carnival for the proletariat, from the first fierce gleam of the desert sun in July, till the mountain snow-plains are cleared in January and February.

There are eight men at the wool-table—a broad, battened platform—on which the fleeces are spread, skirted, rolled up, and self-tied by an ingenious infolding knack, thrown into the wool-sorter's narrow pathway, and by him transferred to the separate bins of first and second combing, clothing, super, etc. The next stage carries them to the wool-presses, which somewhat complicated

machinery, aided by skilled and experienced labourers, turns out daily fifty to sixty neatest, compactest bales. Thence on trucks propelled to the dumping-press, an hydraulic ram-driven monster, which reduces them to less than half their former size, and hoops them with iron bands.

Waggon teams are in attendance at the dumping-sheds, and before sundown much of the wool that was on the sheep's backs at sunrise will be loaded up, or on the road to the railway terminus.

Even that bourne of the weary wayfarer by coach, and the dusty, bearded teamster, is shifting its position nearer and nearer annually to the great central wilderness. As I ride homeward, the tents of navvy gangs appear suddenly through the darkening twilight, in the midst of pine-wood and wilgah brakes. The muffled thunder of blasts is borne ever and anon through the rarely-vexed atmosphere, as the sandstone hills are riven. But the central plain once reached, no work but the shallow trench and the low embankment will be required for hundreds of miles.

In a few years the great pastoral estates will have their own railway platforms, within easy distance of the 'shed,' when possibly a tramway thence to the dumping-room will be a recognised and necessary 'improvement.' When that day comes, shearers and washers will arrive by train from the coast-range, or the 'Never Never' country; King Cobb will be deposed or exiled; 'Sundowners' will be abolished; and much of the romance and adventure of pastoral life will have fled for ever.

NEW YEAR'S DAY 1886

In the list of rambles, possible in the event of certain undefined conditions coming to pass, one fairly-original project has always commended itself to me. An overland tramp from Sydney to Melbourne in the garb and character of a swagman seemed to offer special inducements. Inexpensive as to wearing apparel and including a position not difficult to keep up, the idea suggested health, variety, and adventure. From such a standpoint all grades of society might be observed in new and striking lights.

Circumstances prevented me, during the present holiday season, from carrying out this plan in its entirety. Nevertheless I found myself, in company with the usual midsummer contingent of strangers and pilgrims, in the metropolis of the southern colony; like them in quest of the rare anodyne which deadens care and allays regret. And what a blessed and salutary change is this from the inner wastes, the sun-scorched deserts, whence some of us have emerged but recently! I am not going to cry down the Bush, the good land of spur and saddle, of manly endeavour and steadfast endurance, which has done so much for many of us; but after a long cruise it is conceded that every sailor-man, from foremost Jack to the Captain bold, needs a 'run ashore.' His health demands it; his morale is, in the long run, not deteriorated thereby. For analogous reasons those of us who dwell afar from the green coast-fringe, having perhaps more than our share of sunshine, require a sea change. Every bushman, gentle or simple, should compass an annual holiday, which I recommend him to pass, if possible, in the colony where he does *not* habitually reside.

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'Home-keeping youth have ever homely wit' is an aphorism which has been variously garbed. I endorse the dictum, with limitations. For the removal of that insidious mental fungus, provincial prejudice, there is no remedy like a moderate dose of travel.

Chief among the luxuries in the nature of Christmas gifts with which the wayfarer is presented on arrival in Melbourne may be reckoned an almost total immunity from the heat tyranny. The thermometer registers a scale usually associated with personal discomfort, but oppressiveness is neutralised by certain adjuncts of civilisation—lofty houses, cool halls, and shady trees. The ever-sighing sea-breeze—fair Calypso of the desert-worn Ulysses—invites to soft repose; while the prevalence of ice, as applied to the manufacture of comforting beverages, transforms thirst into a disguised blessing. The glare of the noonday sun, so harmful to the precious gift of sight, even to reason's throne, is here 'blocked,' to use the prevailing idiom of the week, by a hundred cunning devices. The marvels of capitalised industry, the results of science, the miracles of art, are daily displayed. Old friends, new books, freshly-coined ideas, strange sights, wonder-signs of all shades and hues, press closely the flying hours. The tired reveller sinks into dreamless rest each night, only to enter upon a fresh course of enjoyment and adventure with the opening morn.

I find myself following a multitude on one of the first days after arrival, not 'to do evil,' it may be humbly asserted, but to behold the Inter-Colonial Cricket Match. We step out past the Treasury and enter a side alley of Eden. The broad, asphalted walk leads through an avenue of over-arching elms —a close, embowered shade over which our enemy, the sun, has scant power. Anon we cross a winding streamlet, rippling through a gloom of fern-trees and a miniature tropical forest. There the thrush and blackbird flit unharmed, the moss velvet carpets the dark mould, and but a slanting sun-ray flecks the shadows from the close-ranked lofty exotics—'a place for pleading swain and whispering lovers made.' But the order of the day for all sorts and conditions of men and maids is plainly Richmond Park. Only a few deserters are seen from the ranks of the holiday-seeking army as we thread the leafy defiles. Presently we emerge upon the unshaded road which, through the Jolimont estate—erstwhile a Viceregal residence—conducts us to the Melbourne cricket-ground.

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Here, truly, is a sight for unaccustomed eyes. The great enclosure encircled by ornamental iron railings, larrikin proof, as I am informed, its level, close-shaved green a turf triumph and species of enlarged billiard-table as applied to cricket purposes. It is girdled by a ring of well-grown oaks and elms, through which the glossy-leaved Norfolk Island fig-trees, pushing their more lavish and intense foliage, communicate a southern tone.

I stand invested with the privileges of the pavilion, an imposing three-storeyed edifice, containing all necessary conveniences for the comfort of the athletes of the contest, as well as of their friends and well-wishers, who are in the proud position of members. The arrangements are liberal and comprehensive. Refreshment bars and luncheon tables, lavatories, dressing-rooms, billiards, and other palliatives are here provided, while on the western side are asphalted grounds, defended by wire netting, where the votaries of the racquet and tennis-ball display their skill. From the graduated tiers of seats in the lower or upper rooms, as well as from the roof itself, a perfect view of the game may be obtained; while on either side of the lawn, under cover or otherwise, full provision is made for the comfort of the gentler sex, always liberal in patronage of these popular contests. Around the remaining portions of the enclosure, and protected from the *profanum vulgus* by a high iron fence, accommodation is provided for the rank and file of the spectators, who, at a small cost, are admitted.

The hour is come and the man. Twelve o'clock has struck. New South Wales has won the toss. From the pavilion gate the manly form of Murdoch is seen to issue, cricket-armoured, with trusty bat in hand. He enters the arena amid general plaudits, followed by Alec Bannerman. Then forth file the eleven champions of Victoria, who spread themselves variously over the field. Palmer gives the ball a preliminary spin; Blackham stretches his limbs and stands ready and remorseless—a cricketer's fate—behind the wicket. The first ball is catapulted—swift speeding, with dangerous break. Murdoch 'pokes it to the off' or 'puts it to leg,' and the great encounter has commenced.

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Wonderful and chiefly comprehensible must it be to the uninitiated or the foreigner to mark the

rapt attention with which the performance is viewed by the thousands of all classes and ages who are now gathered around. Ten thousand people watch every flight of ball or stroke of bat with eager interest, with prompt, instructed criticism. Wonderful order, indeed a curious silence, for the most part, prevails. It is too serious a matter for light converse. The interchange of opinion is conveyed with bated breath; a narrow escape, to be sure, is noted with a sigh of relief; a hit with cheers and clapping of hands. When the fatal ball scatters the stumps, or drops into the hands of the watchful adversary, one unanimous burst of applause breaks from the vast assemblage. His Lordship the Bishop of Melbourne, who sits in one of the front seats watching the scene with an air compounded of interest and toleration, doubtless wishes that he could secure a congregation on great occasions so large, so deeply observant, so closely critical, so sincerely aroused. Doubtless his Lordship, conceding, with the kindly wisdom that distinguishes him, that the people must have their recreations, would admit that from no other spectacle could so many persons of all ranks and ages, and both sexes, derive so large an amount of innocent gratification.

The 'cricket is so good' that several days elapse before the perhaps somewhat too-protracted match is over. Heavy scoring on both sides in the first innings. An exciting finish on the fifth day wrests the chaplet temporarily from New South Wales. Victoria wins with three wickets to go down. But those who are willow-wise aver that if—ah me! those ifs—Spofforth and Massie had been there, the latter with the advantage of the matchless wicket, another tale might have been told—

From Fate's dark book a leaf been torn,
And Flodden had been Bannockbourne.

The bells have chimed on that fateful midnight when died the old year; the radiant stranger is a crowned king. In the forenoon we turn our steps westwards, and enter another of the parks with which this city has been generously endowed. A holiday-loving race, certes, are we Australians. Had 459
Victoria been a Roman province, her populace would have been regally furnished with *panem et circenses*, or known the reason why. With the eight hours' system, high wages, and frequent holidays, the working-man of the period, compared with his European brother, is an aristocrat. But here we are once more on the Flemington race-course, and of it, as of the Melbourne cricket-ground, we feel inclined to assert (*pace* Trollope) that it must be, in its way, the best in the world.

Much thoughtful care has been bestowed upon the grounds, the buildings, the adjuncts; much money spent since the old days, when it differed little from an ordinary cattle-paddock. And the results are bewildering. Whence this lovely lawn 'with verdure clad,' where, amid flowers and fountains, crowds of well-dressed people stroll and linger, protected as in their own gardens from inconvenient sound or sight? this broad, smooth terrace-promenade below the Stand? this immense edifice, where in sheltered comfort every stride of the race can be seen? these perfect arrangements for the protagonists—brute and human—in the Olympian games we have come to witness? Is this the place where often amid heat and dust, not infrequently under soaking showers, the same sports have been witnessed by the much-enduring crowd? or has the Eastern enchanter of our boyhood carried off the ancient race-course bodily, and replaced it with this garden of Armida?

If the surroundings are complete, and the concomitants exhilarating, the weather is delicious. All things have combined to make this first-born of the opening year a day of days. The unobtrusive sun is merely warm; the bright, blue sky softly toned by fleeting clouds; the sea-breeze whispers of the wave's cool marge and ocean caves.

'On such a day it were a joy to die,' and as in the first race—the 'Hurdle'—one beholds Sparke's rider pulling desperately at the chain-bit in his horse's mouth, as he fights madly for the lead, it appears but too probable that he is destined for the sacrifice. The violent chestnut, however, contrary to an established theory, does not run himself out, or smash his jockey. He retains the lead gallantly, and, with the exception of a perilous bang over the last hurdle, touches nothing. He wins the race from end to end, confounding the backers of Lady Hampden and Vanguard, the latter horse having carried a hurdle on his hocks for some distance, and so lost his very good show in the 460
race.

Archie wins the Bagot Plate, confirming his friends in their previous good opinion. Those, however, who backed him for 'the Standish' on the strength of it, are doomed to furnish another example of the 'you never can tell' theory, as he is therein beaten by Mr. Charles Lloyd's Chuckster. The remaining races are well contested, and many a good horse extends himself ere the Criterion Stakes, the last race on the programme, are won; but, curious to relate, one feels more interested in the people nowadays than in the horses. The pleasant walks and talks, which are possible in this equine paradise, detract from the keen interest with which formerly the possible winners were regarded. Even the luncheon at a friend's table (one of a series provided by the Management), with its accompaniments of smiles, champagne, and lightsome converse, takes its place as a principal event. Afternoon tea, not less pleasant in its way, succeeds; after which function the mass of handsomely-appointed equipages in the carriage enclosure begins to disintegrate, driving up singly to the side entrance. Whether the beer, presumably imbibed by the coachman, has got into the horses' heads, I am unable to state; but the latter prefer the use of their hind-legs temporarily. This effervescence, however, soon subsides. The four-in-hands depart. Carriage after carriage rolls away; their daintily-attired occupants are whirled off safely. *Nous autres* take the Flemington road, or fight for a railway seat; and a day of pleasure, marked with a white stone for some of us, comes cheerily to an end.

A DRY TIME

As I ride, as I ride,
With a full heart for my guide.

BROWNING.

The moon has waxed and waned, yet one may not, in 1883, recall with the poet

The lonesome October
Of a most immemorial year,

inasmuch as that month in these Southern wilds is for the most part a gleesome, companionable time, rich in flower-birth and fruit-promise. None the less, if the windows of heaven be not the sooner opened, the present year of our Lord will be aught but immemorial in the chronicles of the land.

Surely the blessed dews of heaven, the rain for which in these arid wastes all Nature cries aloud, will not long be denied. How clearly can we realise the force of the strong Saxon of the Vulgate, 'And the famine was sore in the land.'

Here now exists the same hopeless, long-protracted absence of all moisture which drove the Patriarch to 'travel' with his flocks and herds, viz. camels and she-asses, his sons and their families, from dried-out Canaan to the rich 'frontage' of the Nile. Here, as then, in that far historic dawn, is dust where grass grew and water ran. Strange birds crowd the scanty pools, while among the great hordes of live stock, reared in plenteous seasons, the strong are lean and sad-eyed, the weak are perishing daily with increasing rapidity.

The hand of man, which has done so much to reclaim these wondrous wastes, is powerless against Nature's cruel fiat. None can do more than wait and pray; for the end must come, when the days shorten and the nights grow cold, even in this summer land; and utter, unredeemed ruin is the goal towards which many of the proprietors have perforce turned their eyes these many weary months past.

The fair but fleeting promise of the bygone month has been unredeemed. Only a few days of the threatening sun have sufficed to wither the tender herbage, the springing plantlets which essayed to cover the baked soil. The broad road seems that veritable way to Avernus, so bare, sun-scorched, adust is it, for hundreds of leagues. Far away one may note its swaying deflections, and hold a parallel course, guided solely by the well-nigh continuous dust-line of the waggon-trains.

Yet, maugre the terrors of the time, certain feathered inhabitants have their provision secured to them. How else trip and flit from myall twig to pine bough, bright-eyed and fearless, this pair of delicious tiny doves? The most exquisitely formed and delicately lovely of all the Columba family, they are, perhaps, the smallest—not larger than the brown bush-quail. Not half the size of the crested pigeon, there is a family resemblance in the fairy pink legs, the pointed tail, the bronze bars of the wing-feathers, the tones of the soft, azure breast. By no means a shy bird, as if conscious that few fowlers could be cruel to the hurt of so delicate a thing of beauty, so rare a feathered gem, in these stern solitudes.

Not that all the tribes of the air can be described as beautiful and harmless. Riding slowly through a belt of timber, musing, it may be, on the undeserved sorrows of the lower animals, I am suddenly and violently assaulted—'bonneted,' as the humorous youth of the period has it. I clutch my hat just in time to save it from being knocked off. There are two round holes near the brim, which I had not previously observed, and a cock magpie is flying back to his station on a tree hard by, much satisfied in his mind. It is a well-known habit of this bold, aggressive bird in the breeding season. He keeps watch, apparently, the livelong day, hard by the nest, and, pledged to drive away intruders, is no respecter of persons. Long years since, the present writer was similarly attacked; when essaying to lift his hat some hours afterwards, and finding resistance, he discovered that the bird's beak had penetrated the felt and inflicted a smart cut. Blood had actually been shed, and, having dried, caused adhesion. The 'piping crow,' as ornithologically the magpie of the colonies is designated, is not truly a magpie at all. He is carnivorous and insectivorous. Withal a handsome bird, with glossy raven breast and back, and most melodious, flute-like carol, at earliest morn and eve. He is easily tamed, and in captivity learns to talk, to whistle, and even to swear with clearness and accuracy—more particularly the last accomplishment. As a member of the household, he exhibits great powers of adaptation, has the strongest conviction as to his rank and position, despises children, whose undefended legs he pecks, and will engage in desperate combat with dog or cat, turkey or gamecock. An Australian naturalist of eminence gives his testimony to the courage with which a tame bird of the species relieved the tedium of a homeward-bound voyage by its constant duels with such gamecocks as the coops produced.

Feeding in the open plain, and in a leisurely way inspecting the sparse vegetation with an eye to grasshoppers, strolls a bustard with his mate. This noble game-bird, the wild turkey of the colonists, is fully equal, perhaps superior, in flavour to his tame congener. Longer in neck and limb, crane-like of head, the plumage presents several points of resemblance which justifies his title to the name. He has also the trick of strutting with drooped wings and outspread tail before the female. Shy and difficult of approach by the sportsman on foot, he is easily circumvented by riding or driving around in circles, gradually narrowing, when an easy shot is gained.

A reminiscence arises here of the regal sport of hawking enjoyed in connection with a bird of this

species. Hard hit with double B, he found it difficult to rise above the tall grass of the marshy plain where he had been stalked, though gradually gaining strength. As he cleared the reed-tops, a wedge-tailed eagle (the eagle-hawk of the colonists) swooped down from airy heights and dashed at the huge bird like a merlin at a thrush. Very nearly did the 'lammergeier' make prize of him, but the long sweep of the bustard's wing kept him ahead. Presently he got 'way on,' assisted by a slight breeze. Down the wind went hawk and quarry, neck and neck, so to speak, while the sportsman put his horse to speed, going straight across country, with head up and eyes fixed on the pair, as they gradually rose higher in the sky. Ever and anon the eagle would make a dash at the wounded bird, but whether the temporary shock had only staggered him, or that it was nature's last effort, the 464
edible one soared away far and fast, eventually disappearing from our gaze.

While on the subject of hawking, there is little doubt that the 'aguila' referred to might be trained to fly at the larger game—turkeys, geese, kangaroo, and emu—while the smaller falcons, which are sufficiently plentiful, might be equally effective in pursuit of the traditional heron. The beautiful blue crane of the colonists (*Ardea Australis*) is found in every streamlet and marsh, as also the spoonbill, the white crane (snowy of hue, and with curious fringing wing-feathers), not forgetting the bittern.

Young Australia, gentle or simple, might find worse employment than riding forth in the fresh morn of the early summer, with hawk on wrist, inhaling even this faintest flavour of the romance of the great days of chivalry.

On the broad, still reaches of the river, or the wide sheets of water artificially conserved, behold we the pelican, in no wise differing in appearance from the traditional dweller in the wilderness. Whether the Australian is unselfishly prodigal in the matter of heart's blood in favour of her young is difficult of proof, forasmuch as no living man, apparently, ever sets eyes on a youthful pelican. In the untrodden deserts which surround the heart of the continent is popularly deemed to lie the haunt of the brooding bird; and an Australian poetess has mourned the fate of the gallant brothers —bold and practised explorers—last seen on their way to the unknown, half-mystic region, 'where the pelican builds her nest.'

As the hot breath of the fast-coming summer proves yet more deadly to every green thing, the pelican flocks sail coastward in great numbers from their failing streams and marshes. With them comes the beautiful black swan—'rara avis in terra,' but here an everyday sight—graceful, with scarlet beak, wreathed neck, and 'pure cold webs'; the wild, musical note clanging from the soaring, swaying files cleaving the empyrean. Rarely-seen waders and swimmers are of the contingent if the 'weather holds dry'—a wayworn, far-travelled host, priceless to the naturalist could he but observe them.

Let but the stern drought continue unbroken, all-heedless of man and his great army of dependants, through the brief spring, the long summer—till the days shorten and (even here) the nights grow 465
cold—unprecedented losses must occur in certain localities. Still, hope is not dead. The dry zone is restricted in area. Outside and around it, what the shepherds term 'fine storms' have refreshed the pastures. Even yet there is corn in Egypt.[4] There is grass and to spare beyond the Queensland border. Thither will many a sorely-oppressed proprietor send a section of flock or herd, availing himself of the time-honoured institution of 'travelling for feed.' Such, neither more nor less, was the last resort of those grand historic sheiks of the desert, even Abraham and Lot, when 'the land was not able to bear them'; and to such an alternative must the latter-day, salt-bush sheik turn in his need, or see his live stock perish before his eyes, in thousands and ten thousands.

4. There is no corn in Egypt now (as far as Queensland is referred to) it must be admitted with deep regret. The famine in the land has reached the biblical record of 'seven years of drouth.'

He will improvise a nomadic establishment with dray and tent, shepherds and cooks, stock-riders and bullock-drivers, horses and cattle, everything save camels, needed in a patriarchal migration. Even these last ungainly thirst-defiers are now bred in Australia. Hard by the tropic he will pass into a land of grass prairies and flooded streams—the promised land of the desert-worn hosts. He will here find himself—'most ingenious paradox'—in a region where live stock are high-priced, but where 'country' is cheap. He will rent, perhaps purchase another run. The drought which drove him forth may so and in such manner make his fortune yet. Let us hope so, in all sympathy and good fellowship. There he will reach his haven of rest. He may sell out again, or decide to cast in his fortunes with the newer colony, but in any case he will remain there until, as far as King Sol is concerned, 'this tyranny be over-past.'

AUSTRALIAN COLLIES

In the stage of the early history of New South Wales, when her increasing herds bid fair to overspread the waste, the dog, his ancient and faithful servant, came to the aid of man. The Scotch collie, friend of the lonely hill-shepherd in North Britain from time immemorial, was unanimously elected to fill the responsible position—not, however, as being the only available canine connected with stock management, for the Smithfield drover's dog had also emigrated, that wonderful stump-tailed animal, which managed to keep his master's cattle separate at the great London mart, though thousands of beeves be around, unfenced and unyarded. Matchless in his own department, he was gradually superseded by the collie, which came to the front as a better all-round dog, more intelligent, faithful, and companionable; when trained, equally suitable for the 'working' of sheep or cattle.

The breed, at first pure as imported, became crossed with other varieties of the multiform genus *Canis*, and so suffered partial deterioration. Still, such was the original potency of the collie proper, that many of the mongrels, even the product of the ovicidal 'dingo,' were excellent workers, in some instances even superior to their pure-bred comrades. The climate, too, appeared to be favourable to the breed. The Australian offspring of the imported collies were handsome, vigorous animals, with correct 'flag and feather,' yet reproducing the traits of fidelity and human attachment concerning which so many a tale was told, poem written, and picture painted in the old land. The 'harder' or fiercer animals were chosen for cattle work, and being bred for the qualities of 'heeling,' and even doing a mild imitation of bull-baiting on occasions, became almost a distinct breed. In the old-fashioned cattle districts, like Monaro and the Abercrombie River, where in early days a sheep was never seen, the cattle dogs—true collies in appearance and extraction—were very different in their manners and customs from their sheep-guiding relatives of the settled districts, whose 'bark was (so much) worse than their bite.'

It was quite the other way with the cattle dogs. They were encouraged to 'heel' or bite the fetlocks of the stubborn, half-wild cattle, in a way which bustled them along as crack or cut of stockwhip could never effect. In the case of a breaking beast they would hang on to his tail, and perhaps, when bringing back a wild yearling to the yard, assault tail, heels, nose, and ears impartially, with dire results. They ran their chance of being kicked or horned at this rough-and-tumble game, but from practice became exceeding wary of these and other dangers. A cattle dog has been seen to 'work' (or help drive) a drove of horses, heeling when desired to do so most impartially, and yet managing to keep clear of the dangerous kicks which the half-wild colts aimed at him. Every man of experience with stock will bear testimony to the admirable service which a good cattle dog will perform. Wearied and low-conditioned droves they will 'move' in a way which no amount of whip and shouting will effect. On the other hand, where caution and diplomacy are required, their sagacity is astonishing.

I once had occasion, 'in the forties,' to drive a small lot of fat cattle some days' journey to a coast town in Western Victoria. They had come to me in a deal, and I wished to turn them into cash. It was a good way from home. The vendors simply 'cut them out' from the camp, accompanied me to the Run boundary, and gave me their blessing. I had no mate but an ancient cattle dog. It may be surmised by the experienced how many times the home-bred cattle tried to break back. Again and again I thought they would have beaten me. I kept one side, the dog Peter the other, necessarily. Had either rashly caused a separation the game was up. It was beautiful to see the old dog's generalship. If a beast diverged on his side, he would walk solemnly out, keep wide and dodge him in with the smallest expenditure of voice or emotion. By this time some of the others would be looking back, preparatory to a dash homeward. These he would hustle up promptly, just sufficiently and no more. That I was watchful on my side needs no telling; an occasional tap or whipcrack kept them going. Even fat cattle know when the stockwhip is absent. We—I say it advisedly—yarded them safely that night, when a well-managed hostelry consoled me for the frightful anxiety I had undergone. Next day they travelled more resignedly, and the third night saw them delivered to 'the man of flesh and blood' in Portland, and, what was better still, paid for.

In the Port Fairy district, then chiefly devoted to cattle, were many famous cattle collies. Old Mr. Teviot at Dunmore had three I remember, their peculiarity being that they understood nothing but Lowland Scotch, in which dialect they had, though Australian by birth, been trained. 'Far yaud' (as Dandie Dinmont says), and other mysterious commands, wholly unintelligible to us youngsters, they understood and obeyed promptly. But it was amusing to watch the air of surprise or indifference with which they regarded the stock-riders, who sometimes in time of need suggested 'Fetch 'em along, boy!' or 'Go on outside.' Like most people to whom dogs are wildly attached, Mr. Teviot was austere of manner towards them, feeding regularly, but permitting no familiarity. How they loved him in consequence! If returning from a trip to the township after dark, they would listen for the footfall of his horse, and long before human ear caught the far, faint sound, would rise up solemnly and walk half a mile or more along the road to greet him. These dogs were popularly credited with being able to do anything but talk, and were renowned throughout the country-side for their obedience and thorough comprehension of their owner's wishes.

I once owned a cattle collie of great intelligence, by name Clara, the daughter of a one-eyed female of the species, celebrated for her 'heeling' propensities. The mother was uncertain as to temper, and was often soundly chastised by her owner for erratic work or short-comings. After a good flogging she jumped up and fawned upon him with the fondest affection, thus verifying the ancient adage. But Clara was a gentle and kindly creature though a good driver, and in all respects strangely intelligent, a handsome black and tan as to colour. In yard work she showed out to the

greatest advantage. Always keenly observant at such times, and curiously eager to assist—leaving a very young family on one occasion. One day in particular a panel of the stock-yard was broken; there was no time for repairs. But Clara was on guard, and there she stayed, never letting a beast through till the drafting was over.

Poor Clara! she met with an early death. Coming back from a muster, she was forgotten in the hurry and bustle. The weather was hot; the distance greater than usual. It was supposed that she died of thirst, or was killed by the dingoes, for she was never seen alive afterwards.

Peter, a Sydney-side dog, brought down by his owner before 1840 or thereabouts, with some of the early herds, was probably one of the cleverest animals in his way that ever followed a beast. His owner was a Sydney native of the 'flash gully-raking sort,' from whom probably Peter had received his education in indifferent company. We judged this from the cautious and unobtrusive way in which he went about his work. He was a medium-sized, dark-coloured dog, wiry and active. He was not fond of working for any one but his master, who could make him do all sorts of queer things. When he came into the kitchen and the maidservants chaffed him, he had only to whisper 'Heel 'em, Peter!' and the next minute the girls would be screaming and scampering, with Peter's teeth very close to their ankles. When tired—and they often travelled far and fast—he would come to the horse's fore-leg and beg to be taken up. Pulled up to the pommel of the saddle, he would sit upright, quite gravely, leaning against his master until he was sufficiently rested; then, when dropped to earth, he would go to work with amazing vigour. If any particular beast kicked him, he would wait till there was a crush at a gate, and 'heel' that very animal to a certainty at a time when it was impossible to retaliate.

The collie, on the other hand, whom fate had destined to a less romantic association with sheep, was trained and exercised differently. He was expected to guide and intimidate his timorous, delicate, though often frantic and obstinate charge chiefly by the sound of his voice and a threatening manner. Biting was forbidden under severe penalties. 'Working wide'—that is, 470
continually running beyond, ahead, outside of the flock, which was therefore turned, stopped, or directed—was inculcated in every possible way. It is to be noted that the fashion is chiefly inherited, the untrained puppy of pure blood doing most of it as naturally as the pointer puppy lifts his fore-leg. A slight nip now and then in driving weary or obstinate sheep is permitted, but nothing approaching injury to the easily-hurt flock. It is an interesting sight to mark a trained collie walking back and forward in the rear of a large flock, intimating to them as plainly as possible without speech that they are to move along steadily in a given path, and, though permitted to nibble as they go, by no means to straggle unduly.

Then observe that shepherd with his flock of, say, two or three thousand. If strong and in good order, the 'head' will string out fully half a mile in advance of the 'body' and 'tail.' If left alone they will soon be out of sight at the rear-guard. Then a division would follow, and once away, after nightfall, wild dogs and dangers are on every side of them. Nor could the shepherd on foot, as he is always, run round ahead and turn them. By the time he reached the head, the tail would be marching in a different direction. When he turned them, the head would be gone again, etc. etc.

But mark the dog! Despatched by a wave of the hand, he races off at full speed. He flies round the scattered sheep, keeping wide, however, and so consolidating them, until he reaches the leaders, which, directly they see him, scurry back to the centre of the flock. Returning, he walks dutifully behind, with the air of one who has fulfilled his mission. In half an hour perhaps the same performance is repeated. In the middle of the day, if warm, the flock indulges in a 'camp' by a water-hole or other suitable locality. As it feeds home to the yard, very little of the morning activity is observed. Our collie, while watchful and ready for a lightning dash at a moment's notice, walks soberly behind, evidently contented with the day's work.

As the New Zealand shepherd, a man in his best years of strength and activity, is a different man from the elderly and often feeble shepherd of Australia, so the collie of Maoriland, having to climb rock-strewn defiles, and search amid glacier plateaux and savage solitudes, for the scattered, half- 471
wild flocks, has an air of seriousness and responsibility. There is but little frolic and gamesomeness about *him*. The dogs of Ettrick and Yarrow, accustomed to snow and the blasts of an iron winter, claim kinship with him. Compelled to act on his own discretion, he tracks outliers, finds and collects his flock in all weathers.

'Sirrah, ma mon, they're awa!' says James Hogg to his wonderful collie, the 'dark-grey puppy' that he bought for a pound, if I mistake not. The dog, in the drear darkness of a snowstorm, goes forth, and hours afterwards is found guarding the four hundred lost lambs, not one being missing.

So when muster-day comes, the New Zealand collie makes for the mountain peaks: on the lonely plain far above the snow-line, where in severe seasons a hundred sheep may be found dead and frozen, he beats and quarters his country, till he finds and brings down to the appointed place all the straggling lots that may have summered there.

Independently of the qualities necessary for the successful mobilisation of sheep, the collie is, perhaps, of all the sub-varieties of the canine race, the most faithful and sympathetic. Time after time has one observed the tramping shepherd or swagman and his dog. Poor and despised, 'remote, unfriended, melancholy, slow,' the forlorn wayfarer had one staunch friend—one faithful ally—that regarded not his poverty, his lowly condition, his lack of self-denial. Who has not marked the tramp asleep *sub Jove* at daylight, with scant shelter or covering, his watchful dog sitting near, prepared to show his teeth, or indeed do something more, at the nearer approach of the stranger? The dog of the imprisoned shepherd, immured by Sir Hugo de Pentonville for inebriety, lies stretched disconsolately before the prison gate, howling at intervals, apparently in deepest despair, betraying on the other hand the most frantic joy at his release. The railway favourite goes heavily, mourning

as unmistakably as a Christian—more sincerely than some—in abstracted gloom, melancholy gait, and aimless daily search for his master, untimely slain by the remorseless Juggernaut. A hundred times has one caught the watchful eye of affection with which the collie regards his ragged owner, as if fearing to lose the least word or gesture.

472 And though the recipients of this unstinted devotion rarely appear to appreciate the gift so lavishly bestowed, it must be recorded, for the honour of human nature, that instances of the contrary *do* occur. But the other day, a lonely pilgrim, who had been ailing few weeks past, was found by the good Samaritan, cold in death, with his arm *round his dog's neck*. A shepherd will carry the young family of his (female) collie, born during a journey, tied in a handkerchief, at much expenditure of toil and trouble. In many an instance blood feuds, savage conflicts ending in manslaughter—suicides even—have occurred, connected with injustice, real or fancied, to the 'dawg.' 'Love me, love my dog,' is an ancient adage by no means without force in Australia. But recently a farmer deliberately shot a neighbour whom he accused, wrongfully or otherwise, of killing his dog. Prior to that occurrence a shepherd, noticed to be despondent for days past, telling one inquirer that some one had poisoned his dog, *hanged himself*.

Touching the price of a really good dog, it may range from two pounds to twenty—an owner often declaring that he would not part with his dog for the last-named sum. Within the present month, indeed, two legal processes, to the writer's knowledge, have been put in force in the collie interest. In one case £10 was sued for as being the value of a cattle dog, alleged to have been illegally poisoned. The other was nothing less than a 'Search-warrant for stolen goods and chattels,' commanding the Sergeant of Police and all constables of Bundabah to make diligent search, in the daytime, at the residence of the man referred to, whose name is not known, but who can be identified, for the said black collie slut, named in the information as 'feloniously stolen, taken, and carried away as aforesaid, and if you find the same, that you secure the said black collie slut, and bring the person in whose custody you find the same before me, or some other justice of the peace. —(Signed) JOHN JONES, J.P.'

At the annual pastoral and agricultural shows, the trial of sheep dogs has never-failing interest for the spectators. Most curious is it to note the gravity with which each competing collie essays to drive three wildish paddocked sheep into a very small fold of hurdles.

473 The free exhibition of strychnine, rendered necessary by the incursions of the dingo, and, 'sorrow it were and shame to tell,' by the increase of foxes, has led to the death of many a valued collie. But good animals are now carefully looked after. Greater attention is paid to breeding. Dogs of the best strains are annually imported. And as the ranks of Australian collies are thus recruited with pure blood and high-class animals, it is not too much to assert, that as a stock dog, our Australian collie is not inferior to his British ancestors, while he may claim even a wider range of accomplishments and experience.

IN THE BLOOM OF THE YEAR

The first week of December! And seeing that we are in the realm of Australia, in the district of Riverina, where the season has been wet, which is 'dry country' English for triumphantly prosperous, also that vegetable growth is at its acme, we regard our title as fully justified.

All plant-life is now profusely, riotously luxuriant. A drenching winter, following a wet autumn, preceded a late, showery spring; thus, and because of which, the pastures and cornfields, the orchards and gardens, are rich with verdure and promise to a degree unknown since the proverbial year of 1870.

Some few sultry days have we had, but the true Australian summer has not, so far, appeared in its lurid, wasting splendour. Hardly a ripening tinge is yet visible on the wide-waving prairies, the bespangled meadows, the shaded forest lawns. Wild flowers of every shape and hue—blue and scarlet, pink and orange, white and yellow, perfumed or scentless—glorify the landscape.

As we drive along, this balmy, breezy, sun-bright day, through the champaign, which lies anear and around an inland country town, let us (if haply it may tend to dispel some small portion of the ignorance of our British friends as to the 'bush of Australia') put on record the 'scenes and sounds of a far clime' in this season of the year.

The wheat crops, standing strong and level for leagues around, as high, generally, as the rail fence which protects them, have not as yet been assailed; but the reaper and binder has made many a foray into the hayfields. Here we notice one of the results of machinery. In the majority of instances the oats, though green of hue, are in sheaves and stooks. The time-honoured spring romance of fragrant haycocks is hastening to its doom, inasmuch as the greater portion of the oat-crop saved is intended to be reduced into chaff, as being more portable or saleable in that form. It is obviously better economy, by using the reaper and string-binder, to have it arranged mechanically in sheaves and hand-placed in stooks. It is then more convenient for loading, stacking, and the final operation of the chaff-cutter. Most of these sheaves are six feet and over in height. Heavy-headed, too, withal. We were informed that four tons of chaff to the acre is not an uncommon yield this year. The lambs, which are running with their mothers in the great enclosures, wire-fenced and ring-barked as to timber, through which the high road passes, are wonderfully well-grown and healthy-looking. The percentage, averaging from eighty to ninety, is exceptionally high, when it is considered that the expense of tendance is nominal. From five to seven thousand ewes—even more sometimes—are running in each paddock, unwatched and untended till marking-time, thence to the shearing, which is also the weaning period. This year the shepherd-kings have a right royal time of it, though not more than sufficient to compensate them for the losses and crosses of the last decade. Apropos of this woolly people, here approaches an aged shepherd. He is mounted, so that he has received his cheque. Solvent and resolved, he is journeying to the town, on pleasure bent, of a rational nature let us hope. The flies of mid-day are troublesome, but he has a net-veil round his weather-beaten face; so has the steady veteran steed. The collie, following dutifully, is unprotected from flies, but accoutred with a wire muzzle—not, as the young lady from the city supposed, to prevent his biting the sheep, but lest he should swallow the innocent-seeming morsel of meat by the wayside, intended for vagrom canines, and containing the deadly crystals of strychnine. Certes, with plenteousness the land runs o'er, this gracious year of our Lord 1887. The cattle lounging about the roads—the roads, like the fields, knee-deep in thick green grass—with their shining coats and plump bodies, testify to the bounty of the season. The birds call and twitter. The skylark, faint reflex as he is of his English compeer, yet mounts skyward and sings his shorter lay rejoicingly. The wild-duck, gladsome and unharmed, swims in the meres which here and there divide the river meadows. The fat beeves in the paddock ruminate contemplatively, or recline around some patriarchal tree. All nature is joyous; the animated portion 'rich in spirits and health,' the vegetable contingent spreading forth and burgeoning in unchecked development. As we pass Bungāwannāh, one of the large estates, formerly squattages, which alternate with the farms and smaller pastoral holdings, a fallow doe with her fawn starts up from the long grass, gazing at us with startled but mildly-timid eye. They are outliers from a herd of nearly a hundred, which have increased from a few head placed there by a former proprietor.

In this our Centennial year it must be conceded that Australia is a land of varied products. We pass orchards where the apples are reddening fast, where apricots are turning pink, and the green fig slowly filling its luscious sphere. We note the vivid green of the many-acred vineyards, now in long rows, giving an air of formal regularity to the cultivated portion of the foreground. Then we descry the dark green and gold of an orangery, hard by the river-bank—in this year a most profitable possession to the proprietor.

Amid this abundance we miss one figure sufficiently familiar to the traveller in other lands, or the European resident, viz. 'the poor man.' He may be somewhere about, but we do not encounter him. He does not solicit alms, at any rate. His nearest counterpart is the swagman or pedestrian labourer. He is differentiated from the shearer and the 'rouseabout' (the shearing-shed casual labourer), who travel, the former invariably, the latter occasionally, on horseback. But the humble dependant upon the aristocratic squatter or prosperous farmer is a well-fed, fairly well-dressed personage, who affords himself an unlimited allowance of tobacco. Say that he elects to journey afoot in an equestrian country, he needs pity or charity from no man.

When one thinks of England, with its three hundred souls to the square mile, one cannot but be thankful, in spite of the ignorant, insolent diatribes of the Ben Tillett agitator class, for the condition of the labouring classes in this favoured country. They are at a premium, and will be for years to

come, while tens of thousands of acres of arable land are awaiting the hands which shall clear and plant them. Meanwhile, a small annual rent is obtained for the State by means of purely pastoral possession—a form of occupation destined to be surely, if slowly, superseded by agriculture, when demanded by the needs of a more developed epoch and a denser population. 477

This particular district has for many years been settled after a fashion which permits of moderate-sized holdings. For a lengthened period, therefore, have the exotic trees and shrubs, which even the humblest farms boast, grown and flourished. The tall, columnar poplars, the wavy, tremulous aspens, the umbrageous elms, are large of girth, stately of height, and broad of shade. They are to be seen around the farm-house, or near the mansion which peeps out amid wood and meadow. Here a row of stately elms borders the roadside, affording a grateful shade to the weary wayfarer. The season has been exceptionally humid, as when

Low thunders bring the mellow rain
Which makes thee broad and deep.

Yet the oak is not so common. Slow of growth, he does not seem to assimilate himself to all soils, although in a few localities he may be observed doing no discredit to his British comrades. The lime, the Oriental plane, the ash, the willow, and the sycamore proclaim the generous nature of the soil and climate which they have reached, so far across the foam. Besides these are the noble *Paulownia imperialis*, majestic with gigantic leaves and purple-scented flowers; the catalpa and even the magnolia, beauteous and fragrant—a botanic miracle. The olive grows rapidly, forgetting oft in eagerness to add branch to branch to mature the fruit, which will one day furnish a valuable export.

All these with others in this last season are spreading their green pennants to the summer breeze—grateful in shade to the traveller wearied and adust; beautiful to the eye of the lover of all plant-life; 'things of beauty and of joy for ever,' even to those whose sense of harmonious landscape-arrangement is rudimentary and undeveloped.

We halt for an instant on the verdant level, hard by the little creek whose waters, this gracious year, run yet with musical monotone, to watch the drivers of these high-piled waggons, who are 478
even now unloosing their teams. There are five waggons, which, with wheels of the adamantine iron-bark eucalyptus, are warranted to carry the heaviest loads procurable; and heavy loads they are. Forty bales of wool in each, or thereabouts. Sixty or seventy horses in the five teams, all 'grade' Clydesdales or Suffolks, and averaging in value from £25 to £35 each. The 200 bales of wool are worth, say at £20 each, £4000; £1500 for the team horses; £300 for the waggons. A not inconsiderable total of values. Stay! In haste we have forgotten the sixty sets of harness and the tarpaulins,—£5000 or £6000 in all. A large property to be in the hands of five young fellows hardly known to the proprietor of the freight. It is fortunate that there are no robber barons at this time of day to demand tribute, or land pirates and buccaneers, *except those who collect the intercolonial protective duties*.

The hare which runs across the road in front of us is an introduced, imported animal, like the deer we saw a while back. He is becoming numerous, but, unlike his cousin and comrade, 'Brer Rabbit,' has not been disastrously destructive. The settlers eat him at present. 'Brer Rabbit' in some districts has commenced to reverse the process.

Among the manifold natural beauties of the season we must by no means omit the hedgerows; in beauteous blossom these, and though, perhaps, chiefly too wild and luxuriant, yet affording pleasing contrast to the bare utilitarianism of rail and wire fence, and the monotony of the barked, murdered woods. Various are they, ranging from the dark green of the hawthorn, lovely with sweet souvenir bloom of long-past English springs, to the pink flower-masses of the quince, the crimson showers of the rose-hedges, and the yellow hair of the *Acacia armata*; while high, towering, thorny, impervious, with brightest glittering greenery, grows the Osage orange—a transatlantic importation, which in some respects is the most effective green wall known, being a species of live barbed wire, with an agreeable appearance of leafage, yet exuding a bitter juice, which prevents its mutilation by live stock. All these, interspersed occasionally with the sweetbriar, the scent and wild-rose flower of which almost atone for its predatory habits, its illegal occupation of Crown Lands. In one instance an economical or patriotic farmer had permitted the fast-growing eucalyptus saplings 479
to interlace his 'drop' fence—an effective and not wholly unpicturesque road border.

From time to time amid the larger enclosures we came across a half-forlorn, half-picturesque patch 'where once a garden smiled.' A roofless cottage, a score of elms and poplars, with straggling rose-bushes abloom among the thistles, mark the abandoned homestead. In the 'distressful country' these would be the signs of an eviction. Here, when Michael or Patrick unhouses himself, he does so with a comfortable cheque in his pocket and the wherewithal to 'take up' a larger holding, perhaps six hundred and forty acres, or even in the central district, two thousand five hundred, by the payment in cash to the Crown—of how much does the reader unlearned in the New South Wales land laws believe? Two shillings per acre! The remaining balance of eighteen shillings per acre to be paid in twenty years, with interest at five per cent, or *ninepence* per acre annually! The neighbouring landholder has bought out honest Pat or Donald, or François or Wilhelm, as the case may be—several nationalities being here represented—giving him a handsome profit in cash for his labour and outlay. The fences are then pulled down, the roof falls in, the elms, the poplars, with a few peach-trees and roses, alone remain to tell the tale of the deserted homestead. As we pass one of these, a grand cloth-of-gold bush, six feet and more in height, hanging over a fence, tempts us with its fragrant clusters. We choose a lovely bud and an opening flower, with its curiously-blended shades of gold and faintest pink, and, much moralising, go our way.

In the good old days, when there was no salvation outside of vast pastoral holdings, when small

freeholds were considered not only inexpedient but immoral, this was held to be a waterless region, unfit for the habitation of man, away from the river frontage. Now near every farm appears a dam or other successful method of conserving water. The homesteads, too, are well built, and substantial for the most part, standing in neatly-kept gardens and fruitful orchards. Milch kine graze in the fields or stroll about the grassy roadways, sleek-skinned, well-bred, and profitable-looking.

No indications save those of comfortable living and easy-going rural prosperity present themselves. Buggies or tax-carts with active horses, driven mostly by farmers' wives or daughters, trot briskly along the high-road to the town, going to or returning from their marketing. Occasionally a girl on horseback canters by, sometimes escorted, often without cavalier or attendant. The road-maintenance man jogs by in his covered cart, filling up ruts with metal here and there, or clearing a drain where the storm-water runs too impetuously. In all this savage land which I have described in detail, there are no lions or tigers, no bushrangers, no Indians. In fact, but for a few varieties of vegetation, one might fancy oneself back again in rural England.

FALLEN AMONG THIEVES

In the spring of 1867 I had occasion to travel from my station, Bundidgaree, near Narandera, on the Murrumbidgee River, to the historic town of Wagga Wagga, the residence of Mr. Arthur Orton, whose claim to the Tichborne title and estates was then agitating Britain and her Colonies. An elderly nurse returning to her home was to accompany me in an American buggy. The roads were good; the weather fine; the horse high in condition, exceptional as to pace and courage. Yet was the situation doubtful, even complicated. The road was risky, the head-station lonely and unprotected. A gang of bushrangers, under a leader popularly known as 'Blue-cap,' was at the time I mention within twenty or thirty miles of Narandera. There was a strong probability that I should encounter them, or that they would visit the station during my absence. Either hap was disagreeable, not to say dangerous. I left home with mingled feelings. But circumstances were obdurate. I had to go. The outlaws, five in number, were 'back-block natives,' all young men with the exception of a middle-aged personage known as 'The Doctor.' He was credited with having 'done time,' that is, served a sentence of imprisonment, which apparently had not led to reformation, as he was looked upon as the most dangerous member of the band. Not as yet committed to acts of bloodshed, they had exchanged shots with Mr. Waller of Kooba—a station below Narandera—who had surprised them while encamped upon his Run. He was a determined man and a well-known sportsman. The story was that he nearly shot 'Blue-cap,' that gentleman having slipped behind a stock-yard post, which received the breast-high bullet. The honours of war remained with the squatter, however, whose party forced the robbers to retreat across the river, leaving (like the Boers) horses, saddles, and swags behind. It was not known when I started whether they had gone up or down the river. Meanwhile, the pair of police troopers who *protected* the district of Narandera, a region about a hundred miles square, were 'in pursuit.'

The question of carrying arms had to be dealt with. I thought at first of a double-barrelled gun and revolver. But the idea of an effective defence against five well-mounted, well-armed men, the while embarrassed with a frightened woman and two spirited horses, did not seem feasible. I finally decided to trust to the probability of not meeting the evil-doers at all, and to go unarmed rather than to carry arms which I could not use effectively. The journey to Wagga, about fifty-five miles, was accomplished safely. Making an early start next day, about three-fourths of the return trip was over when I came opposite to Berrembed, the homestead of my neighbour Mr. Lupton. I was walking the horses over a curious formation of small mounds, provincially known as 'dead men's graves,' when I became aware of three horsemen coming along the road towards me.

My first thought was, 'Here they are-bushrangers!' my second, 'It cannot be the gang—these are too young; and I don't see the "Doctor."' The foremost rider, enveloped in a poncho, decided the question by throwing it back and presenting a revolver, at the same time calling out in what he meant to be a tone of intimidation, 'Bail up. Stop and get out. If yer move to get a pistol I'll blow yer brains out.' By the time he had come to the end of this unlawful demand, he had ridden close up, and held the revolver, into the barrel of which I could see, and also that it was on full cock, unpleasantly close to my head. He was a bush-bred cub, hardly of age, who had but little practice, evidently, in the highwayman line, for his hand trembled and his face was pale under the sun-bronzed skin.

Thus I felt (like Mickey Free's father) somewhat perturbed, as, if I tried to bolt, he might shoot me on purpose, and if I stayed where I was, he might shoot me by accident. Meanwhile, I secured the reins to the lamp iron, and got down in a leisurely manner. 'I have no arms,' I said, as I stood by the off-side horse—the celebrated Steamer; 'there's no hurry. I can't well run away.'

'Give up yer money,' he said gruffly.

'I haven't any.'

'That be hanged! A man like you don't travel without money.'

'I generally have some, but I paid a bill at Martin's (naming an inn a few miles nearer Wagga) and it cleaned me out.'

'Hand out them watches, then!'

He saw by the appearance of my waistcoat that I had more than one. I had brought back a watch belonging to a relative from Wagga, where it had been sent for repair. They were both gold watches of some value.

As he sat on his horse, I being on foot, he kept his bridle-reins and the levelled revolver in one hand, and reached down to me for the spoil. As he did so, I looked him in the eye, thinking that a strong, active man might have pulled him off his horse, grabbed the revolver, and shot one if not both of his comrades. I had no intention of trying the double event myself, but I know a man or two who would have chanced it with such a youthful depredator.

What I said was, 'You don't often get two gold watches from one man.'

'No. I know we don't. Turn out that portmanteau.'

'There's only a suit of clothes and my hair brushes. You don't want them.'

At this stage of the intercourse, old Steamer, an impatient though singularly good-tempered animal, moved on, as of one proclaiming, 'This foolery has lasted long enough.' I walked to his head and soothed him, upon which one of the subordinates said civilly, 'I'll hold your horse, Mr. Boldrewood.'

I looked at him with surprise, and saw for the first time that he was Mr. Lupton's stock-rider, and

the other 'road agent' the son of that gentleman. The mystery was explained. They were *pressed men*. We were within sight of the home station. The rest of the gang were helping themselves to the proprietor's best horses in the stock-yard when they saw me coming along the road. So they had detailed this youth for my capture, and ordered the two others to go with him to 'make a show' in case of the traveller resisting.

However, the interview was nearly at an end. The first robber dismissed me with a brief 'You may 484
go now.' I drove off slowly, not desiring to show haste, in case the capricious devil which abides in this particular breed might prompt him to call me back. He did so indeed, but it was only to say, 'Show us yer pipe. You might have a good 'un.' I exhibited an old briar-root, at which he waved his hand disdainfully, and going off at a gallop, made for the homestead with his attendants on either side, like the wicked Landgrave in Burger's ballad.

I drove in leisurely fashion until they were out of sight, when I let my horses out at their usual 'travelling' pace of twelve miles an hour, or a trifle over, and was not long before I 'reached my cattle-gate.'

While the 'momentous question' was in the stage of discussion I had been anxious and troubled—so to speak, afraid. Not for my personal safety. I did not think any bushranger in the district would slay me in cold blood. We were popular in our neighbourhood, for though I was the Chairman of the Narandera Bench when the Police Magistrate of Wagga, Mr. Baylis, was absent, and as such officially a terror to evil-doers, my wife had endeared herself to our humbler neighbours by acts of charity and womanly sympathy in cases of sickness or other sore need. But what I *was* afraid of, tremulously indeed, was lest the outlaws should 'commandeer' one or both of my horses. Eumeralla, a fine upstanding grey, bred at Squattlesea Mere, good in saddle and harness, and carried a lady, was most valuable, while Steamer, who died after twenty years of priceless service, was simply invaluable. I was only saved from this disastrous loss by the fact that Mr. Lupton's stock-yard (he was absent from home—perhaps fortunately) was full of good station hacks, and as his stud was of high reputation in the district, his loss on that occasion proved my salvation. What had happened at Berrembed was simply this. The bushrangers, with Mr. 'Blue-cap' in command, arrived in the early afternoon unexpectedly. There were few men about the place. The overseer and Mr. Lupton were away. Mrs. Lupton, the governess and the children, with the eldest son, a boy of sixteen, and the stock-rider, were at home. The master of the house had firmly expressed his intention to defend his home, and to that end had sent to Melbourne for a magazine-rifle, capable (it was said) of 485
discharging sixteen cartridges in quick-firing time. The gang, hearing of this preparation, had sworn to pay him out for it at an early visit. In his absence they behaved well, assuring the lady of the house that 'she need not be apprehensive; they only wanted horses and the new repeating-rifle,' which last they demanded at once. She was not frightened—a native-born Australian, come of a Border family, she was not timorous, and had presence of mind enough to deny knowledge of the rifle. The leader was better informed. 'That won't do, Mrs. Lupton. Master Johnnie shot a bullock with it last Saturday. Better give it up. These chaps might turn rusty. They're quiet enough now.' The lady yielded to *force majeure*. The governess was sent to bring the rifle from the shower-bath, where it had been placed, and the bushrangers rode off. One of the men, after roaming through the house, appeared with the baby in his arms, which he had taken from the nurse, alleging that 'it reminded him of his happy home.' This was intended as a joke, and no harm came to the infant, who did not seem to object to a change of nurses. No pillage took place other than that of the rifle and a remount all round. Besides losing their horses and saddles at Kooba, and being reduced to an infantry force, having to cross the river ignominiously upon a sheep-wash temporary bridge, they had another mischance. They called at Brookong Station on Mr. Cuthbert Fetherstonhaugh. Here they treated themselves to grog, in which they vainly tried to make Mr. Fetherstonhaugh join them, and finally went off across country. Near the Urangeline Creek they were startled by the galloping of a body of horsemen in pursuit (as they thought), and racing desperately away, rode into the Urangeline, then in half flood. The others got out, but the 'Doctor,' parting company with his horse, was unfortunately drowned, thus cheating the hangman, and not improbably preventing the commission of bloodshed, into which his evil influence might have led his less-hardened comrades. They were next heard of near Narandera, as to which my wife had a sensational visit from a person in the confidence of the police.

On the morning of my departure she was told by the maidservant that a man outside wished to 486
speak to her. He would not come in, or dismount from his horse. Rather surprised, but being, like our neighbour Mrs. Lupton, Australian born, and not afraid of men or horses or anything in a general way, she walked up to the horseman, who sat in his saddle in the middle of the courtyard, formed by a dining-room and kitchen on one side and store on the other. He was not anxious to be overheard, as he leaned forward and in an agitated voice said that he had been sent by the Senior Constable of Police at Narandera to inform her that the bushrangers had recrossed the river, and might be expected to visit the station on that or the following day. If there were arms in the house she was advised to conceal them for fear of irritating the bushrangers; that the police could not come themselves, as they were following up the tracks in another direction.

This was not cheering news. But action was taken promptly. The armoury consisted of a two-grooved rifle, carrying a bullet of such size that, unlike the 'Mauser,' there was no fear of its penetrating a vital organ without causing instant death. I used to make good practice from an upper chamber at any mark within a hundred and twenty or thirty yards' distance. There was also an effective double-barrel, with a couple of revolvers. A young relative of the family lived with us and helped with the management. We could have made a decent defence probably after warning given. But in nineteen out of twenty cases no warning is given, or, as in this case, too late to be of service.

It so happened that a wool-bale had been suspended in an outer room, into which broken fleece,

pieces picked up on the Run, was placed from time to time. Under the wool, therefore, the guns were hidden for the present.

When I returned from Wagga after my adventure I was naturally anxious to hear if the bushrangers had called in my absence. My first words to the châtelaine were, 'Have you seen the bushrangers?'

Answer—'No. Have you?'

'Well—ahem—I—have!'

Then the story was told in full.

This band, compared with the career and exploits of other gentlemen of the road, hardly rose above the amateur level. They were taken by a sergeant of police and his troopers on the Lachlan. He came unexpectedly one morning, and marching towards them with a determined air, called upon them in the Queen's name to surrender. 'Blue-cap' levelled his rifle. 'What!' roared the sergeant in a 487
voice of thunder. He had known of him when he was a stock-rider, indifferently honest. 'You d—d scoundrel! Would you shoot *me*?'

Whether the idea of the awful crime in the provincial mind, implied in resisting much less attempting the life of such a magnate, overbore the remains of his courage (they were pretty sick of the outlaw business), or that he shrank from deliberate murder, cannot be told; at any rate, they were disarmed, handcuffed, and conducted to the nearest lock-up—magazine-rifle and all. Brought in due course before a bench of magistrates, they were committed to take their trial at the next ensuing Court of Assize, to be holden at Wagga Wagga.

I had occasion to visit the 'Place of Crows' (aboriginal name of Wagga Wagga) some weeks after. The Assizes were coming on, and armed with the police magistrate's order, I interviewed the captives.

When the cell door was opened, and my friend of the poncho and revolver stood revealed, 'quanto mutatus ab illo Hectore!'—'the plume, the helm, the charger gone'—we looked on each other with very different expressions.

'Well, young man,' said I with careless raillery.

He grinned, as who should say 'Met afore.'

'Better have stuck to the mail-driving,' I continued.

'It's too late to think of that now,' he made answer; 'but I wish I'd broken my leg the day I started this bloomin' racket. It was all through the "Doctor" as they called him. He led us chaps into it, simple, with those yarns of his. Anyway, he's dead and gone now. Serve him dashed well right—and me too for being a fool! I was earning good money, and had no call to turn out. And this is what it's done for me. What d'yer think we're goin' to get? They won't hang us?'

'No,' said I; 'you'll get a dozen years' gaol. Luckily you didn't kill any one, so the chief can let you off light. If you behave yourselves you'll be all out again before the end of your sentence.'

'I'll behave all right—no fear!' he replied. 'I'm full up of this "cross" work.'

With the leader, 'Captain Blue-cap,' I had a more lengthened interview. Not a bad-looking young 488
fellow, of the stock-rider type, it seemed inexplicable that he should have preferred the life of a hunted outlaw to that of the well-paid, well-fed, easy-going life of a stock-rider. A gentleman's life, so to speak: independent, with change and variety in fair proportion, three or four good horses always at command, and receiving an amount of consideration far above that of any other *employé* under the rank of overseer; to whose orders, if the proprietor of the station was resident, he did not always hold himself bound to attend. And now—here he was, a fettered captive in the dungeon of the period, awaiting trial, certain of ten years' penal servitude, and not without fear of five years additional, before he walked out a free man again.

We had an amicable conversation, there being 'no animosity' on either side, apparently. It has always struck me as a favourable trait in human nature, that criminals in a general way rarely harbour revengeful feeling against magistrates and others, who are, officially, their natural enemies. Nothing is more common than to hear them say, of the police or higher officials, 'Oh, they're paid for it; it's all in the day's work. I don't blame 'em for doin' their duty.' But the amateur they *do* hate with an exceeding bitter hatred, as having 'gone out of his way' to do them injury. For which interference with the natural order of affairs they are ready to exact, and have before now exacted, memorable revenge.

However that may be, we chatted away, without the introduction of moral axioms on my side or anarchical references on his. It was a lovely, early summer day, without a solitary cloud in the bright blue sky, and he *may*, as he watched the sunlight fleck the elm-tree within sight of the barred window of his cell, have had a spasm of regret. For this is what he said, gloomily: 'They call it a short life and a merry one. I didn't see nothen jolly about it.'

'Many a man's found that out, but you're a young man. If you give no trouble in gaol you'll not have to serve all your time. Face it, and look forward to coming out again.'

'God knows!' he said. 'I might be dead before then; but it's the only thing to do, I suppose.'

'Did you ever get hit,' I said, 'in a scrimmage with the police?' 489

'That near done for me,' he explained, pulling back his singlet and showing a large, ragged cicatrice over the region of the heart. 'I wish to God it had. But it wasn't the police.'

'How then?'

'Goin' up to a hut at night; the feller waited for me. Them marks are slugs.'

'Wonder it didn't kill you,' I said. 'Must have been a good handful of them.'

'Well, I crawled off, and some chaps I knowed nursed me till I got round. But it was a near thing. "Born to be hanged," they say, "save you a lot." But it won't run to *that*, d'ye think, sir, when we haven't killed any one?'

'Not quite,' I said, 'though you fired at Mr. Waller and his men with intent, as the Act says, to do serious bodily harm. You'll get a term of imprisonment of course.'

'A long "stretch," I expect,' he said. 'Well; it's no use cryin'. Good-bye, sir, and thanks very much.'

Then we parted. He went on his way and I saw him no more; circumstances prevented that. I never met him or his companions again. They were sentenced to twelve years' imprisonment, and as all this happened thirty odd years ago, they must be out years and years since. Let us hope that they reformed. It is on the cards, also, that they may have 'struck it rich' on a Queensland or West Australian goldfield.

After this capture and disposal of our highwaymen, the land had rest for a season. One of the consequences of the outbreak might have had an ending calculated to surprise the European wool-buyer. Just before the bale of broken fleece referred to was filled up and put into the press, Mrs. Boldrewood recollected that she had never seen the box of ammunition since the day they were huddled into the wool-bale. It was hastily examined and the explosives hauled out, just as the press was being put down; great was the laughter in the shed, as the men thought of the faces of the wool-brokers in a London saleroom when the 'mixed pieces' were turned out for inspection.

I never got my watch back, though my cousin recovered his. The police heard that the bushrangers had, holding out a hatful of watches, invited the stock-rider to choose one, for his noble conduct and 'moral support' in my affair. He chose my young friend's, which he afterwards returned to him. But mine I saw never again, having to content me with a silver one of small value for the next decade.

A TRANSFORMATION SCENE

'Look alive, boys,' said Hugh Tressider; 'we must slog on for the next hour or two. Pitch dark, and going to be a wet night; but if we don't lose the road we shall pull Barallan before bedtime. There we're sure of a yard and a welcome. A night's sleep won't do us any harm.'

'A night's sleep? Dashed if I've had any for a week,' growled the head stock-rider. 'I'm fit to drop off my bloomin' moke this minute; and he's just the size to kick me for falling. Them blessed B.R. cattle's like a mob of kangaroos for breaking and rushin' if so much as a 'possum squeals or a stick breaks. But I know Mr. Bayard's is a regular stunning place to stop at. Gentle or simple, it's all one to him. He's a gentleman as *is* a gentleman; and every workin' man in the district 'll say the same.'

'All right, Joe; then stir up those lads and the blackfellow a bit; don't let the tail cattle struggle, whatever you do. I'll go on with the lead; my old horse will keep the track.'

'What a thundering wild night it's going to be,' said the drover to himself as he threaded his way through the thick-growing timber, skirting the half-seen wildish herd, which, but a week from the pastures where they had been bred, were still troublesome and prone to break back at the smallest opportunity. The rain, which had held off during the gusty, stormy day, now came down in driving sleety showers, ice-cold, and wetting to the skin the dogged, silent horsemen, who, by the nature of things, were incompletely clothed for resisting so serious a downfall. The cattle, beginning to low with discomfort and uneasiness, were with difficulty restrained from facing towards the opposite point of the compass, away from the blinding storm, which now drove full in their teeth. To those 492
unacquainted with the skill, acquired by long experience in this particular occupation, it would have seemed little short of a miracle that four men and a black boy, who had also the special care of a pack-horse, could guide six hundred head of unwilling, half-wild cattle through a thickly-timbered country on so dark a night, with rain and storm to complicate matters withal.

But it *was* possible. It was done well and effectively. The leader's horse, an Arab-looking grey, visible from time to time, denoted each turn and direction of the road. The quick eyes of the stock-riders were seldom at fault, and detecting each straggling animal, they were instant to urge a wheel before separation from the main body took place. The gregarious habit of cattle was in their favour, as also their indisposition to straggle overmuch in the darkness. When they were doubtful, the piercing organ of the man of the woods was called into play. His decision was prompt and unerring.

It was, 'Me see 'um two fellows cow and that one red bullock yan along a gully, likit picaninny way. You hold 'em, this one pack-horse, me fetch 'um.' And back they came accordingly. One hour, then another, had slowly passed. The rain had ceased, but the heavens were ebon black and murky. Still rode the man, who had first spoken, at the head of the great drove, which, lowing from time to time, kept plodding monotonously forward, at other times silent and all but soundless as a procession of ghostly beeves, escorted by a company of spectre horsemen.

Wet and weary, chilled to the bone, too dispirited to speak—indeed conversation would have been difficult under the circumstances of compulsory separation—the jaded stock-riders moved on; the rain-drops showering from the leaves as they brushed from time to time under the low-growing shrubs and sapling eucalyptus, the horses' feet sinking deeply in the clay and decomposed gravel of the forest; or splashing shoulder-deep through the mountain streams that crossed their track; their watchful outlook strained and concentrated to the fullest, each man at his allotted station. It was a phase of Australian backwoods life not always credited to the much-enduring bushman.

'By George! this is a hard life,' soliloquised the weary pioneer, for such he had been in more than one colony, as he sat, stiff, sore, and aching in every limb, upon his game but over-tired horse. 'Hold 493
up, old man, you haven't had the saddle off your back nor I my clothes for the last six-and-thirty hours; but another half-hour will see you in a good paddock and me in Barallan parlour, with the cattle safe inside of post and rails, if we haven't taken a wrong track. Only for Bandah we should have followed the old Bundoorah road, a mile back, and found ourselves in the middle of a howling scrub, with a strong chance of losing these confounded B.R. cattle, the worst herd to drive in the district, and no more likelihood of bed or supper than if we were afloat on a raft.'

And here the travel-worn bushman, sodden and soaked, splashed and sleepy as he was, laughed aloud at the absurdity of the conceit.

Managing to light his pipe again by sheltering the match with his shut hand against the night-wind, in a manner peculiar to backwoods Australians, he was silent for a while. Then recommenced: 'Yes, a hard life, this of mine; work and anxiety by day and by night, wet and dry, hot or cold, burnt up and scorched in the summer, half drowned and starved with cold in the winter, and all for what? Just for a decent living, with little enough chance of putting by anything for a rainy day—I mean for a dry season,' he added, with another laugh. 'Well, though it is a hard life, I wouldn't exchange it for everyday work in a merchant's office, in a bank, or a Government department. These may be very well for some people, but they wouldn't suit Hugh Tressider at all. Give me the open air for it! And then, hard as the occasional rubs are, you have the benefit of contrast, and enjoy it all the more, as I shall a good supper and a good bed, which I'm morally certain to drop in for to-night. What a trump that Arnold Bayard is! If all squatters were like him, travelling would be a luxury and a privilege. Besides, I have the comfort of thinking—and it does keep me from being a peg too low at times—that all my hard work has not been for my own advantage, and that I have benefited others. Bless all their hearts! How I wish I could do more for them. Was that a dog's bark? Yes, by Jove! and there's the Barallan paddock fence on the left; it makes a wing to the stock-yard. Right you are, old man' (to his horse); 'we can't go wrong now; we'll go back, and help a bit with the tail.'

Making back to the next horseman, Tressider shook up the leg-weary but still game and willing hackney, and finding his way to the rear, informed all hands of the change in their immediate prospects, with the certainty of a speedy entrance into a haven of rest and refection. The intelligence had a distinctly stimulating effect. The pace of the drove was perceptibly quickened. Men, dogs, and horses seemed to have acquired new life and spirit. In less than half an hour the cattle were safely bestowed in a capacious stock-yard, the gates carefully secured, and the whole party dismounted before the outbuildings of Barallan Station.

Though it had been dark for four hours by the watches of the night, it was not more than half-past ten by the clock. Lights were still visible in the principal building, and a glowing fire in the men's kitchen showed that the cook was all alive, or had very lately retired.

A tall man with an abundant beard now advanced, and looked earnestly in the face of Tressider as he advanced to meet him. 'Oh, it's you, old man!' he said, in a voice every intonation of which bespoke kindly, unequivocal welcome. 'I expected you yesterday. What a drenching you must have had this miserable day. Mrs. Bayard has gone to bed, but there's nothing to prevent you and me from being comfortable for another hour. Of course the cattle are in the yard?'

'Yes.'

'Well, look here, you fellows, put your horses through that wicket-gate. Capital feed inside, and not too big a paddock. Joe hasn't turned in yet. He'll soon have supper ready for you. And, hold on, when you've turned out your horses, come up to the back door of the house. A glass of grog all round won't hurt any of you this cold night.'

'Thank you, Mr. Bayard,' was the reply from the oldest stock-rider.

In fifteen minutes at the outside Hugh Tressider was enabled to realise the justice of his proposition, that from the great contrasts of existence the essence of pleasure is extracted. His waterproof valise had furnished a complete change of dry garments, arrayed in which he was seated before a blazing fire, subsequent to the absorption of a glass of hot grog. A substantial meal was imminent, and as he watched the neat-handed Phyllis deftly covering that hospitable board, he was confirmed in the opinion that life had but few avenues of higher enjoyment open to him.

Arnold Bayard, the owner of the station, a wealthy and much-respected magnate in the land, had a particular fancy for this young fellow, whom he watched enjoying himself after his day, or indeed days, of toil and travail, with paternal benevolence.

'A deuced hard-working, honourable, well-principled young fellow,' he was wont to say. 'Every one ought to do him a good turn. I wish all the young ones were like him. His father, Captain Tressider, an old Waterloo veteran, bought that farm of theirs, on the Upper Hunter, instead of a station in the old days, and ruined himself trying to grow oranges and olives, and all that rot, instead of sheep and cattle. When he died, Hugh was left with his mother and the little brothers and sisters to look after. Quite a boy himself, too. He buckled to it then, and it has been all against collar with him ever since. Working like a nigger, and living like one, too, sometimes, but he has managed to keep them going, and pay for their education, though he came off rather short himself. Never mind that; I say he is as true a gentleman as ever stepped, and some day he must come out right. The Tressiders are high enough in point of birth. There's a title, too, in the family, I'm told, if the next heir at home were cleared off, but of course Hugh's too practical a fellow ever to bother his head about that.'

Thus far, Mr. Bayard. But this was only to strangers. Most of the people in the district knew so much, and honoured Hugh Tressider accordingly. Nobody could be poorer; no one could work harder. But curious as it may seem to those people who persist in manufacturing a stage Australia for themselves,—which is as like the country as the English milord of the Porte St. Martin, with his *boule-dogue*, his top-coat, and the ever-present 'god-dam,' to the real aristocrat,—there are few places where gentle birth and the manners which chiefly accompany that accidental circumstance are more truly honoured. So it will not be considered as anything very wonderful by Australians that Hugh Tressider, though only a drover by occupation, who received a certain sum per head for the conveying of large lots of cattle from one part of the colonies to another, known to be the son of a retired military officer, to be proverbially just, true, and self-respecting in all his dealings, was held in high estimation accordingly, and took rank socially with the best people, many of whom could have counted a thousand pounds to his every ten.

Hugh slept the sleep of the just that night, it may be confidently stated—the delicious, dreamless, utter repose of the fatigued worker; a luxury which the dwellers in high places of the earth very seldom taste. The dawn of a winter's morning had, however, but faintly commenced to tinge the lowering sky when he instinctively arose, and dressing with expedition proceeded to stir up his men and make preparations for an early start. The hut cook, an official whose position rarely permits of morning slumbers, was already up, and had the fire lighted which was to boil the huge breakfast-kettle. A restricted toilette suffices for road-hands in winter time. In half an hour the horses were saddled, a breakfast of beefsteak, damper, and hot tea disposed of, the packer fully accoutred, and all was ready for the road.

'Now boys,' says Tressider, 'I'll count the cattle out of the yard. There won't be another chance for a while. We've had a good night of it, thanks to Mr. Bayard. Let them feed for an hour or two, as soon as they steady to the road, and I'll overtake you somewhere about the Burnt Hut Flat.'

Having counted out his herd, which he was gratified to find turned out the correct number of six hundred and twenty-three—a matter which might well have otherwise resulted after the darkling difficulties of the previous night—and seen them straggle out over the wet green grass, the young man betook himself with a light heart back to the 'big house,' which he reached just in time for the family breakfast.

Here were assembled all the olive branches—from Melanie, aged sixteen, and giving promise of general captivation, to a roly-poly three-year-old boy, who ruled the household despotically, and sat on Hugh's knee, with wide wondering eyes scanning his features, as if seriously considering whether they had met in a former state of existence.

'Very glad to see you, Mr. Tressider,' said the lady of the house, a handsome, hospitable matron, as became the châtelaine of Barallan and the wife of Arnold Bayard; she couldn't well have been otherwise. 'We were afraid that you were going to be one of the mysterious guests who come after every one is in bed, and go away before they get up.'

'Like the avenger of blood in *Anne of Geierstein*, mother,' put in Melanie, with her hand on her parent's arm. 'There is something so weird about cattle-men. They always seem to be doing their work at unearthly hours, or beside watch-fires, like the people in the German legends.'

'And don't they have to light fires when they travel with sheep?' asked Jack, aged fourteen. 'Girls don't know anything about stock, do they, father?'

'They know as much as some boys who forget to fasten gates, and let the weaners "box" after a day's hard drafting,' returned Mr. Bayard with mildly reproachful emphasis. Here Mr. Jack subsided, while a certain tremulous movement of the lip showed the effect of the reminder.

'Never mind, poor old man! he'll remember next time. I'm sure he was as sorry as any one,' said the tender mother, giving a squeeze to the boy's hand. 'And now, breakfast is quite ready. You had better sit here, Mr. Tressider, and you can tell me how they all were at Rimandah, and who won the tennis match.'

'By the way,' said the Master, seating himself in a contemplative way before a noble round of beef, 'there is an English newspaper and a letter for you in the smoking-room; came yesterday. We were so busy yarning over the fire last night that I forgot to tell you.'

'They'll keep till after breakfast,' said Hugh calmly. 'There isn't a soul out of Australia that I care two straws about. I suppose some one has sent me a *Times* with nothing in it that can possibly concern me. Thanks; I will take some chicken-pie. I can fall back upon corned beef on the road, though one never seems to tire of it.'

'How are they all on the Allyn?' said Mr. Bayard. 'Have you heard from home lately?'

'Oh, doing quite splendidly,' said the young man, his face lighting up with an expression of tenderness which transfigured the weather-beaten features and imparted a pathetic lustre to his dark-grey eyes. 'Elinor was improving in her drawing—going to be quite an artist. Fairy was taking lessons in singing; she always had a wonderful voice. Bob was head of his class at school, and was safe for a scholarship if he kept up the pace. Mother was stronger than she had been for years. I shall get back there at Christmas time if I've luck on this journey, and we're going to be no end jolly. The Armordens are coming over from Braidwood, and we shall be as happy as kings—much happier, indeed, by late accounts.'

'I'm sure you deserve it,' said Mrs. Bayard half-unconsciously to herself. 'But what a terrible day you must have had of it yesterday. It never ceased raining here. It is perishing weather even now. However you can endure your life in such a season as this, astonishes me.'

'We get used to it, Mrs. Bayard, like the eels, you know. Somebody must do it, or who would buy the Barallan cattle, and get them to market?'

'Yes, I see; but I can't bear to think of nice people—of one's friends, you know—sitting in the saddle through these long, dismal, bitter nights, or watching by fires in the forest, like demons or ghosts.'

'That's the pleasantest part of it, I assure you. When the virtuous drover has eaten his supper, made up his fire, and lighted his pipe, he feels—well, nearly as comfortable as Mr. Bayard here when he has locked up the house and put out the lamp for the night. It doesn't always rain, either.'

'Here are your letters and paper, Mr. Tressider,' said Melanie, who had quietly arisen from the breakfast-table; 'I was afraid dad would forget them again. Hadn't you better open them? I would if I had letters from England.'

'You have my permission,' said the lady of the house. 'Some people are dreadfully cold-blooded about letters. Fancy a woman leaving her letters unread all this time!'

'Theirs are pleasanter than ours,' murmured the recipient. 'That is, generally speaking. Ha! This seems a different hand from the last correspondent. I thought I knew the old fellow's writing well.'

With the sleepless curiosity of youth, Melanie and Jack had kept their eyes fixed upon their friend's face. To their great and unaffected surprise they observed him to flush all over, bronzed cheek and forehead, and afterwards to turn deadly pale. The letter slipped from his nerveless hand, and his eyes assumed such a fixed and strange expression, that the young people were alarmed. Mr. and Mrs. Bayard, with averted heads, were discussing matters of family interest, and so had escaped the bit of melodrama.

Mr. Bayard was recalled by Melanie's eager tones—

'Oh, father! Mr. Tressider's taken ill. He's had some bad news in his letter.'

'Why, old fellow, what is it?' inquired Bayard, turning to him with a face of sincere concern. 'Anything gone wrong at home? I didn't know you heard from relatives in the old country.'

Hugh Tressider stood up and looked at his good friend with a staid and serious expression, not by any means habitual. 'All is well; better than well, my dear Mr. Bayard. I know it will rejoice your

kind heart. But it *was* rather sudden, and as unexpected as an order to become Governor-General. I'm Lord Trewartha, that's all; and there's Trewartha Castle, with not much of an income yet, but a fair sum in cash at my credit to support the dignity. More will fall in when another relative dies. It rather knocked me over at first. The thought of all I could do for the girls and Bob, and the poor Mother who has slaved her soul out all these years for us, was too much for me—my heart struck work for a minute or so. I nearly fainted. There's the letter.'

'And you're a lord?—Lord Trewartha—a real live lord!' said Melanie and Jack, each taking hold of a hand, and jumping up and down with wild excitement and the exuberant, unselfish joy of youth. 'Oh, what fun! Isn't it splendid? And will people have to say, "Yes, my lord," and "No, my lord," and "If your lordship please"? Of course you will send these crawling B.R. cattle to Jericho.' This last was Master Jack's suggestion.

'I shall carry out my engagements, even if I were made a marquis,' said Hugh, recovering his spirits, 'which I read somewhere is ever so much higher than a baron. And you are all to call me Hugh, without Mr. or anything. That is all the difference. Otherwise I shall leave you nothing in my will. And now I must go and have a smoke with your father, or I shall have a fit.'

It was all true. Is true. For the matter of that, something very like it happened only the other day under nearly similar circumstances. Hugh Tressider will never more need to undertake to drive cattle from Kiandra (let us say) to the Paroo, or from Mount Cornish to Adelaide, at per head. Elinor and Fairy will have *such* private lessons and masters and general embellishment that they will do more than pass muster among their European kinsfolk. Bob will graduate at Oxford or Cambridge, and if ever he revisits Australia—as being a younger brother he probably will—it will be impossible to tell him, at first sight, from the imported Anglo-Saxon aristocrat.

And Hugh Tressider, what of him? As he smokes his pipe that evening by the camp-fire—one of the last of the series he is likely to warm himself by—what avenues of enjoyment, hitherto undreamed of, seem lengthening out into vast and endless grandeur, like the Sphinx-guarded paths of Egyptian cities, all ending in wondrous palaces, purple-draped and gold-illumined! The hard and homely present nearly faded out of sight; only by an effort could he recall himself to the rude primeval surroundings he was so soon to quit for ever. A peer of England! A man of fortune! The heir of an ancient name! Free to meet and mingle with the world's best and fairest, bravest and most exalted, on terms of freedom and equality. His foot slipped into a pool of ice-cold water amid the tussocks of frosted grass as he thought of all this, and with a light laugh at the incongruity of his situation and prospects, he resumed his walk around the recumbent drove.

At no distant date the Tressider family sailed for England, when doubtless most of the good things in keeping with their altered fortunes were duly dispensed to and appreciated by them.

IN BUSHRANGING DAYS

The practice of 'intromitting with the lieges travelling on their lawful business'—as Captain Dugald Dalgetty (sometime of Marischal College, Aberdeen) hath it—is an ancient and fascinating, if irregular mode of financial reconstruction. It has always commended itself as a combination of business and pleasure to those bolder spirits who chafe at the restriction of an over-timorous social system.

From the days of the mad Prince and Poins there were those 'for sport sake content to do the profession some grace.' Risks of death and dishonour were thus taken in countries boasting a high civilisation—a short shrift and a high gallows constituting the accepted termination of a period of riot and revelry; and though the strong hand of the law rarely failed to bring the bold outlaw to his doom, certain alleviations always served to cast a glamour around the pleasant and profitable, if perilous career of the highwayman.

Brigand or bandit, pirate or smuggler, bushranger or buccaneer, as might be, he rarely failed to enlist the feminine sympathy, which has flowed forth in all ages towards the doer of bold deeds—the scorner of gold save for revel and gift—the fearless withstander of the law.

The feats of these heroes of Alsatia have been sung and their valour vaunted in the ballads of all lands and ages; indeed they have formed no inconsiderable portion of the material. 'Yo Soy Contrabandista' never fails to evoke a storm of applause from every Spanish audience.

They have flourished alike under the rule of kings and the co-operative coercion of democracy. Monarchies fail to extirpate, republics to suppress them. They apparently owe their existence to some unexplained ordinance of Dame Nature, whose *enfans gatés* they are. Her forest children they. Lords of the Waste, roamers through wood and wold, formulating thus a world-old protest against the dulness of respectability, the greed of industrialism, the selfishness of property.

Products as well of the careless ordering of new countries as of the stern discipline of older communities, small wonder that they should have arisen in this brand-new, scarce century-old Austral land of ours, hugging the South Pole and dissevered from many of the formalities of civilisation. Small wonder, I say, that amid our pathless woods and sea-like plains, with every natural advantage and conceivable aid from the habits of a migratory, restless, centaur-like population, these unlicensed tax-gatherers should have appeared. Thus the profession and practice of what is now called 'Bushranging' occurred at a very early period of Australian history. The term easily grew out of the natural desire of the escaped felon, desperate from harsh treatment, or perhaps merely averse to toil, to hide himself in the woods which then surrounded the settlements.

The old English words 'wood' and 'forest,' 'copse' and 'thicket,' had been superseded by the comprehensive colonial term 'bush,' doubtless suggested by the close approximation to 'scrub' or 'jungle,' which the interminable eucalyptus wilderness then presented to the first emigrant Britons. 'The bush' came next, as more fully comprehensive and explanatory, signifying something analogous to the Dutch-African 'veldt,' not necessarily woodland, but the waste lands of the Crown generally. This nomenclature must have mystified later arrivals considerably, much of the so-called 'bush' being composed of plains nearly, and in some cases altogether, without timber of any description.

The wandering robber, necessarily 'a burgher of that desert city,' came then, by general consent, to be described as a 'bushranger.' The term was even Latinised, as the philologist may discover by reading the description in St. James's Church, Sydney, on the tablet placed there to commemorate the death of Dr. Wardell, of 'Wardell's Bush,' Petersham, slain in the early thirties, 'latrone vagante' (*sic*). The first robbers were in all cases convicts. For the small proportion of free men employed as guards and warders, overseers and head workmen, there was obviously no temptation to leave recognised positions, to ramble through the terrible foodless wastes, with a price on their heads, as was the stern usage of the period.

But in the case of the reckless felon the conditions were different. He had been flogged—he was worked in irons for bad conduct. If returned by his employer to the authorities as useless or stubborn, no prospect lay before him but that of ending a wretched life in the severer penal settlements, where incorrigibles were doomed to chains and slavery. He declared for the open sky, the free forest. The toll levied on the drays of the squatter, the homestead of the farmer, or the wayfarer on the high-road, was necessarily the chief, almost the only support of outlaws. For a time they lived and flourished. Having secured arms—the fowling-piece, musket, or pistol of the period—they entrapped or intimidated the unwary traveller. They made stubborn defence against the minions of the law, unless the odds were too great. In some instances, having discovered retreats known only to the aboriginal tribes or outlying shepherds, mostly sympathisers, their evasion of justice was prolonged for years. The end, however, was but delayed. Tracked down, betrayed, slain in fair fight with police, with soldiers, with settlers combining for self-defence, the same fate awaited all.

Found with arms in their hands, they were hanged as a matter of course. No sentence of imprisonment afforded them hope of escape, with further possibilities of crime. They had played the great hazard, and the forfeit was duly paid.

Living in this condition of continual warfare—their hand against all men, and, with rare exceptions, all men against them, the gallows or the bullet their certain doom—it is not to be wondered at that crimes of violence shocked and aroused the community. 'As well be hung for a sheep as a lamb,' was the familiar proverb quoted in reference to deeds of blood and rapine. With fancied wrongs and

years of oppression to avenge, they showed no mercy. They had received none. Fighting with the rope round their necks, they were reckless and ruthless. And when the last act of the grim tragedy was played, with the hangman for stage manager and a quasi-criminal crowd for audience, the leading actor had more than once boasted of a score of murders and kindred outrages.

At the first outbreaks the highwaymen of the period had neither horses nor arms worthy of the name. Revolvers were unknown; pistols were far from being 'arms of precision.' Rifles even were rare; only the fowling-piece and the Tower musket were in common use. Horses, too, were scarce. So that the colonial summons of 'Bail up,' or even the old-fashioned British demand, 'Your money or your life,' came mostly from a ragged Robinson Crusoe-like individual behind a tree, with a rusty gun-barrel protruding therefrom.

Of course after the 'breaking out' of Port Phillip—as the earliest colonisation of Victoria was disrespectfully termed—in 1837, persons of darksome record hasted to the new settlement to hide from the law or prey on the public. Among them were three escaped Tasmanian felons, named Williams, Jepps, and Fogarty.

This worthy triumvirate raided the wilds of the Upper Plenty, robbing and holding to ransom the lieges, terrorising a line of farm-houses. They took prisoners my good friend Charles Ryan and the late Mr. Alick Hunter, adding insult to injury by eating the breakfast prepared for the latter gentleman and his friends. What the fashionables of the day wanted on the banks of the Plenty Rivulet I never could make out. But it was considered 'the thing' apparently to have a farm in that locality; it was even surmised that these aristocratic amateurs might make money by the practice of agriculture—a delusion long dispelled. What the solid fact amounted to *re* Jepps and Co. was that, like the footpads in *Don Juan*, their first accost was 'D—— your eyes, your money or life.' So much for the 'first robbers' in Victoria.

To them enter four gentlemen—volunteers, squatters of the period and overlanders at that—Mr. Henry Fowler, of Fowler's Flat, near Albury; Mr. Peter Snodgrass, M.L.A., son of the Colonel and Lieutenant-Governor of that name, historically known as commanding the 13th Portuguese Regiment, when on August 31, 1813, he mounted the 'imminent deadly breach' at the siege of St. Sebastian; Lieutenant Robert Chamberlain, a retired military man; and Mr. Gourlay, squatter. Arming in haste, they followed hard on the tracks of the spoilers, and, as they crossed the creek flat, discovered the bushrangers entrenched in a slab hut, fully prepared for battle. The outlaws had the best of the position, having cover, behind which they could fire through windows and other openings. The attacking force did not stop to weigh probabilities, but charged up to the fortress, the besieged returning fire with effect. Mr. Chamberlain was slightly wounded; Mr. Fowler was shot through the jaw. But 'blood will tell.' The volunteers were cool and determined. One of the robbers was shot dead, and the others captured before the smoke had well cleared from the tiny battle scene, which compared favourably as to killed and wounded with more pretentious engagements. The prisoners were conveyed to Melbourne, there to await trial, sentence, and execution. Their captives, I may mention, finding themselves neglected, promptly quitted the field, their position between two fires being eminently unsafe.

It were tedious to follow the calendar of crime more or less connected with the highway in old colonial days. In many instances the records testify not less to the unflinching courage of the settlers than to the recklessness of the robbers.

Among memorable incidents that of Mr. Charles Fisher Shepherd, of Monaro, deserves to be recorded. On the 14th of December 1835, being attacked by bushrangers at night, also deserted or betrayed by other inmates of the station, he shot one robber dead and kept up a fight against odds in the most gallant manner, until, being wounded in the head and half-a-dozen other places, he was left for dead. He recovered, however, as if by a miracle, and gave evidence at the trial and conviction of the chief criminal and his abettors.

As far back as 1830 this evil, so far from being stamped out by chain-gang and gallows, assumed alarming proportions, as may be judged by a newspaper extract containing a letter from Mr. George Suttor to Mr. E. B. Suttor, of Baulkam Hills. On the 27th of October in that year, a meeting of the magistrates and inhabitants of Bathurst was called at the Court-house to consider what steps should be taken as to a band of bushrangers. They were led by a desperate convict, said to have been flogged unjustly; and numbering at times from twenty to thirty, kept the district in a state of alarm. Murder, as well as serious depredations, was laid to their charge. A body of volunteers numbering twelve, well armed and mounted, was at once formed, Mr. W. H. Suttor being nominated commander by Major Macpherson.

They started at five o'clock P.M., after hearing of a fresh robbery committed at the house of one Arkell. Mr. Suttor, always a friend of the aboriginal race, met two aboriginal natives who knew him, and enlisted them as guides. They ran the tracks until the robbers were descried in a rocky glen near the Warragamba River, about an hour before sunset. The volunteers dismounted and prepared to take them by a *coup de main*, but a stone falling, alarmed the gang. They instantly took to the trees for cover, and kept up an incessant fire. The volunteers stood their ground and returned the fire. While Mr. Suttor was on the rock giving orders, a bullet passed through his hat. The firing was kept up for about an hour. Two bushrangers were wounded and fell, but were got to the rear. Mr. Suttor made a feint to charge, which caused the robbers to run from their position, though he had but an empty carbine to threaten with. He then effected a retreat, none of his men being wounded. Mr. Charles Suttor was the last to leave the glen. All remounted their horses, which they had left in charge of the two blacks and a lad they had taken from the bushrangers.

The night after the skirmish was stormy, and Mr. Suttor was vexed to find that most of the horses

had strayed; while seeking them the mounted police were met with, eager to overtake the bushrangers. Had they but come up sooner, their united force would have been sufficient to take or shoot the whole gang. In the encounter which took place, two of the troopers were shot and five of the horses lost. Lieutenant Brown did all that a brave officer could, even carrying off the wounded men on the back of his own horse.

The number of the robber band was between fourteen and twenty. They escaped at that time, but were pursued by Captain Walpole and Lieutenant Moore with separate detachments, to whom they surrendered. 'Major Macpherson was much pleased with the brothers Suttor for going forward in the prompt manner they did' (*sic*).

There was talk of a 'rising' at Mudgee, which did not come off; and doubtless all the 'banditti,' by 507
which term they are referred to in this interesting letter signed G. Suttor, under date October 27, 1830, were shot or taken in usual course. Let us trust that our country may never fall short of sons of the soil ready to act with the courage and loyalty of the Messrs. Suttor and the other Australian volunteers in the 'battle' described.

Although gold-mining on a large scale practically commenced in New South Wales in the month of May 1851, when Mr. John Richard Hardy was appointed the first Goldfields Commissioner, and, with a body of mounted police, commenced to issue licenses and to administer the law at Ophir, where a large number of diggers had already collected, and where an eighteen-ounce nugget was found a day or two after their arrival, no robberies of consequence were committed. Still, tent thefts were frequent. Mysterious disappearances from time to time took place, while drunken brawls, horse-stealing, unlicensed liquor selling, and such-like, kept the police fully employed.

But no organised road robbery on a large scale occurred until 1862. Then all Australia was thrilled by an announcement of the gold escort robbery by Gardiner's gang, near Forbes in New South Wales. A peculiar significance attached to this daring crime, from the fact of the perpetrators being chiefly native-born Australians. It shook the general belief, long held, that the sons of the soil were free from the reproach attached to their progenitors. The New South Wales natives were proverbially sober. Not prone to the graver crimes, reared amid favourable surroundings, the type had developed few of the faults of former generations. Much might be expected of the coming race. This optimistic opinion was now unrooted. The details of the crime left but little hope for the philanthropist, while it confirmed the cynic's mockery of his kind.

On the 15th of June 1862, the gold escort coach from Forbes was stopped and robbed by Gardiner's gang, eight or ten men in all, with blackened faces, and wearing red shirts. Bullock drays had been placed across the narrow road, and a rude breastwork constructed, at a place locally known as 'Eugowra Rocks.' Behind this an armed band suddenly appeared. No challenge was given, but at the 508
word 'Fire' from the leader, a volley was poured into the coach, on which sat the police in charge of the gold. The sergeant and the trooper were hit. The sergeant fell, wounded in the side. The police, taken by surprise, made no effectual defence. The horses, left to themselves, bolted and overturned the coach. The robbers then took possession of the escort gold and notes, packed in four iron boxes, amounting to about fourteen thousand pounds in value. It is in evidence that a division was made, which gave about twenty-two pounds weight of gold to each man besides his share of the notes—roughly, one thousand pounds or more each—a tempting booty enough even in those days of universal plenty and comparative wealth, enjoyed by all sorts and conditions of men throughout Australia—those colonies which had not as yet produced gold, sharing almost equally in enhanced profits and heightened wages with those which had.

Very soon after the robbers had packed their ill-gotten gold upon the coach leaders and ridden hard for the gullies of the Weddin mountainland, which had many a time and oft sheltered fugitives from justice, the police, with that indispensable sleuth-hound the black tracker, were on their trail.

So hot was the pursuit, that on the Thursday following, Superintendent Saunderson's division came up with part of the gang, in one of the fastnesses of 'the Weddin'—discovered their camp and the scales with which the gold had been weighed and divided. They caught sight of the outlaws, but, on their tired horses, failed to overtake them, splendidly mounted as they appeared to be. However, they were forced to abandon a pack-horse, which the police found to be richly laden, having in four bags, secured to the saddle, about fifteen hundred ounces of gold.

Sir Frederick Pottinger, Mr. Mitchell, C.P.S., and Detective Lyons also arrested two men near Narandera, one of whom had with him two hundred and thirteen ounces of gold and one hundred and fifty pounds in notes. These were doubtless accessories or confederates. A reward per head was offered by the Government for information leading to capture of any of the gang. Thus ran the proclamation:—

'Mail and Escort Robbery 509

'*£1000 Reward, and Pardon to an Accomplice*

'Whereas it has been represented to the Government that on the afternoon of the 15th inst. the gold escort from the Lachlan was attacked on the road between Forbes and Orange by a band of armed men, said to be ten in number, and described as dressed in red shirts and caps, with their faces blackened, who fired on and wounded the police forming the guard, opened the mail-bags and letters, and carried off a large amount of gold dust and money: Notice is hereby given that a reward of one thousand pounds will be given by Government for such information as shall lead to the apprehension and conviction, within six months from this date, of each of the guilty parties; and a

pardon will also be granted to any accomplice in the above outrage who shall first give such information.

CHARLES COWPER.

'COLONIAL SECRETARY'S OFFICE, SYDNEY, *June 17, 1862*.'

The great gold robbery having been accomplished, the actors in which were for a time uncaptured and unpunished, other enterprises of the same nature disturbed the land.

More than one gang had apparently been formed, whose doings were heard of, sometimes in one direction, sometimes in another.

Well armed and admirably mounted, they were not easily overtaken or overpowered by the police force of the day, then recently organised on the centralising system, which has since proved so efficacious. Before the advent of Captain Mayne, Captain M'Lerie, and Inspector-General Fosbery, the police in New South Wales were under the control of the magistrates of the district, much as obtained formerly in the rural parts of England. The system did not work well: one police magistrate might be alert and courageous, likely to keep his men in good order; another might be easy-going, slack of discipline—mentally even in near resemblance to Justice Shallow. It was evident that there would be little *esprit de corps*, each division working for its own hand.

But when the new régime came into force all was changed. The force became at once semi-military 510
in discipline, in prestige, in general organisation. The officers, each in graduated rank, responsible for a district, maintained a high standard of efficiency, while the inspector-general at headquarters enjoyed much the same power and rank as the military commandant of a colony. From that time forth the bush outlaws were more easily traced, more often captured, and more invariably punished than had been the case in former years.

Still, the circumstances of the country were so much in favour of this particular class of offender, that from time to time society waxed impatient at the protracted immunity of known criminals fresh from the scene of notorious outrage. Outlying stations were attacked, and more than one household had reason to rejoice at their narrow escape from capture and ill-treatment. Perhaps one of the most daring outrages of Hall and Gilbert's gang was the attack on the house of Mr. David Campbell, of Goimbla. The story of the siege and of his memorable defence I had from his own lips in the summer of 1869. He was then living at Cunningham Plains, where I visited him *en route* from Narandera to Goulburn.

Mr. Campbell was Scottish by descent, though born in India. A keen sportsman, a high-couraged, chivalrous gentleman, he was justly indignant that he should be menaced by the lawless men who were then terrorising the country. In expectation of an attack, he made more than usual provision in the way of arms; a double supply of which were at hand in places of concealment.

Thus his story ran:—

It was the time of the evening meal. Mrs. Campbell was a refined, delicately-nurtured woman, but none the less fearless in time of trial, as the event proved. Hearing a noise, Mr. Campbell went out into a passage, at the end of which he saw an armed man, who at once fired at him. He returned fire without effect, retiring upon his base of operations. A volley from the front of the house crashed through the windows. The siege had begun.

Mr. Campbell returned fire so accurately and repeatedly, having several rifles and fowling-pieces, 511
that the robbers believed more than one man to be behind the defences. Mrs. Campbell carried ammunition and helped to load. On one occasion, when crossing the line of fire, a bullet grazed her neck. All this time the firing was kept up briskly, though more than once a proposal came to harm nothing if the garrison surrendered, but with ruffianly threats if the defence was continued. One only reply was made, 'Come and take us.'

After half an hour's incessant fusillade, a new idea struck the attacking party. The outbuildings were composed of 'pisé,' a preparation of rammed earth, as its name implies, much favoured by Mr. Campbell, and singularly adapted for dwellings in an arid land. Now came a lull with fresh disposition of forces.

The stable immediately in the rear of the cottage was discovered to be in flames. A favourite horse of Mr. Campbell's, unable to escape, was burnt alive. As the screams of the tortured animal pierced the night air, his owner (he confessed) felt uncommonly wolfish. 'I will have one of you for poor Highflyer,' said he, as he ground his teeth. The burning stable would have caused the roof of the cottage to catch fire, as there was a dray loaded with hay standing between it and the back of the house, had not Mrs. Campbell and the servant maid courageously covered the hay with a tarpaulin.

During the pause in the firing which took place, after the flames lighted up the scene, Mrs. Campbell made an important reconnaissance. Stealing to the corner of the verandah, she examined a high paling fence, from behind which the assailants had commenced the attack. 'I saw,' she told her husband on returning, 'a man jumping up from time to time, and looking over towards the house.'

Mr. Campbell awaited the next appearance, and, taking a snap-shot, sent a bullet through the outlaw's throat. A final volley was fired and returned. Then silence ensued. Half an hour afterwards the 'besieged resident' walked down to the men's hut and brought up the station-hands, who had preserved a strict neutrality during the engagement. They found O'Malley lying dead under a tree,

whither he had been dragged by his companions through the standing oats. The siege of Goimbla had been raised.

Mr. Keightley's experiences as a 'besieged resident' were not dissimilar from those of Mr. Campbell. A Goldfields Commissioner, a sportsman, and a determined man, he was attacked in his own house at Dunn's Plains, near Bathurst, while the robbers of the escort were still at large. 512

Like Mr. Campbell, he was prepared, was a dead shot, and killed one of his assailants. I may mention that I knew Mr. Keightley well for many years, and had the account of the affair from himself. The gang surrounded the house at mid-day, and finding such cover as they might, commenced firing, after calling upon the garrison to surrender. Mr. Keightley, on his part, kept up a brisk fire from time to time, and dislodged several of the besiegers from their hiding-places. He himself narrowly escaped being hit on several occasions, as his position was not completely protected. Bourke had been the most daring and aggressive of the party, and in gaining a nearer position, he partially exposed himself and was laid low by a snap-shot.

Up to this stage of the affair the conditions were not unlike those of the Goimbla siege. The robbers lost a man in each case. But here the circumstances varied materially. The attack on Mr. Keightley's household was during daylight—the one on Mr. Campbell's after nightfall. On the death of O'Malley, the robbers decided upon a retreat; but soon after Bourke fell, a discovery was made that Mr. Keightley's ammunition had been expended. He was therefore at their mercy, and had no alternative but to yield.

The four persons then in the house—Mr. and Mrs. Keightley, Dr. Pechey, a relative of the lady of the house, and a servant woman—surrendered themselves to the bushrangers, who announced their intention of shooting Mr. Keightley in requital for their comrade's death. To this end he was marched to some distance by two of the bushrangers, while the others were holding a colloquy with Mrs. Keightley and the servant, who passionately implored them to spare Mr. Keightley's life.

They retorted that he had not spared Bourke's, and also that 'he had boasted that he would have the reward which the Government had offered for their capture.'

Mrs. Keightley replied that he had never dreamed of a reward: he was the last man to take blood-money; if he had shot Bourke it was in defence of his home, which any man would do. Furthermore, if they would allow her to ride to Bathurst, she would undertake to bring them five hundred pounds in notes on the following day. 513

'How could you get that?' asked Ben Hall.

'From my father. You know that he is a wealthy man, and would gladly give it to me for such a purpose. Surely you will not kill my husband in cold blood before my face?'

The lady was young and beautiful. Her tears and entreaties in this dread position were such as to have moved the sternest heart. She was a native-born Australian, like themselves.

They had shed blood, but it had been in fair fight. They had never been accused of inhumanity otherwise. They relented, finally agreeing to take the five hundred pounds if brought to a certain tree, visible for a considerable distance, by a specified hour on the next day. The messenger was to come alone. They would hold her husband as a hostage for the performance of the bond.

The two men told off as executioners had by this time called upon their prisoner to turn his back towards them for the fatal shot.

'I have never done that to any man living, and will not now,' returned he; 'fire away!'

As he folded his arms and looked his captors in the face, a voice was heard from below—

'Hold on! There's to be no shooting; we've agreed to take the money.'

Mrs. Keightley was then suffered to depart in company with Dr. Pechey for Bathurst, while her husband remained in the custody of the gang, pending the arrival of the ransom. It may be imagined that his feelings were of a mingled nature. He was assured of the safety of his wife. Still, he could not be free from anxiety as to his own, in case of default of payment or pursuit by the police.

But the brave woman well performed her part. As the appointed hour on the next day drew perilously near, a horseman was seen from afar to approach the track to the well-known fire-scathed tree. He reached it, and throwing down a package, returned as he came. It was speedily taken possession of, and found to contain one hundred five-pound notes.

Then Mr. Keightley was released.

Many years have elapsed since these events took place. Few of the actors are now living. The hand of time and the Nemesis of the law have thinned the ranks of the combatants. Their deeds and adventures are passing into the domain of legend and tradition. In a few decades they may take rank with Dick Turpin and Claude Duval, while the feats of Gardiner's 'Darkie' may be quoted by the 'coming race' as in rivalry with those of Black Bess of sainted memory. 514

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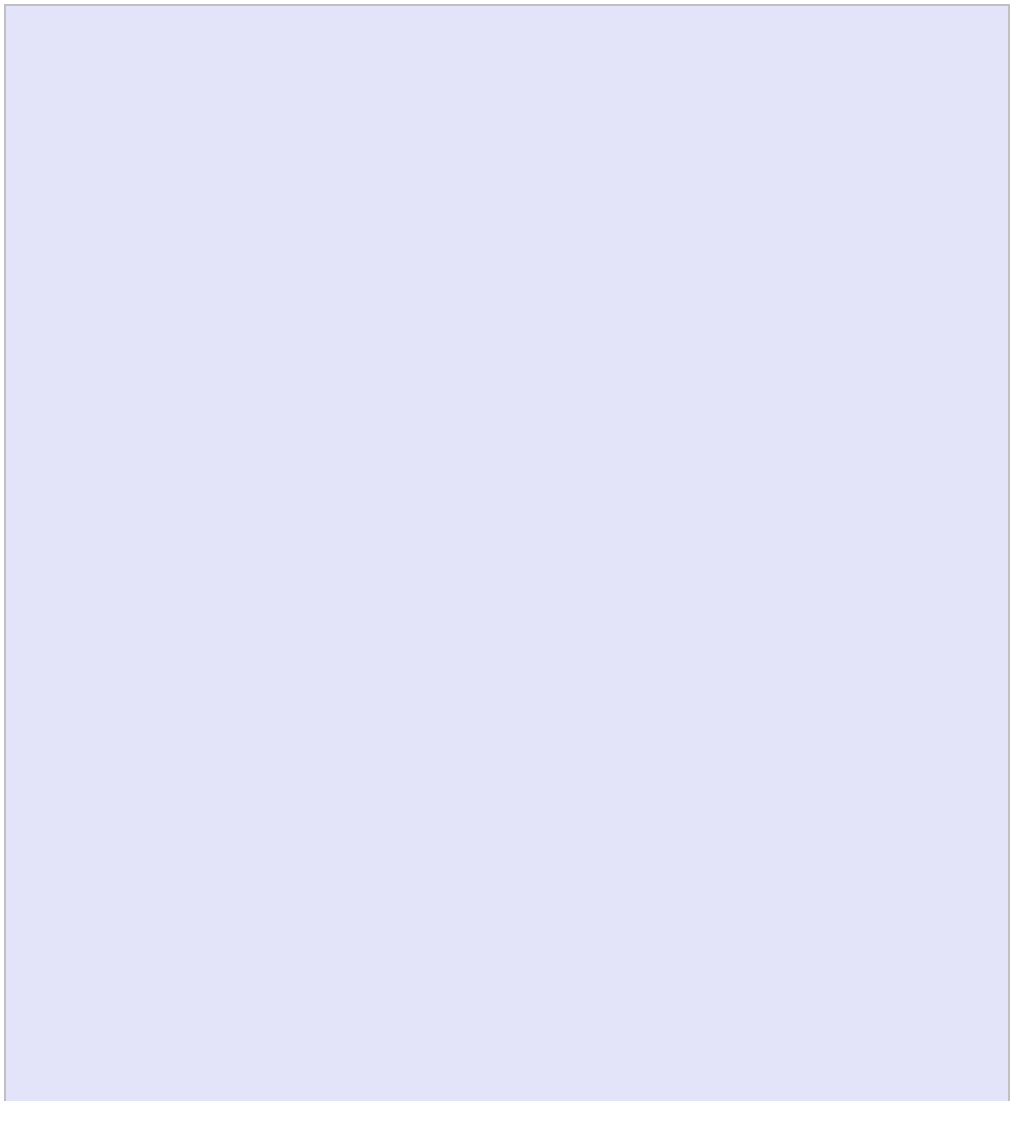

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